

GETTING TO KNOW TO BUILD THE RELATIONSHIP: A GROUNDED THEORY OF THE
PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROCESS IN MULTI-YEAR CLASSROOMS

by

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Abstract

The parent involvement literature is well-established with concern to the mono-grade classroom but there remains a paucity of research focusing on the multi-year parent involvement process from the perspective of parents. As part of a Grounded Theory approach, an iterative process of data collection and analysis of 53 semi-structured interviews with 16 parents, 11 students, and 3 teachers generated a theory of the process of parent involvement in multi-year classrooms. Developed primarily from the perspectives of parents, interview data was collected over two years and supplemented by student and teacher interview data, student drawings, and teacher journaling activities. Findings from this study revealed the core categories, Getting to Know and Building the Relationship Over Time, which initiated and continued to motivate parent involvement in the student's education and classroom throughout the multi-year program. Six other categories related to the multi-year parent involvement process included: (a) Being an Advocate; (b) Supporting the In-School Curriculum; (c) Supporting the Out-of-School Curriculum; (d) Supporting Independence; (e) Responding to Involvement Opportunities; and, (f) Limited Involvement and Relationship Development. The significance of the findings in relation to the types and changes of parent involvement and parent-teacher relationship development over time and the implications for school actions and policies are discussed.

Lay Summary

A Grounded Theory approach was used to generate a theory to explain how parent involvement develops over time when the parent, student, and teacher stay together for three years. A total of 53 interviews were conducted with 16 parents, 11 students, and 3 teachers over two years. Student drawings and teacher journal data were also collected. Results from the analysis revealed that two central categories, Getting to Know and Building the Relationship Over Time, were primary motivators of parent involvement over time. Six other categories related to the multi-year parent involvement process included: Being an Advocate, Supporting the In-School Curriculum, Supporting the Out-of-School Curriculum, Supporting Independence, Responding to Involvement Opportunities, and Limited Involvement and Relationship Development. Findings from the study are discussed, including ways in which parents are involved, how parent involvement changes, how the parent-teacher relationship develops, and what these results mean for teacher practices and school policies.

Preface

I was solely responsible for all aspects of the research project, including recruitment of participants, data collection, coding, analysis, and writing the theory. I worked under advisement of my research supervisory committee, Dr. Laurie Ford (Supervisor), Dr. Jenna Shapka, and Dr. Richard Young. Ethics approval for this research was issued by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) at the University of British Columbia (certificate number: H15-00486). This study was carried out under the BREB title: The Gift of Time: A Grounded Theory Approach to Understanding Parental Educational Care in the Multi-Year Classroom. This title was changed to Getting to Know to Build the Relationship: A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms for the final version of the dissertation presented in this document.

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Dedication

For my mom, who showed me that the relationships we form can become more meaningful when we genuinely *care* about and for others.

For my dad, who made quiet sacrifices for my education but like his hugs – which seem to last a bit longer these days – took some time to fully appreciate.

For my sister, whose role modelling and shared moments of *hakuna matata*, helped to disrupt so much early chaos.

For all my family

...and a few who I've mentioned in the acknowledgement section above...

Children need to be given a chance if their potential is to be actualized.

Your collective resilience and determination to work through struggles and build on successes showed what a community can do for any child. Know that I have become what we are, and I thank you all for giving me a chance.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Parent involvement has been conceptualized through an ecological lens (Epstein, 2018; Epstein & Sanders, 2000) and as a process that recognizes parent role construction that contribute to how parents engage in school- and home-based education activities (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Simon, 2004; Spera, 2005). Additionally, parent involvement has been analyzed from an asset-based perspective, highlighting knowledge, skills, and resources families of diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds have and from which schools and teachers can draw upon as a means to enhance family-school partnerships (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

Critiques made of parent involvement theories and frameworks by scholars often cite narrow parameters of what constitutes parent involvement, the difficulty in applying parent involvement theories to diverse communities, the limited agency and voice given to parents in defining their own involvement, and privileging the school's agenda that keeps the family-school relationship unbalanced (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Yamauchi, Ponte, Ratliffe, & Traynor, 2017). Parent involvement theories identify the importance for strong family-school partnerships, however, the classroom structure has been given less attention. What remains unaccounted for in the theorizing are the ways in which alternative classroom structures affect parent involvement. Multi-year classrooms, for example, are thought to be in a better position to nurture teacher-parent relationships by providing the additional time necessary for trust to be built, for parents to be empowered and support their child's education, and for a more balanced and meaningful family-school partnership to take shape.

Study Rationale

The impact of extended parent-teacher relationships has been given less attention in terms of theory development, including the impact multi-year classrooms has on parental involvement. Theories on parent involvement are primarily based on the observations of researchers in mono-grade classrooms. The importance of developing a theory of parent involvement in multi-year classrooms includes: (a) distinguishing itself from other parent involvement theories by having parents define how they are involved and what constitutes involvement; (b) accounting for changes in involvement and the influence of relationships on parent involvement due to greater parent, teacher, and student continuity; and (c) updating parent involvement and multi-year classroom literature and theory that captures the perspectives of parents of diverse linguistic and ethnic background, who are often overlooked.

Study Purpose

Despite a school's best efforts to engage parents, there will remain barriers when classrooms are not designed in a way to provide the time necessary for family-school relationships to develop. Teachers of multi-year classrooms, however, often perceive greater parent involvement and strengthened partnerships with families (Ford, 2010; Jordan, 2001; Williams-Wright, 2013). Parents who have a child enrolled in a multi-year classroom tend to view the school and teacher more positively, feel more part of the school community, and identify the additional time students and teachers spend together as helpful in building trust (Herr, 2002, Jordan, 2001; Little & Dacus, 1999; Nichols & Nichols, 1999, 2002; Sherman, 2004). These benefits notwithstanding, there remains a paucity of research on parent involvement in multi-year classrooms from the perspective of parents and how parent involvement develops as a result of longer parent-teacher contact. The purpose of this study was

to address these gaps and build a theoretical model of the process of parent involvement in multi-year classrooms.

Research Question

As part of the review of literature that was developed for Chapter Two, the question I identified and that guided me throughout this two-year journey is as follows: What is the process of parental involvement in the education of the child who is enrolled in a multi-year classroom?

Definition of Terms

Mono-grade classroom. A *mono-grade classroom* consists of students who enter and exit a classroom with one grade level, are part of a cohort who correspond closely by age, and are taught by a single teacher who teaches one grade level.

Multi-year classroom. A *multi-year classroom* is a classroom that consists of a core group of students and a single teacher remaining together for two or more years.

Multi-year teacher. A *multi-year teacher* is a licensed educational professional who has sole responsibility for delivering a school curriculum to a cohort of primary students for two or more consecutive academic years.

Parent. The term *parent* is defined in various ways in different contexts. In the present study a parent is an adult primary caretaker or guardian of a student and may include a mother, father, aunt, uncle, grandmother, grandfather, or other adult individual who provides the primary care for the child.

Parent involvement. While there are many definitions of parent involvement in the literature, for the purposes of the present study, *parent involvement* refers to the physical and non-physical activities that a parent can or does engage in at home, school, or community that support the student's learning and development.

Relationship year. The term *relationship year* refers to the amount of time (in years) that a parent has known their child's multi-year teacher and are grouped accordingly (e.g., Year One Parents, Year Two Parents, or Year Three Parents).

Summary and Dissertation Organization

In Chapter One the topic is introduced, the rationale for the study is provided along with the key terms used in the study. A literature review to orient the reader to multi-year classrooms and parent involvement research is provided in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, background to the Grounded Theory methodology and the ontological and epistemological perspective that guided this study, as well as the study site and participants, the data collection procedures, and selected mode of analysis is provided. A thick description that details the characteristics, demographics, and social conditions of the community and school site where this study took place, followed by a series of parent profiles that adds depth to the participants' experiences while enriching the findings in the proceeding chapter is shared in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, the Grounded Theory and results of the study are presented, followed by an in-depth discussion of findings from each group of parents by the year of their parent-teacher relationship (Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3), along with supplementary student and parent data interwoven throughout the chapter. In Chapter Six, the findings from this study are juxtaposed with extant parent involvement and multi-year classroom literature, detailing the implications, limitations, and strengths of this study, and concluding with a series of future research recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

This chapter begins by briefly detailing the history of multi-year classrooms, followed by a review of literature on multi-year classrooms as it relates to parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships. A review of literature regarding the importance of parent involvement, what traditionally constitutes parent involvement, which parent engagement activities that are often overlooked, and barriers that can limit a parent's ability to support their child's educational development is provided. This chapter concludes by positioning the Grounded Theory that was developed from this study as one that fills a gap in the parent involvement and multi-year literature.

Multi-Year and Mono-Grade Schooling

A brief history. Between the 17th and early 19th century, the prevailing structure serving at least half the school-aged population in the United States was the multi-year school system, designed out of necessity to meet an increasing immigrant population (Aina, 2001; Gulliford, 1984; Hitz, Somers, & Jenlink, 2007). Multi-year education has been the dominant form throughout the history of formal education. During the industrial revolution in North America, mono-grade classrooms emerged to become the standard educational structure as a means to manage urbanization (Veenman, 1995). To keep pace with rapid industrialisation and a growing population, schools began running schedules on ringing bells, segregating students into grade levels and the school curriculum into specialized subjects and separate faculties (Little, 2001). The now dominant education system incorporates schooling and personnel into larger bureaucratic institutions and effectively demotes the teaching profession from knowledge-holders and experts to simply low-level functionaries who are responsible for implementing

explicitly standardized forms of instruction – an instrument of public policy and preparation tool for specific forms of economic activity (LeVine & White, 1986).

Despite the omnipresence of mono-graded classrooms worldwide, nearly a quarter billion students receive their education in multi-year classrooms in over 60 countries, including a quarter of all primary education classes in England, a third of public schools in France, 42% of all Ireland's primary schools, 35% of all primary schools in Norway, and nearly eight in ten public primary schools in developing countries like Peru (Little, 2001; Sliwka, 2008; UNESCO, 2003). More multi-year classrooms are present in developing countries and rural areas of developed countries out of necessity due to limited infrastructure, resources, and teachers (Little, 2001).

Multi-year classroom structures. Multi-year classrooms, also called looping, family grouping, multi-grade, multi-age, or multi-year placement, are those classrooms in which a core group of students and a single teacher remain together for two or more years (Hitz et al., 2007; Nichols & Nichols, 1999, 2002; Rasmussen, 1998). The variety of multi-year structures is a result of either pedagogical reasons or infrastructure-related issues. For example, multi-age classrooms are often established due to the philosophical reason that student exposure to more knowledgeable peers can pull development along; while multi-grade classrooms are usually formed as a result of school infrastructure issues (e.g., limited classroom space, school over population, limited number of teachers).

Multi-year classroom benefits and challenges. Multi-year classrooms are characterized by the stability it provides for students, parents, and teachers (Hitz et al., 2007; Rasmussen, 1998). This is especially true among students who transition to middle school. As the sense of school community and support tends to dwindle among many students in middle school, students

who make similar transitions to new places but with familiar peer and teacher faces are able to maintain emotional bonds and academic gains made as a result of multi-year classrooms (Checkley, 1995; Espinosa, 2005; Liu, 1997). Compared to students in mono-grade classrooms, students in multi-year classrooms are often quicker to adjust to new settings and because multi-year classrooms are rooted in community connectedness and belonging, students are able to take risks and involve themselves more in day-to-day lessons (Jacoby, 1994; Marzano, 1992). Ovalle's (2004) study also suggests that students can become too comfortable with a particular teacher that the transition to a new classroom can be difficult for some students.

Although multi-year classrooms have many benefits, this classroom structure does not always lead to positive academic outcomes and social-emotional well-being (Johnston, 2000; Mason & Doepner, 1998; Mason & Burns, 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Mason & Doepner, 1998). A study conducted by Johnston (2000) revealed that the social and emotional of implementing multi-year teaching for primary students did not necessarily translate for intermediate students.

Additionally, multi-year classrooms that are created out of necessity can have negative impacts on the perceptions of teachers, especially when the educational structure is forced upon teachers who may feel unprepared (Ames-Ramello, 2004). Still, offering multi-year classrooms as a pedagogical choice can have positive benefits including academic stability and persistence (Espinosa, 2005; Rasmussen, 1998), which can generate more of a positive student outlook on learning compared to students in traditional mono-grade settings (Little & Dacus, 1999). Added to this, once teachers are able to manage grade-specific standards, the benefits of multi-year teaching become more pronounced (Elliott & Capp, 2003).

Perspectives of multi-year classrooms

Parent perspective. Nichols and Nichols (2002) examined perceptions of 455 parents of students enrolled in multi-year and mono-grade classrooms from a large urban school in the midwestern region of the United States. When compared, multi-year parent responses were significantly more likely to hold positive views about: (a) the teacher; (b) the school; (c) the student's behaviour at school; (d) the student's attitude of school; (e) the student's academic motivation; and (f) the overall school environment. Earlier findings from Little and Dacus (1999) found parents of students enrolled in a multi-year classroom being more likely to be on a first name basis with the teacher and that parents believed they had built more of trust in the teacher that was unseen in their child's previous mono-grade classroom settings.

Herr (2002) explored the effects of multi-year programs in three mid-western elementary schools in the United States by interviewing and observing teachers, administrators, and parents and students in their second year of the program (Grade 2, Grade 4, and Grade 6). All participant groups believed family-school relationships were made stronger as a result of parents understanding teacher expectations and that positive parental support in the classroom led to better student learning. Parents especially felt that an additional year provided them with more comfort with the teacher.

Survey research carried out by Lawton (1996) with 70 schools in 20 states in the United States measured the perceptions of teachers, parents, and students regarding their multi-year experience. Findings from surveys found that multi-year classrooms were a positive educational structure with benefits for parents in particular. However, favourable views of multi-year classrooms are not always held (Ames-Ramello, 2004; Byrnes et al., 1994; Rodriguez, 2006). Parents often worry of a mismatch and that there can be difficulty in covering multiple grade

level curricula (Elliott & Capp, 2003; Mason & Doepner, 1998) and that students may not be exposed to more variety of instructional styles and learning tools (Cistone & Shneyderman, 2004; Kerr, 2002).

Student perspective. To gauge student' attitudes of their multi-year classroom experience, Rodriguez (2006) sampled students from an elementary school in the western United States and measured differences in perceptions on classroom transitions, peer relationships, and student-teacher relationships. The majority of students (76%) indicated that their transition at the beginning of the year had been easy for them because the teacher remained the same. However, 26% reported that their transition had been "okay" or neither easy nor difficult while no student indicated that they had a negative experience transitioning. The majority of students (91%) indicated that the transition was positive having the same teacher the following year. The majority of students indicated positive attitudes towards having the same classmates again and 88% of the students in class believed that their classmates' behaviours had either stayed the same or had improved from the year before. When asked to list advantages to having a teacher for two consecutive years, the majority of students indicated that they liked the teacher, were happy and that the teacher supported them. When asked to list disadvantages associated with having a teacher for two consecutive years, all but one student provided no response or wrote that they could not think of anything.

Although the general attitudes of students revealed by Rodriguez (2006) favoured multi-year classrooms, not all students have the same experiences and it is important to understand that multi-year classrooms do not provide positive results in all instances. Byrnes, Shuster, and Jones (1994) found that older students in a multi-age cohort of six, seven- and eight-year old students and their parents were more likely to express negative opinions regarding academic progress.

Johnston (2000) revealed that primary students in multi-year classrooms were more likely to hold positive attitudes of their classroom, but older intermediate grade students did not have similar positive attitudes.

Teacher perspective. Multi-year teachers appear to be positioned to construct environments that promote caring and supportive parent-teacher relationships (Cistone & Shneyderman, 2004; Sherman, 2004). More than just the life-altering influence teachers can have on the short- and long-term academic goals of students, teachers who also engage and connect emotionally are viewed as more supportive and caring (Jacoby, 1994; Suldo et al., 2009). When relationships are extended beyond single semesters to several years, teachers are in better position to develop and differentiate relationships with students and their families (Noddings, 1988). Teachers feel parent involvement increases when provided additional time to interact and there is a greater family-like feeling for families and schools (Cistone & Shneyderman, 2004; Jacoby, 1994; Kuball, 1999). To determine levels of parent involvement in multi-year and mono-grade classrooms, Johnston (2000) interviewed teachers about the benefits and drawbacks of multi-year classrooms. Results indicated that teachers believed that multi-year classrooms positively impacted the relationships and academic growth of their students. Parents of primary students in multi-year classrooms were found to be more involved with their child's education than parents of students enrolled in mono-grade classrooms.

Sustained school relationships through multi-year classrooms can be supportive and provide a protective buffer that minimizes distress, anxiety, uncertainty, and other daily life stressors among young people (Espinosa, 2005 Malecki & Demaray, 2006). For example, through a Grounded Theory approach, Barnes (2009) explored the benefits of multi-year classrooms by comparing the success of students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing students in

multi-year classrooms to the success of students with similar hearing impairments who received their instruction in mono-grade classrooms. Approximately 26 multi-year teachers were recruited and interviewed over a six-month period. Analysis of interview, survey, and observation data resulted in several primary themes to emerge, including the themes of continuity, academic improvement, relationships with parents, relationships with students, and students' self-esteem and confidence. The study also revealed that teachers find multi-year classrooms offer opportunities for parents and teachers to develop long-term relationships and to collaborate for student success.

As part of a study investigating the perceptions of multi-year classroom effects, Sherman (2004) surveyed 33 elementary multi-year teachers to understand their perceptions of administrative support, expectations of student achievement, classroom climate, student-peer relationships with their peers, and parental involvement. Findings revealed that multi-year teachers perceived their educational environment to have positive effects on the social well-being and academic achievement of students. Teachers also agreed that the multi-year classroom contributed to their effectiveness in the classroom and that teachers grew professionally. In terms of parental involvement, the majority of the teachers surveyed agreed that there were positive effects of multi-year classrooms on parental involvement, including parents volunteering for special outings and class trips, as well as parent/teacher conference attendance.

Moreover, Jordan's (2001) study of the perceptions of 47 multi-year teachers revealed that 81% of the teachers believed they had improved their relationships with parents compared to 19% who didn't find their relationship improved or were undecided. For their students of ethnic minority background, all of the teachers indicated that multi-year classrooms added a sense of security for these students and made it possible for the teacher to get to know the students better.

Importance of Parent Involvement

The effects of parental involvement on student academic achievement is robust. Parent involvement significantly contributes to the academic outcomes and social well-being of students and the performance of children during early childhood and primary school in particular (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Epstein, 1987, 2010, 2018; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Robinson & Harris, 2014; Swick, 2003). Having parents who are active and engaged in their children's education is linked to better grades, test scores, homework completion, as well as improved behaviours, school attendance, and graduation rates (Barnard, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Van Voorhis, 2009, 2011). The benefits of parent involvement in a student's education is so widely-recognized that school policies are shaped to incorporate parents (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Van Voorhis, 2009) and calls for programs encouraging parent involvement are made at the highest levels of government and international institutions (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011; U.S. Department of Education).

Fan and Chen (2001) synthesized quantitative literature that investigated the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement as part of a meta-analysis. The authors compiled a list of parent involvement activities that spanned the meta-analyses (see Table 2.1) and they include: (a) parent-child communication; (b) parent-school communication; (c) home supervision and support; and (d) engaging in learning activities at home. Results indicated that definitions of parent involvement vary widely across the literature. Still, parental aspiration and expectation for the student's education achievement had the strongest relationship compared to parental home supervision (e.g., assistance with homework), which had the weakest relationship with student's academic achievement.

Table 2.1

General Parent Involvement Categories and Description of Involvement Activities

Category	Description
Parent-Child Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discussing school activities ➤ Expressing expectations to the child for academic achievement and success
Parent-School Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communicating with the teacher ➤ Participating in school activities ➤ Attending school functions
Home Supervision & Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Structuring out-of-school time ➤ Enforcing household rules (e.g., completing homework and chores) ➤ Checking on homework ➤ Being supportive and helpful (e.g., providing advice) ➤ Tutoring and aiding the student with homework
Engaging in Learning Activities & Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reading regularly together or listening to the child read ➤ Completing literacy exercises with the child ➤ Receiving training in homework support ➤ Participating in parent-teacher partnership programs

Supporting these findings is Hill and Tyson (2009)'s meta-analysis of parent involvement effects on middle-school-student academic achievement, which revealed a moderate but positive relationship between school-based parent involvement (e.g., volunteering and attending school events) and academic achievement. A weaker relationship was found between some home-based involvement and academic achievement including homework assistance and homework supervision. Parents structuring the student's out-of-school time had a greater impact on academic achievement. As middle school students take on greater independence in completing their work, parent involvement transitions from direct support with school work and towards the

provision of space and time necessary for students to complete their work while being present to support the student when asked.

To study the effects of parental involvement with homework, Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of studies between 1987 and 2004 that examined the link between parent training for homework involvement and student academic achievement. The study revealed that training parents to support homework activities in a more strategic way resulted in greater homework completion rates, fewer homework difficulties, and improved academic performance among elementary school children.

Across all three meta-analyses, parents who were involved indirectly with the completion of their child's homework, including setting expectations for the student, supporting studying and homework habits, and providing the space and time for the student to engage in homework activities were most effective whereas monitoring and providing direct support were less effective (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Patall et al., 2008).

Developmental process of parent involvement. Parental involvement has been argued as a developmental process as students progress through the school system (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Simon, 2004; Spera, 2005). Parent support during the primary school years is characterized by greater direct support in the student's education including assistance with homework and volunteering in classrooms and with school functions (Hill & Tyson, 2009). During the primary years, many parents believe they are able to assist their child with school-related work.

As students graduate towards middle and high school, parent's self-efficacy to support homework tasks decrease and communication between families and teachers decline (Lee, 1994). Similarly, parents are less likely to hold discussions with their child about school and homework

as adolescents gain more autonomy and express greater agency over their education as they progress through the education system. These parental involvement changes may also be attributed to schools being less welcoming to parents as students move up grade levels, which can lead to a degradation to family-school trust (Adams & Christensen, 2000; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hornby, 2011).

Epstein and Dauber (1991) examined the school-family connection by surveying 171 teachers in eight inner-city elementary and middle schools regarding the connections between school programs of parent involvement, teacher attitudes, and teacher practices for involving the parents of their students. Patterns were examined at two levels of schooling (elementary and middle), in different academic subjects, under various classroom organizations (self-contained, semi-departmentalized, departmentalized), and under different levels of shared support for parent involvement by the teachers and other groups. Each of these variables has important implications for the types and strengths of school programs and teachers' practices of parent involvement. The study revealed that programs of parental involvement were weaker and less comprehensive at the middle school level than at the elementary school level.

Parent self-efficacy can also cause parent involvement to evolve as the curriculum becomes more challenging when students progress through middle and secondary schools (Hornby, 2011; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Mentioned before, children are expected to and do become more autonomous, as they advance grade levels and they may be less open to having parents involved with their schools. The literature suggests that as children transition from elementary to secondary schools, parents may change their type of parental involvement to accommodate adolescent' expectations of autonomy. This may translate into parents providing less direct support and presence in the child's school and moving into a supportive role at home,

including helping their children with homework and advising on subject option choices (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Parent-teacher trust is an important relationship quality that can develop, build, and maintain the family-school relationship. Adams and Christenson (2000) studied the trust between 1,234 parents and 204 elementary, middle and high school teachers in the United States. The researchers found that trust was greater in elementary years and declined in middle and secondary school. The authors attributed the declining trust levels to structural differences across grade levels. In the elementary years, the ratio of teacher to parents tends to be equal, which allows parents to build a relationship and develop trust with the teacher.

Diverse Forms of Parental Involvement

Traditionally recognized involvement activities. Parental involvement is a concept that has no uniform definition and has shifted to capture greater parent actions outside of the classroom. When definitions are provided, they vary widely (see Table 2.2). Studies of parent involvement are often absent of an explicit definition, but implicitly set the contours of what constitutes parent involvement by reporting on specific parent involvement actions and activities under study. For example, Kim and Riley (2014, p. 69) claim that Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, and Skinner (2004) defined parent involvement as “parents volunteering in the classroom”. However, Castro and colleagues (2004) not only lacked an explicit definition of parent involvement, but several dimensions of parent involvement were investigated that went beyond volunteering. Parents engaged in activities with their children at home, attended parent-teacher conferences, and most prominently, supported the teacher by volunteering in the classroom.

Table 2.2

Definitions of Parent Involvement, 1994 – 2011

Source	Definition
Larocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011, p. 116)	“...parents’ or caregivers’ investment in the education of their children.”
El Nokali, Bachman, and Votruba-Drzal (2010, p. 989)	“...parents' behaviors in home and school settings meant to support their children's educational progress.”
Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007, p. 374 – 375)	“School-based involvement represents practices on the part of parents that require their making actual contact with school... Home-based involvement represents parents' practices related to school that take place outside of school, usually, though not always, in the home.”
Jeynes (2007, p. 83)	“...parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children.”
Hill and colleagues (2004, p. 1491)	“...parents' work with schools and with their children to benefit their children's educational outcomes and future success.”
No Child Left Behind Act (2002, §9101)	“the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities.”
Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994, p. 238)	“...the dedication of resources by the parent to the child within a given domain.”

A highly encouraged and recognized form of involvement includes parents maintaining communication with the school and their child’s teachers through email, phone, face-to-face discussions, and exchanging information to each other through notes and journals brought to and from school by the student. Monitoring student academic progress can include the parent being up-to-date with whether their child and school are meeting standards and benchmarks and what plan is in place to meet or maintain school standards. Parents also stay informed of their child’s

academic progress by asking how they can have a presence within the school, including supporting school fundraising efforts (Stitt & Brooks, 2014; U.S. Department of Education).

Forms of parent involvement that have been traditionally acknowledged include support of the in-school curriculum (e.g., assistance with academic tasks and projects) or school-based activities including volunteering in school activities and classrooms, or attending parent-teacher conferences, or organizations and open-house (Marzano, 2003). Teachers are likely to request parent support that adheres to the mission of the school (Lawson, 2003) by attending school events, supporting the teacher by being physically present in the classroom, and by being an assistant or a tutor to students. Other requests by teachers include parents consulting with the teacher and supplementing the teacher's curriculum at home, such as reading together or providing support with homework (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). Parents certainly can supplement the school curriculum with extra resources.

The types and effects of parent involvement on student achievement has expanded beyond school, and now includes parent involvement activities that support student' education in the home and community (Cooper, 2005; Elman, 1999; Epstein, 2018; Marzano, 2003). A meta-synthesis by Wilder (2014) compiled nine meta-analyses investigating the effects of parent involvement on student achievement and illuminated the wide array of parent involvement definitions being broad in scope to determine transferability of findings.

Generally, what held across all meta-analyses was that parent involvement was significantly influenced by student' need and requests for support and even highly involved parents backed away unless called upon by their child. Additionally, parent involvement had a great impact on student achievement across all grade levels, especially when parent involvement can shift with student independence.

Often overlooked forms of parent involvement. How parent involvement has been traditionally defined is through a western, middle-class female lens, whereby parents are involved in school activities at both school and in home that support the in-school curriculum. This includes assisting with the student's schoolwork, volunteering, engaging the teacher in formal and informal meetings, and attending events (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Schools often take an *if you are seen, you are involved* perspective, while those parents who are not observed participating in school-related functions are stereotypically portrayed as disinterested and not caring for their child's education (Kamoea, 2012; Robinson-Zanartu & Majel-Dixon, 1996). This can be challenging for single working parents who are less likely to be available during school hours compared to families with dual incomes, but are nonetheless engaged with their children away from school in ways that support learning and development (Stitt & Brooks, 2014).

Many parents of Asian heritage have been stereotyped as having a model minority identity (Lee, 1994). In an educational context, this identity is characterized by an Asian parent who values education, will ask questions, and monitor their child's academic progress, but has a personality that is reserved, passive, unwilling to challenge the teacher's decisions, and is supportive and respectful of the teacher and school agenda regardless of their personal pedagogical beliefs (Lim, 2012). Cultural differences impact the way parent's construct their educational roles and can widen inequalities in building healthy parent-teacher relationships. For example, the collectivist perceptions that are more prominent among Asian communities can lead to disadvantages when schools value traditional, individualistic views of parent involvement and idealize the forms of involvement among White, middle class families (Walsh, 2002).

Indirect forms of involvement often go unrecognized, such as parents structuring their children's out-of-school time, purchasing extra textbooks, supplementing homework with additional work, providing tutors, and enrolling in extra-curricular activities such as music and language proficiency courses (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Parents also support the development of their children's identities. In a review of Chinese Canadian youth literature conducted by Costigan, Su, and Hua (2009), they found that parents played a large role in the ethnic identity development of their children. Parents felt it was important to maintain Chinese customs and values, including fulfilling family obligations, respect for elders, and the expectation of taking care of parents during old age.

Indirect forms of involvement that Asian parents may be engaged in has not resulted in the same level of negative stereotypes as other communities of ethnic minority background. Indigenous, Hispanic, Latino, Black, immigrant, and single parents all are more likely to be perceived negatively by teachers and seen as unsupportive of their own child's welfare (Cooper, 2005, 2009; Kamoea, 2012; Madden, Higging, & Korteweg, 2013; Robinson-Zanartu & Majel-Dixon, 1996; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). For example, Black parents are often stereotyped as being absent from their child's school life relative to White-middle class parents (Cooper, 2009). These biases are deep despite a long history of parent involvement in communities of ethnic minority background, including parent participation in school activities, reading to their children, assisting with homework, and promoting school attendance (Lott, 2001; Thompson, 2003).

Parents of ethnic minority background provide educational support to their children in the form of anti-racist efforts and activism, desegregation movements and advocating for school choice, which have historically gone unrecognized (Cooper, 2005). Active participation in local

elections and protests among parents in the marginalized communities have been an integral part in school reform efforts to expand access and inclusion for equitable schooling experiences (Cooper, 2005, 2009). Parents of ethnic minority background provide educational motivation for their children who are likely to confront racism and discrimination, offering wisdom with how to achieve and be resilient in the face of systemic racism (Cooper, 2005; Thompson, 2003).

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Divergent beliefs about what constitutes parent involvement. Parents and teachers have different beliefs about what constitutes parental involvement and these beliefs may serve as a barrier for parents to be fully engaged in their child's education. As part of an ethnographic study, Lawson (2003) conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with parents and teachers to better understand the perceptions that teachers and parents held about the meaning and functions of parent involvement. The study revealed that teachers and parents do in fact hold different perceptions that were tied to their worldviews. Teachers perceived parent involvement to be important insofar that it met the needs of the classroom and broader school context. For parents, a teacher's objectives for students are important to the degree that the objectives meet the needs of their child and community in which they live. These differences in educational epistemologies can affect how parents can involve themselves in the school and in their child's education. Whatever differences there may be in worldviews around the meaning and functions of parental involvement, both teachers and parents were found to hold similar attitudes that a healthy parent-teacher partnership is critical to student learning and academic success.

Barriers of parent involvement among marginalized families. Families of ethnic minority background are less likely to be contacted by the school compared to White families (Robinson & Harris, 2014) and to feel less welcomed by the school (Pena, 2000). Barriers to

parent involvement, including different treatment, can be a function of a school's bias towards White, middle-class values that overlook, ignore, or reject the values and practices of parent involvement among families of ethnic and linguistic minority background (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011;). What can result from these attitudes and biases is a feeling that some parents with particular backgrounds are unwelcomed in their child's school (Madden, et al., 2013; Pena, 2000), negatively influencing the presence of parents in school and reaffirming beliefs by school professionals that some parents simply don't care to be involved (Lightfoot, 2004).

There is not only a need to recognize the level of involvement parents have in their children's education, but also the educational support provided by parents of ethnic minority background who have historically been met with avoidance, denigration (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; Cooper 2009), and treated on a superficial level (De Gaetano, 2007). On the surface, schools and teachers can promote and teach a multicultural curriculum, but this falls short of the relationship work that is needed to support the healing process and to revitalize cultural practices of Indigenous communities that were suppressed by centuries of White colonization (Lee, 2016). The repeated attempts to commit cultural genocide of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada by the Canadian government through residential schooling and other oppressive practices continues to have an impact on Indigenous families and their relationships with schools and full participation in the education system (Nelson, 2016; Truth and Reconciliation of Canada, 2015).

As part of an exploration of the experiences of parents of Indigenous students with special needs, Nelson (2016) identified additional stressors parents have when interacting with the school system that are distinct from other families. These stressors can include: (1) the cultural discontinuity that divides home and school environments; (2) guilt and intimidation

when communicating with teachers; (3) absence of special needs constructs or differences in how exceptionalities are perceived; (4) difficulty with navigating the system; and, (5) negative perceptions of the school system as a result of being a victim of residential schooling either directly or vicariously (e.g., transgenerational trauma).

In a synthesis review of literature, Kim (2009) compiled research findings on school barriers that prevent parents of ethnic minority background from fully participating in their children's school. The synthesis resulted in the identification of eight school barriers including: (a) teachers' perception about the efficacy of parents of ethnic minority background; (b) teachers' perception concerning the capacity of parents of ethnic minority background; (c) teachers' beliefs in the effectiveness of parental involvement and developmental philosophy; (d) teachers' self-efficacy in teaching effectiveness; (e) school friendliness and positive communication; (f) diversity of parental involvement programs; (g) school policies; and, (h) school leadership. The first two barriers to parent involvement speak to the tendency for teachers to view parents of ethnic and linguistic minority background through a deficit model lens, viewing these parents as problems, vulnerable, and having lower capabilities. These reasons are then used as justifications to keep parents out of the classroom and away from schools (Hornby, 2000; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lightfoot, 2004).

Theories and Models of Parent Involvement

Several models of parent involvement (Table 2.3) have been identified in the literature (Hornby, 2011; Swap, 1993) and they include: (a) Expert Model; (b) Protective Model; (c) Transmission Model; (d) Curriculum-Enrichment Model; (e) Consumer Model; and (f) Partnership Model.

Table 2.3

Overview of the Models of Parent Involvement

Model	Roles and Responsibilities
Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teachers are the expert on student education and development ➤ Parent' knowledge and opinions are not valued or sought out as parent involvement is viewed as unnecessary ➤ Parents are expected to not interfere with the education process at school and to be dependent on teacher information and instructions
Protective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parents ensure student attends school and materials are provided ➤ Conflict is avoided by having clear, non-overlapping roles and by having boundaries set between home and school ➤ Teachers have complete control of the curriculum
Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parents are expected to be dependent on teachers and follow teacher advice and expectations to promote student progress outside of school ➤ Parents are seen as a resource to advance the class and school agendas ➤ Teachers are the primary source of expertise and have complete control of curriculum and education decisions
Curriculum-Enrichment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parents are viewed as a resource with important expertise to contribute towards the school curriculum ➤ Two-way communication between parents and teachers regarding curriculum implementation supports the class and school agendas ➤ Parents and teachers learn from each other as part of a working relationship
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parents are experts of their child and teachers are experts on education ➤ Control and decisions are shared ➤ Trust and open dialogue between parents and teachers are emphasized
Consumer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parents serve as a consultant and are viewed as the expert ➤ Parents make the educational and intervention decisions ➤ Teachers are consultants who provide parents information and educational options to choose from

The Expert and Protective Models consider teachers as experts in all education-related topics. The Expert model, however, does not find parent' knowledge and experience as a resource (Hornby, 2011), while the Protective Model does, but maintains distinct and separate parent and teacher roles to avoid conflict and parent interference (Swap, 1993). The Transmission and Curriculum-Enrichment Models (Swap, 1993) view parents as resources who can support the class and school agendas, but for the Transmission Model, teachers are still considered the experts who make the final decisions for the student (Swap, 1993). The Curriculum-Enrichment Model views parents as contributors who have expertise and knowledge that can be integrated into the curriculum. The Partnership and Consumer Models (Hornby, 2011) place greater emphasis on parents in the decision-making process. In the Partnership Model, parents and teachers bring their expertise to the relationship where there is equal control in the educational planning and decision-making process. The Consumer Model (Hornby, 2011) goes a step further by viewing the parents as experts and decision-makers, relegating teachers to the role of consultants who supply parents needed information and options.

A review conducted by Yamauchi and colleagues (2017) on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in parent involvement and family-school partnership research revealed that nearly half of all empirical studies are absent of any family-school partnership theories, frameworks, or models. Among the other half of studies, the most prevalent theories, frameworks, and models that were employed to frame the study and/or its findings included Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) model of the parent involvement process, and Joyce Epstein's (1992, 2010) overlapping spheres of influence and framework of six types of family involvement.

Bioecological systems as a parent involvement framework. The bioecological theory of human development is a comprehensive theoretical and methodological model developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 2001; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Despite Bronfenbrenner never having illustrated his theory, users of his model have attempted to diagram the model as a set of systems and interrelations (see Figure 2.1).

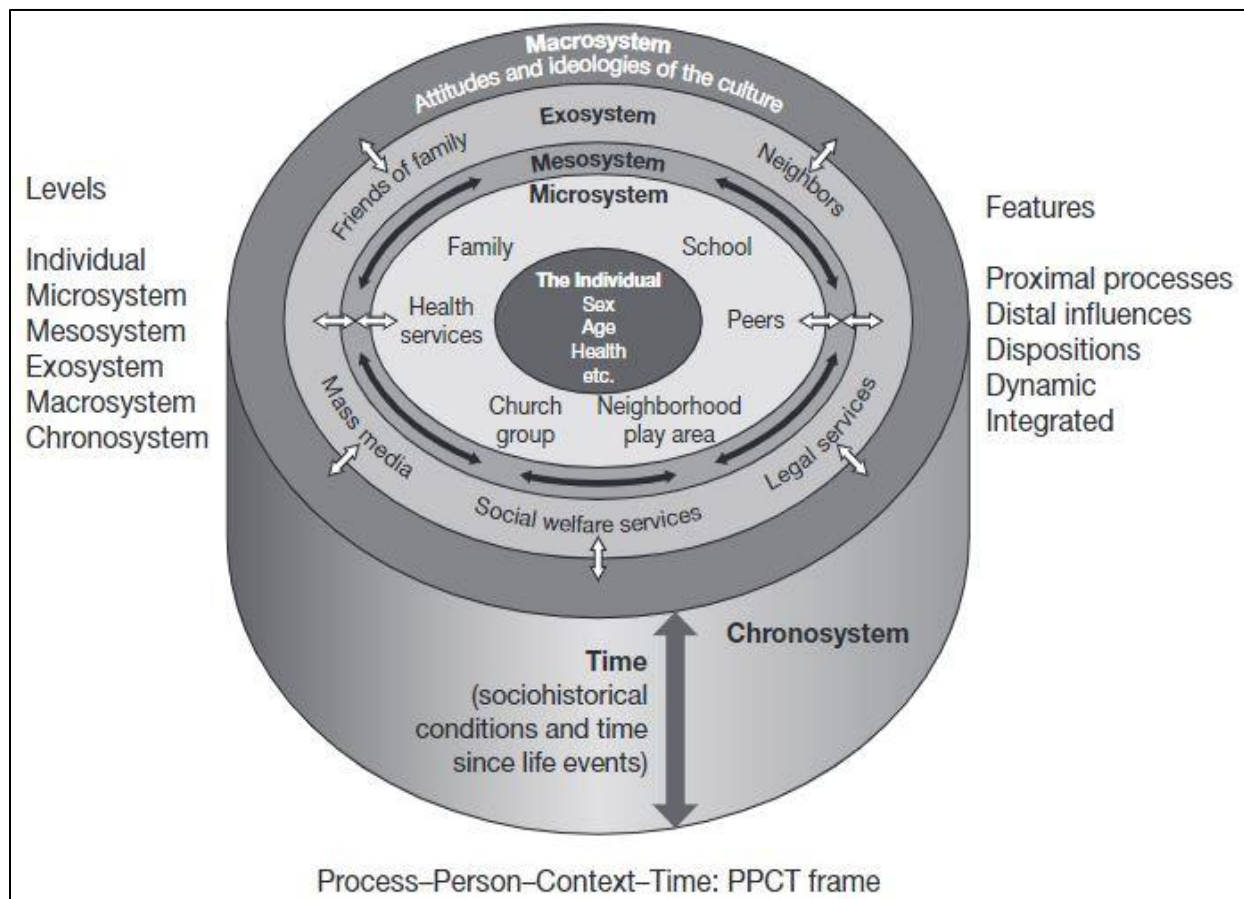


Figure 2.1

Bioecological Model of Development¹

¹ Source: The Bioecological Model of Development is from *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education* (p. 14), by N. Hayes, L. O'Toole, and A. M. Halpenny, 2017, New York, NY: Routledge. Reprinted with permission.

Fundamental concepts to his theory follow a set of systems, or nested structures, that have varying degrees of influence on a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The first and inner-most level is the *microsystem*, the setting which contains the developing child. The setting can include the child's home, classroom, or other places the child frequents. It is within this system that interpersonal relations, or proximal processes, drive human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The interrelations among at least two major settings wherein the child is an active participant forms the *mesosystem* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Those environments the child does not actively participate in yet would be affected by actions taking place in those distal environments are part of the *exosystem*. These environments may include PAC meetings or places of employment that parents attend. The *macrosystem* is the fourth level, encompassing the cultural, political, religious and other macro-institutions that affect the child's development within all other system levels over time (*chronosystem*).

Bronfenbrenner envisioned that his bioecological theory would be relevant for research and policy development affecting families and schools by studying human development in realistic contexts. This vision was reflected in two axioms Bronfenbrenner commonly quoted: "There is nothing as practical as a good theory" – an expression which Bronfenbrenner credits to his mentor Kurt Lewin – and "There is nothing like the practical to build a good theory" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 48). Ironically, Bronfenbrenner's theoretical model has been riddled with practicality issues, ranging from misapplications of bioecological model concepts (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009; Tudge, et al., 2016) to the problematic operationalization of his theory (Ungar, 2002). The difficulties in applying Bronfenbrenner's theory can first be attributed to the misunderstanding that the theory serves to only describe the system-level influences on human development.

The attention researchers gave to the original formulation of the ecological systems theory in the 70's and 80's led to Bronfenbrenner reformulating his theory in the 90's and 2000's to clear up misconceptions and misapplications (Bronfenbrenner, 2001; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Jaeger, 2016; Tudge et al., 2009, 2016). Bronfenbrenner intended for his theory to be operationalized and to this end, he emphasized proximal processes as the driving force of human development, which entail bi-directional and progressively complex interactions between evolving biopsychosocial humans and those people, objects, and symbols they interact with (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner also theorized that proximal processes are best measured when they take place on a regular basis. As a result, the Process-People-Context-Time model was introduced, but researchers still too often rely on the earlier ecological systems model to contextualize their research of family-school relationships and parent involvement. As a result, the use of Bronfenbrenner's theory has been used to frame research and often applied in an ad-hoc fashion (Tudge et al., 2009, 2016).

Some parent involvement research will focus on particular systems and neglect or reduce the importance of other systems, leaving an incomplete picture of the effects of parent involvement on student development (Adamsons, O'Brien, & Pasley, 2007; Tudge et al., 2016). For example, Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, and Keating (2009) sampled students, parents, and teachers from a rural Canadian elementary school to investigate the association between student perceptions of parent involvement, student characteristics, and academic achievement. The authors framed their study within an ecological framework, focusing on the level of the microsystem (child perceptions) and mesosystem interactions (parent pressure and encouragement) in predicting academic achievement. However, exo, macro, and chronosystem

variables were largely absent, which limits the researchers' ability to adequately measure changes in student perceptions and parent involvement practices and the impacts on academic development over time. The ecological model appeared to be merely an organizational tool, or as Rogers and colleagues (2009) characterized it, as a “backdrop” for their research.

Joyce Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence. Inspired by the work of Bronfenbrenner, Joyce Epstein's (1992, 2010; Epstein & Sanders, 2000) overlapping spheres of influence represents the importance and interrelations between community, school, and families on child development (see Figure 2.2).

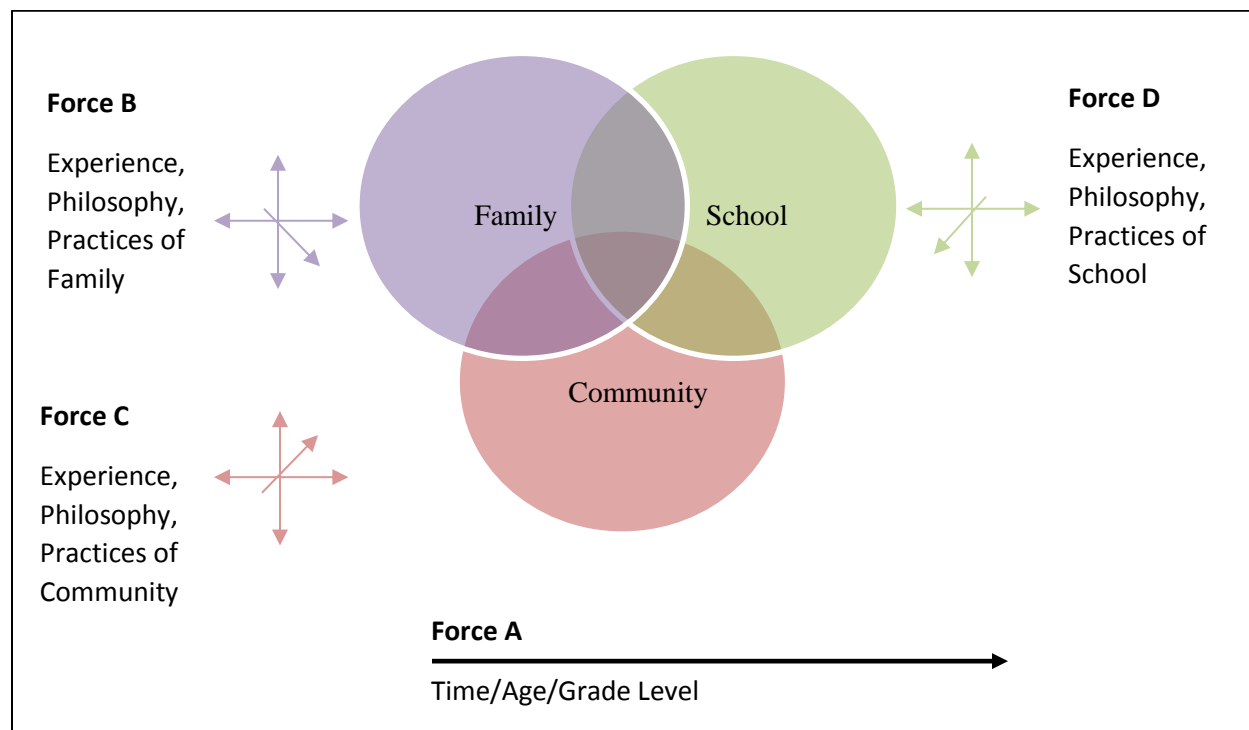


Figure 2.2

Overlapping Spheres of Influence on Children's Learning²

² Source: The Overlapping Spheres of Influence on Children's Learning is from *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing educators and Improving Schools* (p. 32), by J. L. Epstein, 2018, Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Reprinted with permission.

The degree to which these spheres overlap, Epstein (2018) conceptualizes, is based on four controlling *forces*, which include time, and the characteristics, philosophies and practices of the family, school, and community. The force of time refers to the historical period and social conditions in which the child lives and develops. The forces from each sphere reflect the experiences and pressures placed on families and schools that must be incorporated into any study in order to fully understand and change family-school relations (Epstein, 2018).

The overlapping spheres of influence was conceptualized on the premise that families and schools share mutual interests that are promoted through school policies and programs and reinforced by the attitudes and actions of all involved within the two spheres (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 2018). Yet, many families and schools come to the relationship with different interests and goals (Lawson, 2003). Even more, parents and teachers often bring to their partnerships a set of unique experiences and cultural values that affect their perspectives about how best to educate the student (Lines, Miller, & Arthur-Stanley, 2011).

Epstein (2018) contends that *maximum overlap* occurs when schools and families operate as true “partners”, which would include frequent interactions, ample opportunities to collaborate, clear communication, and comprehensive strategies and programs that promote and support an array of parent involvement activities. However, community forces are absent from the maximum overlap that Epstein (2018) advocates for and does not account for differences in cultural practices as it relates to parent involvement. For some ethnic groups, clear divisions of family and school responsibilities are made, resulting in less overlap, while the community has a significant role in the growth and development of children (Valdez, Dowrick, & Maynard, 2007).

The term *school-family-community partnership* was a preferable term for Epstein (2018) as parent involvement, parent engagement, and parent participation recognizes only the efforts

and actions of parents while omitting the role communities and schools have in the partnership. Even further, the partnership “is necessary to increase equity of involvement [which] aims for equal opportunities for parents to become involved in their children’s education, equal feelings of welcome at a school, equal evidence of respect” (Epstein, 2018, p. 82). However, the partnerships that Epstein (2018) describes have been criticized as favouring the school and teacher perspective, while privileging a school agenda that parents support (Auerbach, 2011).

Moreover, the parent-school-community partnership (2011, p. 88) is supposed to recognize students as the “main actors in their education”, but students themselves are largely absent from Epstein’s theoretical framework and are conceptualized as passive recipients of the benefits of parent-teacher interactions, rather than as a critical voice who can exercise autonomy and agency (Edwards & Alldred, 2000).

Joyce Epstein’s framework of six types of parent involvement. Epstein (2018) has resisted providing an explicit definition of parent involvement, believing that the emphasis should be on the important work of implementing comprehensive programs that form stronger family-school-community partnerships. Instead, she developed a framework of six types of parent involvement (see Table 2.4), which has been a resource for many schools in their efforts for planning, supporting, and strengthening school-family-community partnerships (Epstein, 2018; Epstein & Sanders, 2000). The types of involvement include: (a) basic obligations of families; (b) basic obligations of schools; (c) involvement at school; (d) involvement in learning activities at home; (e) involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy; and (f) collaborating with the community.

Table 2.4

Joyce Epstein's Parent Involvement Typologies

Involvement Type	Parent Role	Teacher or School Role
Basic Obligations of Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensuring good health and safety ➤ Developing parenting skills ➤ Supporting school readiness ➤ Promoting positive home conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assisting families and providing opportunities (workshops, advice, videos of lessons) in gaining knowledge and skills to understand and recognize student development and competencies at each grade level
Basic Obligations of Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communicating with the school about the student's progress and school programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communicating with families about the student's progress and school programs
Involvement at School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assisting teachers, school principals, or other school staff, and students ➤ Attending school events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engaging in recruitment efforts, and improving and varying schedules for greater volunteering participation ➤ Providing training for volunteers
Involvement in Learning Activities at Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Following teacher guidance in supporting home learning activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Requesting and guiding parents to assist the student with home learning activities ➤ Informing parents about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade-level skills needed for their student to pass; • How to monitor, discuss, and help with home learning activities; and, • When and how to make decisions about school activities and programs to improve the student's success
Involvement in Decision Making, Governance, & Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participating in school and community organizations and committees, and other independent advocacy groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training parent leaders and representatives in decision-making skills ➤ Providing information for community groups regarding school improvement activities
Collaboration & Exchanges with Community Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Accessing community resources to support the student's education (e.g., library, language programs, museums) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Seek out community resources to embed in classroom curriculum ➤ Connect parents with community programs to support the needs of families and students

Though Epstein (2018) avoids providing an explicit definition of parent involvement, what is implicit in the framework of the six types of parent involvement is the value placed on specific parent involvement activities. The framework reifies a White, middle-class view of what parent involvement should look like and overlooks how families of ethnic and linguistic minority background are involved or how these families want to be involved (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

The way Epstein (2018) articulates the basic obligations of schools suggests the parent is a passive receiver of information from the school, which neglects the role that parents have in sharing their vision and goals of their child's education while favouring the school's agenda. The sixth parent involvement type, *collaboration and exchanges with community organizations* (Epstein, 2018) highlights the role of agencies, businesses, and other community groups that share responsibility for the education and success of children in their community. The role of the school includes sharing and drawing upon these community resources to support curriculum development and improve student experiences. However, the role of families in collaborating with the community is described superficially and lacks a thorough review of the many ways the community has a significant presence in the lives of children and families.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's parent involvement process. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) model of parent involvement (Figure 2.3) considers the parent involvement process from the perspective of parents and benefits for the child. The model incorporates five levels including: (a) Level 1 – the beliefs systems and motivations that contribute to the parents' decisions to get involved in their child's education; (b) Level 2 – the forms of involvement; (c) Level 3 – the mechanisms through which parent involvement influences children's outcomes include modelling and reinforcement of behaviours and attitudes, as well as instruction; (d) Level 4 – mediated by the parent's use of developmentally-appropriate

involvement strategies and fit between the parent's involvement actions and school expectations; and, (e) Level 5 – student outcomes, which include students’ knowledge, skills, and sense of self-efficacy regarding school success.

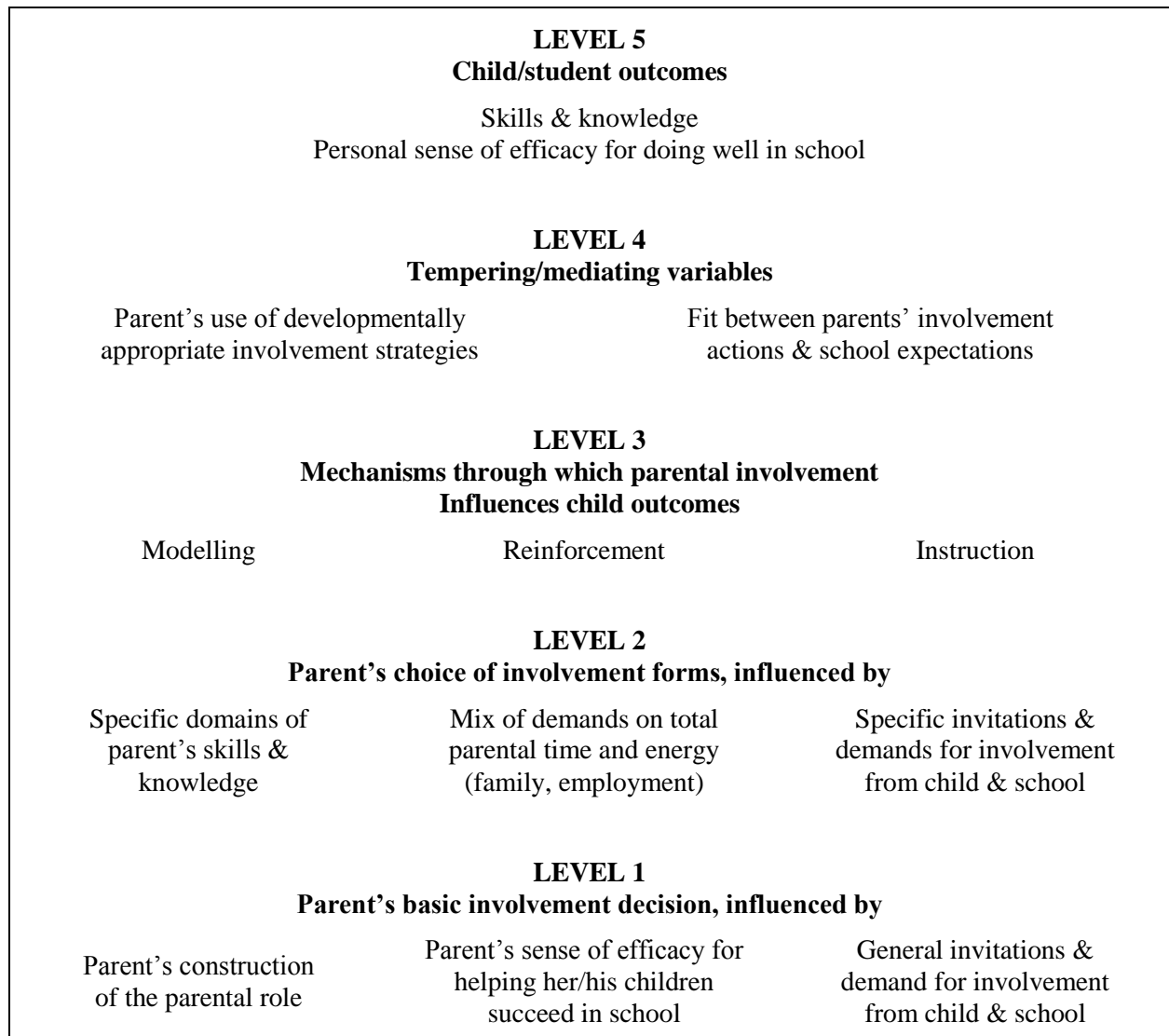


Figure 2.3

*Model of the Parental Involvement Process*³

³ Source: The Model of the Parental Involvement Process is from “Why do parents become involved in their children’s education?”, by K. V. Hoover-Dempsey and H. M. Sandler, 1997, *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), p. 4. Reprinted with permission.

Limitations to the model are similar to Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory, in that the level of complexity of fully testing its efficacy results in researchers testing only parts, which are often only the first couple of levels (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2015; Yamauchi et al., 2017).

Models of barriers to parent involvement. Barriers to parent involvement are complex and multi-layered. As part of their synthesis of models of parent involvement barrier, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) developed a model (Figure 2.4) adapted from Epstein’s (1992, 2010) overlapping spheres of influence (family, school, and community). The authors conceptualized barriers to parent involvement within four broad categories: (a) individual parent and family factors; (b) child factors; (c) parent-teacher factors; and, (d) societal factors.

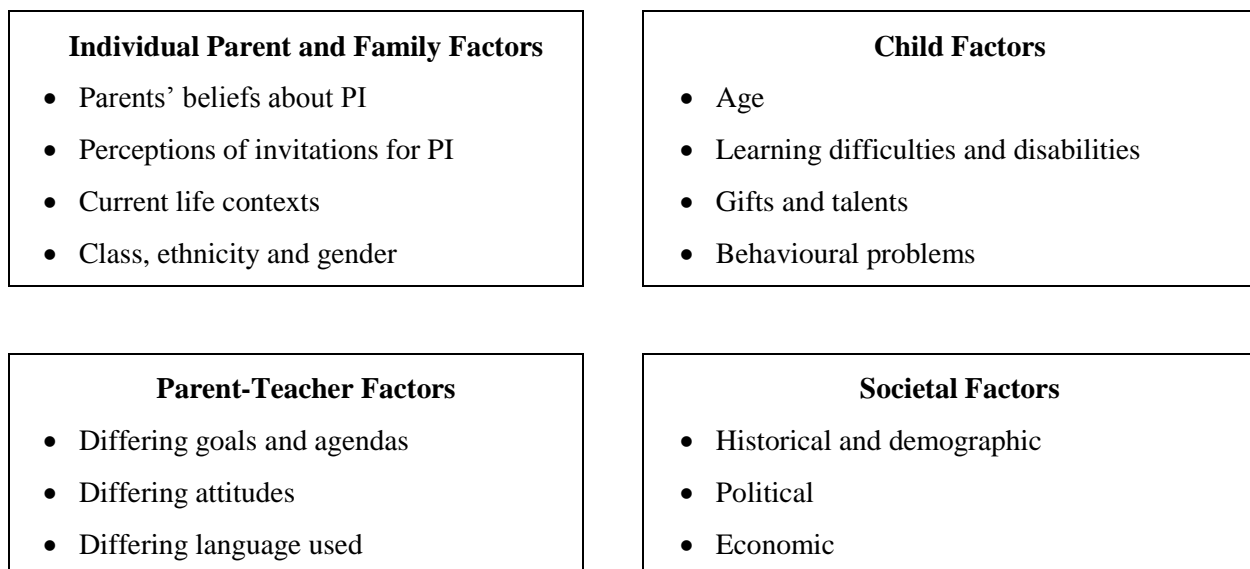


Figure 2.4

Model of Factors Acting as Barriers to Parental Involvement⁴

⁴ Source: The Model of Factors Acting as Barriers to PI is from “Barriers to parental involvement in education: An explanatory model”, by G. Hornby and R. Lafaele, 2011, *Educational Review*, 63(1), p. 39. Reprinted with permission.

Individual parent and family factors contributing to parent involvement barriers include family composition and income levels (e.g., low-income households, single-parent households, and less reliable social support). Parent perceptions of the level of explicit and implicit school and teacher invitations for involvement are also individual parent and family factors, although Hornby and Lafaele (2011) do not provide a category and discussion regarding school and teacher factors in causing barriers to parent involvement (e.g., opportunities for involvement, teacher biases). The authors do cite a bias for White-middle class as a parent involvement barrier but without a school- and teacher-specific category that speaks to exclusionary practices and values, the model ultimately comes across as if parent involvement barriers are derived mostly within parents, families, and children themselves.

Additionally, the treatment of ethnicity and social class as individual parent and family factors is surprising as the authors could have more appropriately listed these as parent-teacher factors. For instance, if the authors correctly identify language differences as parent-teacher factors, why would differences in parent and teacher ethnicity be only a parent and family factor that causes barriers to parent involvement?

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) state that literature on parent involvement “include suggestions of how to overcome the typical disadvantages of social class and ethnicity”. This is a deeply problematic articulation of ethnicity as being in and of itself a barrier to overcome. This not only perpetuates a deficit-based perspective of parents of ethnic minority background, but the very treatment of the concept of ethnicity is associated only with parents of colour, leaving White families as culture-less.

Child factors that the authors identify as potential barriers include the natural progression and growth towards independence that occurs as the student gets older, leading to less parent

presence and direct education support. While student independence often reduces certain types of parent involvement (e.g., direct, instrumental support with homework), Schnee and Bose (2010) find that *null actions* are specific types of parent involvement and consist of actions that parents intentionally do *not* take. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) may be inclined to see a child's age as a barrier to parent involvement, it may be more appropriate to view parent involvement as one that shifts, whereby energy and time engaged in one parent involvement type is re-allocated to other involvement areas.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) include the student's behaviours as a factor for reducing parent involvement, suggesting that if schools and teachers have a pattern of contacting parents only to report negative behaviours of the student, parents may feel reluctant in initiating contact with the teacher out of fear or anxiety that the conversation will inevitably be negative in nature.

Supporting this is McNeal (2012) who found a lack of evidence of the Parent Involvement Reactive Hypothesis, a phenomenon that leads parents to increase their involvement when their child has reduced achievement and higher levels of truancy. However, a child's behaviour alone would not be a factor serving as a barrier to parent involvement, as parent' and teacher responses would be affected by the intensity, duration, and other contextual factors surrounding the nature of the student's behaviours. Disruptive school behaviours may lead to an increase in involvement if parents, teachers, and students collaborate to develop attainable behavioural goals, behaviour plans, and parents check in with the teacher for updates. In other words, the school's response to student behaviours, including school and classroom policies and procedures for addressing problem behaviours, would serve as opportunities or barriers to parent involvement.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) identify gifts, talents, disabilities, and learning difficulties as child factors that could act as barriers for parent involvement. The authors argue that when parents and schools work together and agree about the level of student's abilities (e.g., giftedness, learning difficulties, etc.), greater parent involvement will result. Alternatively, when there is disagreement, trust can be lost, and parents are more inclined to back away. However, the authors do not account for a student's scholastic success and difficulties prompting parents to become more involved and resolve issues, or the quality of the parent-teacher relationship to overcome disagreements, as well as attitudes, perceptions, and other school, teacher, and parent factors that could have a greater influence as to whether access or barriers to parent involvement are created.

Fan, Li, and Sandoval (2018) recognized that the model of parent involvement barriers as described by Hornby and Lafaele (2011) did not acknowledge the interrelations and influences between categories. Fan and colleagues (2018) set out to develop a reformulated model (see Figure. 2.5) to account for the historical, demographic, and other societal-level factors that influence the interrelations between individual parent and family factors, child factors, and parent-teacher factors on parent involvement and barriers. The model, like its predecessor, retain the same problems, including the treatment of ethnicity as parent and family factors that cause barriers to parent involvement.

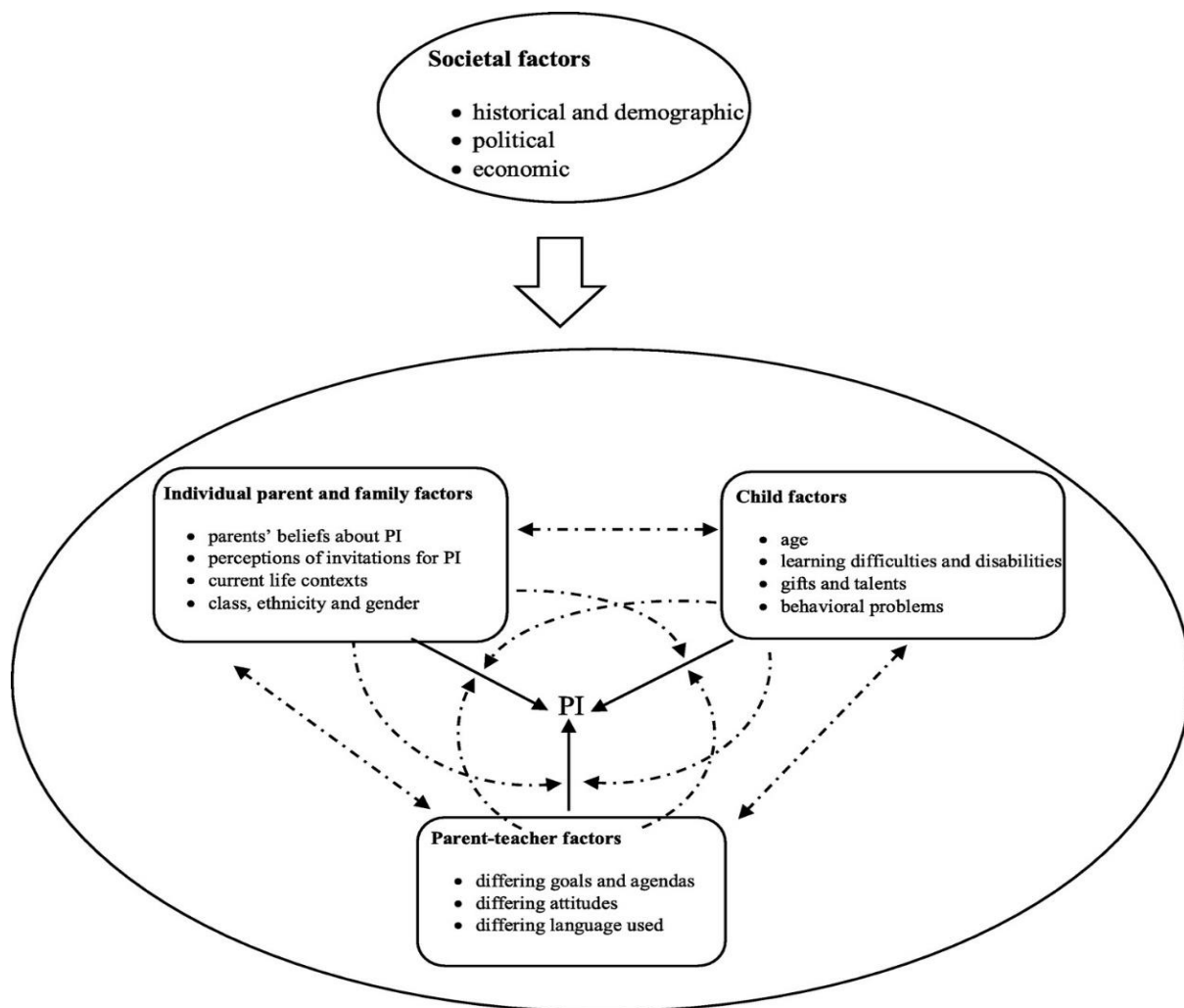


Figure 2.5

The Reformulated Hornby and Lafaele's (2011) Model of Barriers to Parental Involvement⁵

Multi-year classrooms are considered alternative forms of education despite having been the most dominant form of education and still having a presence in at least one-third of the world's countries (Aina, 2001; Gulliford, 1984; Sliwka, 2008; Veenman, 1995). Despite its history, when theories of parent involvement have been developed (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Simon, 2004; Spera, 2005), data sources that are cited almost exclusively come from

⁵ Source: The Reformulated Hornby and Lafaele's (2011) Model is from "A reformulated model of barriers to parental involvement in education: Comment on Hornby and Lafaele (2011)", by W. Fan, N. Li, and R. Sandoval, 2018, *Educational Review*, 70(1), p. 122. Reprinted with permission.

research conducted in mono-grade classrooms. Although multi-year classrooms have been studied in terms of its positive benefits for students (Jacobson, 1997; Little & Dacus, 1999; Liu, 1997; Marzano, 1992; Pavan, 1992; Rasmussen, 1998; Rodriguez, 2006; Veenman, 1995, 1996), for teachers (Grant, Johnson, & Richardson, 1996; Jacobson, 1997; Jordan, 2001; Sherman, 2004) and for parents (Little & Dacus, 1999; Nichols & Nichols, 2002), there remains a gap in literature concerning the process of parent involvement in multi-year classrooms.

Summary

In this chapter, a review of multi-year classroom literature was provided, including its history and prevalence, the perceptions and experiences of parents, students, and teachers, and the effects of multi-year classrooms have on parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships. Various parent involvement topics including its importance, definitions and perspectives of involvement and its limitations, as well as barriers to parent involvement were discussed. Because the question guiding this study is about understanding the process of parent involvement in the multi-year classroom, this chapter concluded with a review of often-used parent involvement theories and frameworks while referring back to the multi-year classroom literature as a method for identifying gaps and limitations. In the next chapter, an overview of the epistemological stance I took as part of the Grounded Theory process is provided, followed by a discussion of the methodology, which is broken down and discussed with regards to the study context, participants, and data collection procedure. The scientific rigour that was applied to maintain the integrity of the data methods and data itself, the analytic process, and ethical considerations used in this study are also discussed.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Overview

In this chapter, support for the study methodology including the context, participants in the study, and the data collection procedure and analysis are described. I also detail the scientific rigour applied to maintain the integrity of the data methods and data itself, the data analysis, and the ethical considerations used in this study. Additionally, the data analyzed for this study are part of a larger project on parent involvement in multi-year classrooms.

Ontological View of Reality and Epistemological Stance

Selecting an appropriate methodology was a commitment to the research question I developed for this study, which asks: What is the process of parental involvement in the education of the child who is enrolled in a multi-year classroom? The way I structured the question reflects how I have come to know and understand the world and reality. Ontology deals with the certainty of claims about nature and reality. On one end of the spectrum is *realism*, an ontological perspective, which assumes a single, observable world or reality that is independent of the human mind and what it may experience (Moses & Knutsen, 2012).

Alternatively, the relativist ontology views reality as individual projections. I take a bounded relativist position, viewing knowledge as more localized and, to some degree, shared among groups and communities of people with similar lived experiences. Bounded relativism is characterized as a subjective view of reality, multiple in nature and equal in space and time within boundaries of a group (Moon & Blackman, 2014). In this sense, parents are likely to have a different view of the multi-year classroom experience whether they are a parent of a student who is new to the multi-year classroom or in their final year of the program. The development of relationships and perceptions students, parents, and teacher have of one another will be perceived

as a local phenomenon with shared realities among parent cohorts as it pertains to their involvement and stage of parent-teacher relationships.

Epistemology is concerned with “the validity, scope, and methods of acquiring knowledge, such as, with what constitutes a knowledge claim; how knowledge can be produced or acquired; and how the extent of its applicability can be determined” (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 1171). A social constructionist approach is the epistemological stance of this study. Social constructionism posits that knowledge and belief systems are social constructions influenced by experiences, history, and culture (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Generally, social constructionists believe knowledge is formed through engagement with and interpretation of the world (Crotty, 1998). Individuals will approach a phenomenon with a different perspective and make meaning of the phenomenon in a different way as a result of differences in cultural, historical, and social contexts (Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998). This process by which people assign (or socially construct) meaning assumes that knowledge and meaning are always partial, conditional, and perspectival and not timeless or universal. To this end, I primarily sought out the perspective of parents, supplemented by the views of students and teachers, to generate a Grounded Theory of the process of parental involvement in multi-year classrooms.

Overview of the Methodology

Grounded Theory Approaches. Grounded Theory owes its extensive use to the suitable methods it offers for research that seeks to explore social processes (Flick, 2014). The development of Grounded Theory in the 1960s was anchored in the work of two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), with each emerging two distinct research traditions (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Two Approaches to Grounded Theory

Tradition	Glaserian Approach	Straussian Approach
Theory Generation & Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Theory naturally emerges from unstructured data and neutral questioning ➤ General, formal, substantive, and systematic theory with a focus on abstraction and generalizability (i.e., Abstraction trumps complexity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Theory is revealed from structured data and more focused questioning ➤ Generating and testing with emphasis on complexity (i.e., Complexity trumps abstraction)
Researcher Role & Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Researcher begins with curiosity and interest but has an <i>empty mind</i> and does not have experiences impacting where to start ➤ Researcher is a passive observer and listener, makes general and less descriptive observations ➤ Theoretical sensitivity gained through immersion in the data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Researcher begins with general ideas and where to start given prior experiences ➤ Researcher is <i>doing social research</i>, making observations, which shapes analysis (i.e., Data interpretation <i>is</i> analysis) ➤ Theoretical sensitivity gained through methods and tools
Data Analysis Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Less rigorous iterative two-phase process of coding (simple and substantive), including constant comparison of incidences to incidences that results in the construction of a core category ➤ Data is fractured (reductive) to conceptually build up categories (inductive) while avoiding over-conceptualizing data, including labeling incidences to reduce burdensome analysis ➤ Naturally emerging coding families are used as part of the research process to broadly describe social interactions and influencing factors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More rigorous iterative open, axial, and selective coding process including word-by-word micro analysis ➤ Codes are built up into categories and destabilized to identify exceptions and cases through a process of verification ➤ Nature of making comparisons varies with the coding paradigm and techniques

Sources: Corbin & Strauss (1990, 2008); Glaser (1967, 1978, 1992)

Although Grounded Theory methodology has undergone additional developments and additions (Charmaz, 2003; 2006; Flick, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) ⁶, each approach places great importance on the open coding process but proceeds down a slightly different path until the theory is built up from the data (Apramian, Cristancho, Waitling, & Lingard, 2017; Walker & Myrick, 2006). The thread that ties each approach together is the generation of an inductive Grounded Theory, which is derived based upon the researched phenomena through a systematic, iterative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The investigator collects rich data through in-depth interviews, participant-observation in the field, and other methods. Data collection is followed by analysis repeated until a point of saturation (Charmaz, 2003, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

A Straussian approach diverges from the traditional Glaserian approach by arguing that Grounded Theory cannot produce concepts and categories that can account for all contexts. Data must be restructured for the complexities of the generated theory to fit. The researcher poses questions to intentionally fragment the data to locate exceptions and deviant cases. General ideas informed by the researcher's experiences are allowed to help start the process of structuring data collection tools, while observations during fieldwork are expected to help shape the analysis and selection of coding paradigms and techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2008; Strauss, 1987).

The rigorous three-phase coding process (see Data Analysis section) that defines the Straussian approach includes the researcher continuing to embed coding paradigms and techniques to reveal the theory. The coding process is not meant to be used in a linear fashion as the researcher is likely to move back and forth from coding phases, typically beginning with a word-by-word micro-analysis of data to generate codes, then towards a building-up of categories

⁶See Apramian, Cristancho, Waitling, and Lingard (2017) for a review of Glaserian, Straussian, Charmazian, and Clarkeian approaches to Grounded Theory.

by finding relationships among codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher then engages in a process of verification, wherein categories are destabilized by identification of cases that appear to be exceptions and are treated to an intense analysis to better understand the conditions and consequences within each case (Strauss, 1987) until a coherent theory is developed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Criteria for being considered a grounded theory. Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 17-18) lay out a set of criteria for determining the validity and robustness of a Grounded Theory. The first criterion is that concepts must have been generated from a systematic coding process, are technical and not overly-simplistic, and there are a sufficient number of concepts related to the phenomenon under study. The second criterion is concerned with whether concepts are systematically related and if these relationships have been evidenced throughout the section that reports on the findings of the Grounded Theory. To meet the third criterion, categories must be well-developed and have many conceptual linkages. In other words, categories and concepts should be related to one another through the conditions, contexts, actions, interactions, and consequences that define the properties and dimensions of the Grounded Theory. The fourth criterion calls for variation to be embedded within the Grounded Theory, which is to say that a wide-variety of conditions and consequences where the phenomenon appears are fully explored and detailed. The fifth criterion is related to the broader conditions being linked back to the phenomenon under study while explicating on the effects these conditions have on interactions and actions observed by the researcher. The sixth criterion requires that the process, or change and development observed over time, be accounted for within the Grounded Theory. Finally, the seventh criterion deals with the extent to which the findings from the Grounded Theory are significant and can stir and inspire new perspectives and future research.

Elements of a grounded theory. The following is a list of terms that are foundational to building a Grounded Theory.

Units of analysis. Generating a Grounded Theory begins with identifying the basic units of analysis, or *concepts*, which are described in terms of conditions, contexts, actions, interactions, and consequences (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The units of analysis for the Grounded Theory in the present study were incidences of parent involvement.

Lower-level concepts. Through constant-comparison analysis, *lower-level concepts* are formed, which include reducing the data down into generalized words that stand in for interpretations of concrete events and actions that share some major common properties. Lower-level concepts contain analytic and sensitizing features that generalize the properties in a concrete manner (analytic) and provide a meaningful illustration to readers to make reference to their and/or the experiences of others (sensitizing) (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Approximately 29 concepts were formed (see Appendix M, Table M1 – Table M8) and then grouped based on shared properties in the present study

Properties. *Properties* are the characteristics of an object, event, or action. The characteristics give specificity to and define an object, event, or action (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Many properties were identified during the process of analysis and building the Grounded Theory for this study. For example, properties specified the events and actions of parent involvement in the school (e.g., attending school plays and meeting with the teacher after school), support provided at home (e.g., monitoring homework, providing resources, and advice), the personal traits they ascribe to the teacher (e.g., personality, attitude, demeanor, and communication style), and other actions, events, and resources that described a parent's involvement.

The properties of lower-level concepts identified from the present Grounded Theory study helped distinguish one set of concepts from others. For example, parents were often involved differently (actions) when supporting the student with homework (events) compared to how, when, and where they would be involved in supplying the student with additional learning activities that were separate from the school curriculum. Even further, how parents monitor homework looked different from parents supporting student independence because the motivations and goals of the parent were different.

Dimensions. *Dimensions* are variations of a property or properties that fall along a range or spectrum (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). During analysis in the present study, dimensions were highlighted and included parent' descriptions of their level of involvement over time and their involvement level relative to other parents (e.g., increased, decreased, no change). When parents described their relationship with a teacher, they often described a degree of relational proximity (e.g., distant, close, open, closed off, having grown, or developed). Parent-teacher relationships fell along a range with regards to trust, openness, respect, warmth, and degree of connection and closeness.

Categories. *Categories* are higher level concepts that reach the level of abstraction and are synonymous with the term *themes* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Categories represent the many diverse stories and lived experiences of parents and represent a group of lower-level concepts that have similar properties. The Grounded Theory in the present study resulted in eight categories that are discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

Core category. The *core category* represents the main theme of the Grounded Theory process and reflects the basic social process of the theory and how the process unfolds (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researcher defines the core category by identifying where and what in the

theory is emphasized, selecting the category that links all other categories around it, and that has the “greatest explanatory relevance” to the Grounded Theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 104). Urquhart (2017) argues that a grounded theory must be comprehensive in covering main dimensions and properties of the categories and that the theory have only one or two core categories to aid in reaching parsimony – that is, only the most important categories are represented. The core categories that were revealed through a systematic analysis process are described in Chapter Five.

Selection and rationale of the Straussian tradition to grounded theory. For this study, a Straussian design to generating the Grounded Theory was employed, focusing on the experiences of participants (Hutchinson, 2004). This methodological approach was most suitable due, in part, to my experiences that informed both the process-oriented research questions that guide this study, as well as my endeavour to develop a theory that contextualizes the process of how parental involvement develops for parents of students in multi-year classrooms.

The social constructivist stance taken for this Grounded Theory study builds upon Strauss’ contributions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1997) by assuming that reality is multiple and subjective. From this perspective, the Grounded Theory in this study was co-constructed by students, teachers, and parents, and even the presence of the researcher observing participants during interviews as well as parent-teacher interactions through ongoing proximal processes (Charmaz, 2003, 2006).

Recruitment and Sampling

Ethics and district research approval. An application to conduct a larger study was submitted and approved by the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research and Ethics Board (BREB). Upon BREB approval, research approval from two school districts were

received before the selection of the school sites were finalized. A total of four schools across three school districts took part in a larger study on parent involvement in multi-year classrooms. This study included one school site to develop a Grounded Theory of the parent involvement process in multi-year classrooms.

School inclusion and recruitment. Consideration for inclusion of the school in this study was the ethnic, language, and socio-economic diversity of the school and community. A review of schools in British Columbia's Lower Mainland was undertaken to help ensure that the school selected for inclusion offered Grade 4/5/6 multi-year classrooms within a culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse community. School selections also came through a review of community demographics and descriptions pulled from Canadian Census data and municipal websites, which provided me an indication of the diversity levels I would most likely see reflected in the school and classrooms. Prior to gaining formal school district approval, discussions were held with classroom teachers, school principals, and vice principals to validate my review that the school population I sampled from was diverse.

As part of the initial meetings, principals were informed of the study purpose, goals, data collection procedures, data to be collected, and what would be asked of participants. Preliminary approval was provided and a recruitment plan to approach, review, and recruit teachers for the study was developed once full district approval for the study was received.⁷

Teacher inclusion and recruitment. The teacher inclusion criteria included needing to have taught and delivered curriculum to a Grade 4/5/6 multi-year classroom cohort for three consecutive years prior to the start of this study. This ensured a wide timeframe for parents to have a child enrolled in a multi-year classroom and allowed recruitment of parents and students

⁷ Two school sites were selected for inclusion as part of a broader study on parent involvement in multi-year classrooms but only the data collected from participants from one school site are reported in this study.

who were at different points in their multi-year classroom experience. Criteria for inclusion was also based on the multi-year experience teachers who expressed interest, the diversity of students in their classroom, as well as teacher availability and willingness to take part in multiple rounds of interviews, journal activities, and support with recruitment of parents and students.

As part of the recruitment plan, teachers were emailed by the school principal about an opportunity to take part in a study on parent involvement. Teachers who were interested attended an information meeting led by me and were informed of the study's purpose, goals, data collection procedures, data to be collected, who could participate, and what their participation would entail. Teachers who wanted to take part in the study were given a consent form, which was reviewed and signed.

Parent and student inclusion and recruitment. The inclusion criteria for parents and students were less restrictive for the initial phase of data collection, knowing that later phases of data collection would be more targeted (i.e., theoretical sampling) as concepts and categories emerged. Parents who had a primary caregiver role (e.g., mother, father, aunt, uncle, and a grandparent) were eligible participants. Given that the theory of the parent involvement process in multi-year classrooms was meant to be grounded primarily in the voices of parents, there needed to be an adequate amount of parent voices to reach a point of saturation in the data so that the theoretical model developed would not be grounded in only a few parents. All parents who took part in this study had a child taught by one of the three multi-year teachers who participated in this study.

I attempted to recruit parents and students as evenly as possible across Grade 4, Grade 5, and Grade 6. Student grade levels often corresponded to the number of relationship years the parents and teachers had known each other. There were cases of parents who had known the

teacher prior to their child entering the multi-year classroom, including when an older child had already been enrolled in the same multi-year classroom as their younger child. As part of the recruitment process, I grouped parents who had known the teacher for the same number of years and added parents accordingly. Recruiting an equal number of parents across parent-teacher relationship years helped to capture the process of parental involvement as it unfolded.

Consent and assent. I worked with teachers to explore the best way to coordinate the student/parent recruitment and data collection process to ensure minimal disruption to the classroom routine. On agreed upon days, I visited each classroom to meet with students to introduce the study and answer questions. Students were provided Parent Consent Forms (Appendix A) to take home to their parents.

I provided teachers an email that was forwarded to parents as an additional strategy to reach parents in case paper copies of the consent form did not make it home with the student. In the email, parents were given information from the Parent Consent Form and were directed to contact me if they were interested in taking part in this study. Consent forms introduced parents to the study purpose, objectives, data collection procedures, contact information, and asked parents for their participation and permission for their child to take part (if the student gave assent).

Student assent was obtained by first meeting with students to introduce myself and the study, the purpose of the research, and its importance. Students were provided an age-appropriate assent form (Appendix B) for their review. Assent forms were picked up at the end of the day once students had time to reflect on whether they wanted to participate in the study. Before each interview, students were reminded of their right to not take part in the study or stop taking part at any time. Interviews began once the student re-affirmed their willingness to continue.

Participants

A total of 53 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 individuals (parents, students, and teachers) from three multi-year classrooms within one school site over two rounds of data collection across one academic year (see Table 3.2). More interviews were conducted with parents as the Grounded Theory centred on their experiences.

Table 3.2

Interviews by Participant Group, Parent-Teacher Relationship Year, and Interview Round

Participant Group	Parent-Teacher Relationship Year	Round One Interviews	Round Two Interviews	Total Interviews
Parents (<i>n</i> = 16)	Year 1 (<i>n</i> = 6)	6 ¹	3	9
	Year 2 (<i>n</i> = 4)	4	3	7
	Year 3 (<i>n</i> = 6)	6 ¹	3	9
Students (<i>n</i> = 11)	Year 1 (<i>n</i> = 2)	2	2	4
	Year 2 (<i>n</i> = 4)	4	4	8
	Year 3 (<i>n</i> = 5)	5	5	10
Teachers (<i>n</i> = 3)	N/A	3	3	6
Total Participants = 30		30	23	53

¹ *Additional interviews were added to reach a level of saturation*

I spent nearly 43 hours in discussions with parents, students, and teachers including nearly 23 hours of parent interviews; over 10 hours of student interviews; and over 9 hours of teacher interviews. Generally, the second round of interviews took longer to complete as participants became more comfortable to talk about their experiences and interview guides

became more focused. A breakdown of the length of discussions for both rounds of interviews across participant groups is provided in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Length of Interviews by Parent-Teacher Relationship Year and Interview Round

Participant Group	Parent-Teacher Relationship Year	Average Time of Round One Interviews	Average Time of Round Two Interviews	Average Time of Both Rounds	Total Time
Parents	Year 1	56 min.	63 min.	59 min.	8.9 hrs.
	Year 2	31 min.	64 min.	42 min.	4.2 hrs.
	Year 3	65 min.	65 min.	65 min.	9.7 hrs.
Students	Year 1	19 min.	30 min.	24 min.	1.6 hrs.
	Year 2	23 min.	39 min.	31 min.	4.2 hrs.
	Year 3	23 min.	34 min.	28 min.	4.7 hrs.
Teachers	N/A	60 min.	127 min.	93 min.	9.3 hrs.
Total Time		43 min.	56 min.	48 min.	42.6 hrs.

Parent participants were ethnically and linguistically diverse (see Table 3.4). There were as many parents and students who identified as being of Asian heritage (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, or Vietnamese) as there were who identified as White/Caucasian, and a couple of parents who identified as have multiple ethnic backgrounds. The majority of parents and students indicated that English was the primary language spoken in the home while about one-third of the parents selected Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, or Vietnamese as the primary language spoken at home. All three teachers identified as White, female, and indicated English was the primary language spoken in their home.

Table 3.4

Parent Demographic Background

Demographic Characteristic		Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Total	%
Ethnicity	Asian	3	1	3	$n = 7$	43.7%
	White	3	2	2	$n = 7$	43.7%
	Multiple	0	1	1	$n = 2$	12.5%
Primary Language	English	3	4	4	$n = 11$	68.7%
	Mandarin	3	0	0	$n = 3$	18.7%
	Other	0	0	2	$n = 2$	12.5%
Sex	Female	4	4	6	$n = 14$	87.5%
	Male	2	0	0	$n = 2$	12.5%
Marital Status	Married	4	4	6	$n = 14$	85.5%
	Single or Divorced	2	0	0	$n = 2$	12.5%
Number of Children in Family	One Child	4	2	1	$n = 7$	43.7%
	Two Children	1	2	3	$n = 6$	37.5%
	Three or More Children	1	0	2	$n = 3$	18.7%
Employment Status	Full-Time	5	2	3	$n = 10$	62.5%
	Part-Time	1	1	1	$n = 3$	18.7%
	Unemployed	0	1	2	$n = 3$	18.7%

Procedure

Interviews. To develop a theory of parental involvement in multi-year classrooms, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents, students, and teacher over two rounds of data collection across one academic school year. For the first round of interviews, a

Parent Interview Guide (Appendix F), Student Interview Guide (Appendix H), and a Teacher Interview Guide (Appendix J) were developed and designed to allow participants to share their experiences and explore paths in our discussion that may not have otherwise reflected the questions I posed (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Open-ended questions allowed participants to delve deep into their experiences of parent involvement, how the parent's involvement may have developed or changed since the start of the student being enrolled in the multi-year classroom, and opportunities provided by the teacher or school to support the student's education in school, in their home and in the community. As each interview progressed, participants were asked to describe the parent-teacher relationship and any changes they had observed since the start of the multi-year classroom experience. Interviews concluded with closed-ended background questions.

As part of the second round of data collection, a new Parent Interview Guide (Appendix G), Student Interview Guide (Appendix I), and Teacher Interview Guide (Appendix K) were developed. The second round of interviews focused on specific types of involvement, changes in involvement across school, home, and community environments, as well as interactions with the teacher early on in their multi-year classroom experience. These discussions allowed participants to discuss changes they had observed in parent involvement since our previous meeting and to go in greater depth around parent-teacher communication, personality, and pedagogy. These discussions were especially important to understanding the development of parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships in the early phase of the student entering the multi-year classroom. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Illustrations. Each student interview during the first round of data collection began with an icebreaker activity, requesting students to draw a picture that reflected how they perceived the

relationship between their parent(s) and teacher. The student's picture was used as a bridge to the open-ended discussion questions in the Student Interview Guide (Appendix H). As the interview progressed, conversations were shifted back to the illustration by having students elaborate on reasons they believed had affected the status of the relationship between their parents and teacher.

Second round of student interviews were conducted across the final months of the school year to ensure that student experiences of their parent(s) involvement and observations of the relationship between their parent(s) and teacher were captured over time. At the start of each student interview, I presented the drawing the student created earlier in the year as a reminder of our previous discussion and asked if they had observed any changes in their parent's involvement or relationship with their teacher. Students were asked about their perceptions of their parent(s) involvement in supporting their independence and how they and their parents learned about the classroom routine and expectations at the beginning of their multi-year classroom experience.

E-journals. Journaling provided a rich source of data (Charmaz, 2000) and served as an additional source of data to compare to results of semi-structured interviews and student illustrations. At the onset of the study, each teacher was asked to document their ongoing interactions with parents in an electronic parent-teacher interaction journal (Appendix L). An example of a journal entry was provided to help ensure they understood the data requested, including the purpose, duration, mode of communication for each interaction with parents. Teachers also identified who initiated each interaction with a parent, how long the teacher has known the parent, as well as the parent's gender, and any other notes teachers felt inclined to

provide comments for. At the end of each month, teachers forwarded their electronic parent-teacher interaction journals to me via email.

Data Analysis

Memoing. The memos I documented in a research journal I kept through the course of this study were fundamental to the Grounded Theory approach I took. Memoing served as a supportive tool for capturing the connections between properties, dimensions, and concepts, which became less abstract as I progressed through the data analysis process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). My engagement in extensive memoing supported the identification and detailing of conditions, actions, and associated consequences among and between incidences of parent-teacher interactions. No standardized process was used for memoing but it served several fundamental principles: (a) provided a method for discovery and development of theory; (b) served as a support tool for diagramming concepts; (c) provided a space to keep track of the iterative process of re-engaging the data and re-entering the field until a point of saturation was reached in the data analysis; and (d) allowed for a greater level of abstraction through writing and re-writing memos.

Memos were dated and indicated which particular part of the transcript and the categories, concepts, properties, and dimensions to which they referred. During data collection, memos were typed while participants were interviewed. Memos contained the quotes of participants, observations of participant behaviour, connection or thoughts I may have had at the moment, as well as my ideas and conceptualizations of emerging aspects of the theory. Some memos pertained to coding (i.e., code notes) and procedural directions that I thought were potential pathways to take (i.e., operational notes), while others related to theory in the literature (i.e., theoretical notes). Diagrams were drawn to graphically map relationships between

categories and the emerging theory. Memos were developed further once interviews concluded. The electronic journal containing the memos and diagrams was then uploaded to NVivo software.

Coding. I followed a three-phase analytic process outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1997), which began with rich data collection through in-depth interviews and field notes, followed by a three-stage coding process: (a) *open coding* or the breaking down of data into parts and concepts and then grouped together into categories (dimensionalising); (b) *axial coding* or making connections between categories and subcategories and determining a context which describes the conditions under which parent involvement occurs; and (c) *selective coding* or validating the relationship between a core category by “drawing together additional categories of context, conditions, actions, interactions, and outcomes with the focusing of memos and generation of theory regarding this category” (Grbich, 2013, p. 86).

Open coding. Strauss (1987) has suggested that open coding be undertaken by having the researcher look for *in vivo* (within the data) codes and attach existing concepts from the researcher’s discipline; label each code; be reflexive and interrogative during the process (What is going on here? What category does this incident or situation indicate?); locate comparative cases; and account for all data in the coding process. This process of open coding should lead to the researcher seeking out additional specific examples of whatever aspect comes out from the data in a process of induction (inferences from observations), deduction (reasoning from general to particular instances) and verification (double-checking or cross-checking against other data) (Grbich, 2013, p. 83). Additional analytical tools that I applied to the treatment of data included

distancing myself from the literature and allowing for the debunking of assumptions that the participants and I had.⁸

My approach to analyzing participant transcripts was conducted in a similar open coding process. I first segregated the data into manageable parts through the identification of potential concepts and categories that could be broken down into dimensions through a line-by-line analysis (Grbich, 2013). As I worked through each line of the transcript, I wrote memos in an electronic journal as part of a constant comparison analysis, going back and forth from transcripts and ideas that were elicited while working through each transcript. To reduce the impacts of my professional knowledge on the generation of the Grounded Theory, and as part of a Straussian tradition, I sought to challenge emerging concepts by asking questions about the data (e.g., Where does this not take place?) and identifying cases where there were deviations in concepts and categories as part of a purposive sampling technique. This eventually led to a more complex Grounded Theory that accounted for and helped to inform me of the variations in experiences with the parent involvement process in multi-year classrooms.

Axial coding. After identifying initial concepts and categories as part of the open coding phase, I began refining and differentiating the concepts and categories (Flick, 2014). Axial coding allowed for connections between categories, the development of the core categories, and lower level concepts, as well as a context to be determined, which supported me in describing the conditions under which incidences of parent involvement and parent-teacher relationship development occurred. Through the axial coding process, I continued memo writing, which

⁸ As part of a proposal for this study, a justification for this Grounded Theory research included a literature review. However, the initial literature review did not include models or theories of parent involvement and the review of research was broad enough in hopes that a-priori theories would not cloud my judgment upon entering the field to collect data and throughout the analytical process.

served to clarify the relations among properties and concepts and to fully develop emerging categories (Flick, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Selective coding. The final stage in the coding process, selective coding, continued the axial coding at a higher level of abstraction with the primary goal of developing a theoretical scheme explaining the relationships between categories. This constant comparison of categories throughout axial and selective coding phases allowed the core categories to emerge from related subcategories (Glaser, 1978). The theoretical scheme I developed helped me to relate concepts with categories as well as between categories. The goal of this analysis was to identify patterns as well as conditions for which they apply. The final product of the analysis was the developed Grounded Theory discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five and discussed in relation to extant literature in Chapter Six.

Inter-coder agreement. To ensure I met standards of rigour, a negotiated inter-coder agreement approach was used (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pederson, 2013; Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, Koole, & Kappelman, 2006). A typical negotiated agreement approach entails two or more researchers coding transcripts independently, meeting to compare coding results, and identifying and reconciling differences in coding. The iterative rounds of data collection and analysis in a Grounded Theory approach, as well as the level of depth and data sensitivity I reached, meant that my coding would not run concurrently with the coding of an additional reviewer.

A research assistant (RA), a graduate student with knowledge of family-school partnerships, was recruited to provide an additional lens and analysis of interview transcripts. I developed a Categories, Concepts, Properties, and Dimensions (CCPD) codebook for each year of the parent-teacher relationship, which was used as a guide during the inter-coder agreement

process. Each codebook included descriptions of Grounded Theory terminology and included tables that organized relatable incidents of involvement and relationship development that were given the same property or dimension label as an element of a concept, with multiple concepts connected and placed within an appropriate category (Grbich, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The RA was provided a portion of all Year One Parent transcripts in a Word document along with the Year One CCPD codebook, which the RA used during the analysis to determine when text merited a particular code or multiple codes. Each parent transcript contained between 15% and 30% of the original parent transcript, which exceeds the acceptable range noted by other scholars (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pederson, 2013; Hodson, 1999). Once the RA completed the review and analysis of the transcripts, we met to compare codes and discuss and resolve differences in coding. Additionally, the negotiated agreement approach allowed me to continue developing and refining the codebook (Campbell et al., 2013). These steps were repeated for Year Two Parent' transcripts and Year Three Parent' transcripts.

Determining inter-coder agreement. The complexity and iterative nature of the Grounded Theory coding process led me to undergo a review of various inter-rater agreement methods to calculate inter-rater coder agreement scores for the interview transcripts. Line-by-line analysis produced a significant number of codes, reducing the likelihood that an additional coder and I would agree by chance (Grayson & Rust, 2001). Upon my review, I applied a simple proportion agreement method for this study as described by researchers in other exploratory studies (Campbell et al., 2013; Kurasaki, 2000). Results from the proportion agreement are provided in a series of tables in Appendix O and discussed in Chapter Five.

Ensuring Rigour

Overview. The aim of rigour in qualitative research is to demonstrate trustworthiness in the data collected, which is supported by consistency and care when carrying out research practices and procedures, which are reflected in making transparent the practices and procedures in data collection (Davies & Dodd, 2002). Ensuring methodological rigour is also established when there is a high degree of trustworthiness in the chosen analytical techniques and the conclusions drawn by the researcher, which is reflected in my level of documentation and constant mindfulness of the limitations of my research findings.

Research journal. Journaling is an essential practice in Grounded Theory methodology (Lempert, 2007) and my use of an electronic journal and the multiple data sources (i.e., data triangulation) was part of the process of ensuring a high degree of methodological rigour. Maintaining a journal was a key tool for advancing the analytical work I undertook, utilized before and after each participant interview and throughout the analysis process. The journal provided a space for my descriptive, analytical, and reflexive observation notes (i.e., memos) of parent involvement incidences, changes to parent involvement over time, parent-teacher relationships, and overall theory development for this study.

The journal allowed me to reflect on any potential biases immediately following participant interviews, observations of parent, teacher and student interactions, and while listening to interview audio. Additional researchers and academic professionals (e.g., research assistant and supervisory committee) were consulted and provided oversight and additional outside perspectives throughout the data collection and analytical phases of this study.

Like the gift of time given to parents, students, and teachers in multi-year classrooms to become more attuned to each other, the two years of data collection and analysis that I undertook

allowed me multiple opportunities to interact with participants through formal and informal discussions, observe their interactions with each other, and be fully immersed within the data to become more attuned and sensitive to the meanings within the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The research journal was used, in part, to document and review thoughts and feelings expressed by the participants, to ask questions about the data such as (e.g., What is happening in this situation? What does this represent?). Constant journaling allowed me to gain greater theoretical sensitivity to have a richer understanding of the meanings within the data and to get closer to the core of the Grounded Theory.

Member checks. As part of a communicative validation process (e.g., member checks), participants were provided the opportunity to review their transcripts, I elicited feedback from the participants during the second round of interviews by posing questions around the preliminary findings that emerged from analysis and presented results to participants post-data collection. Communicative validation enhanced the authenticity of participant's transcripts and the concepts and categories generated (Flick, 2014). Additional oversight from the dissertation committee and peer colleagues throughout the life course of this Grounded Theory study ensured quality maintenance of the data collection and analytical process.

Triangulation. Participants were interviewed until saturation of concepts and categories was achieved, that is, when there was data adequacy and no new information was gained from collecting more data. Although no true saturation can occur because categories are tentative and can always be modified – which would require further data collection – I had confidence in the data due to the observed corroboration across data sources (e.g., interviews, journaling, and drawings) and internal consistency between the three groups of parents when recalling previous school years (e.g., Year Two Parents recalling previous year and Year Three Parents recalling

previous two years). This allowed me to conclude further field-work as saturation of the data would likely be the best that could be achieved during the timeframe of the study (Coyne & Cowley, 2006).

Summary

In this chapter, the Grounded Theory approach I took for this study, the procedures followed for recruiting participants and collecting data, as well as the ethical considerations I had while carrying out this study was detailed. A description of the methods employed across participants and how scientific rigour was met, the analytical treatment transcripts underwent, which included open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and a negotiated agreement process was provided. In the next chapter, the community and school context, as well as background profile of participants are provided.

Chapter 4: Study Context and Participant Background Profiles

Overview

In this chapter a brief discussion of the importance of thick descriptions and gaining theoretical sensitivity as means for getting closer to the core category of the Grounded Theory is provided. The thick descriptions and features of the community and school where this study took place, as well as background profiles of the parent participants are also detailed.

Thick Description of the Study Context and Participants

A Straussian approach to developing Grounded Theory departs from the Glaserian tradition through the richness of the descriptions that account for the complexities of the phenomenon under study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Grounded Theory, then, can be achieved, in part but most importantly, through deep immersion in the data and the level of description that can capture participants' experiences and conversations held between them and the researcher carrying out the Grounded Theory study. What follows from quality thick descriptions is the ability for others to understand the perspectives and appreciate the experiences being shared from research participants (Geertz, 1973). For this study, thick descriptions were created to better understand and represent a complex and detailed portrait of the parents, the school their children attend, and the broader community in which the school is situated, and parents and their families live their lives.

Community and School Context

As one of almost two dozen neighbourhoods that comprise a major metropolitan city in British Columbia, the Ji-hye neighbourhood⁹ is home to several large parks, libraries, community centres, and other recreational areas for its nearly 4,000 residents to enjoy. The population has

⁹ Pseudonyms are used in place of the study site neighbourhood, school, and participants.

gone mostly unchanged over the last two decades, with approximately 14,000 residents in 1996 and 2016. The neighbourhood has a linguistically diverse population, with four in ten residents (40.5%) whose first language is Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, or German and about half (51.3%) of residents whose native language is English. The median household income is higher than most other surrounding neighbourhoods. About four in ten (37.9%) residents live in one of the many low-rise and high-rise buildings in the neighbourhood, whereas one in five (17.8%) families live in single-parent households, and one-quarter (22%) of its residents live in low-income households (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Within a residential area of the community is Guanxi Elementary¹⁰, a school with nearly 50 staff members, led by a new school principal who supports the learning of almost 500 students enrolled in kindergarten through Grade 7 classrooms. Almost four in ten students attend a multi-year classroom at the school, while the remaining student body attend a traditional, single-grade classroom. The student population reflects the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Ji-hye neighbourhood with 16 first languages represented including Cantonese, English, French, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Multi-lingual households are common as eight in ten students live in a home where English is spoken, and another two-thirds of the student body live in a home where a language of East Asian origin is spoken. About one-third of the school population receive English language learning support and another 6% of the student body have a BC Ministry of Education, special education designation that require an Individual Education Plan.

¹⁰ The source of data was taken from the Guanxi Elementary School Plan, which provides school goals, philosophy, school characteristics, discipline systems, and other relevant information to introduce the school to parents and the community.

Meet the First Year Parents

First Year Parents of a student enrolled in a multi-year classroom were figuring out their role, coming to understand who their child's teacher is, and developing an understanding of the class routine. Year One Parents often became more comfortable with the teaching style, as well as the personality and communication approach of the teacher as the year progressed. Year One Parents are ethnically and linguistically diverse, have different family sizes, and are represented by both mothers and fathers. Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the backgrounds of Year One Parents.

Table 4.1

First Year Parent Backgrounds

Parent Name	Ethnicity	Primary Language Spoken at Home	Marital Status	Number of Children	Employment
Amelyn	White	English	Married	3	Full-Time
Beverly	White	English	Married	1	Full-Time
Fu	Taiwanese	Mandarin	Married	2	Full-Time
Li	Chinese	Mandarin	Single	1	Full-Time
Maurice	White	English	Married	1	Full-Time
Zan	Chinese	Mandarin	Single	0 ¹	Part-Time

¹ Zan is viewed as the primary parent of her younger cousin but has no biological children of her own.

Amelyn. As a mother of three children, Amelyn and her husband are newly arrived immigrants from the United States. Amelyn's youngest daughter is a Grade 4 student in a multi-year classroom. She has a 13-year-old son in Grade 8 and another daughter who is 16 years of age and in Grade 10. This year marked the first time that she and her husband enrolled their

youngest daughter in a public school. All three children received a mix of homeschooling by Amelyn and private school education. Education was seen as a way for Amelyn to spend time with her daughter, was the primary source for developing her child's literacy skills, and she stressed the importance of her daughter "reading good literature". Amelyn was attuned to her child's social development, feeling that her daughter "thrives on having people working along side [her daughter] doing the same kind of work", and as a result, Amelyn enrolled her daughter in a public school. Since then, Amelyn has been keen to learn more about the multi-year program her daughter attends and is happy with the teacher who she described as "wonderful".

Beverly. In addition to being a full-time educator, Beverly is a mother to her Grade 4 son who is in his first year of the multi-year program. Beverly identifies as a White Canadian, is married, and lives in a household where the primary language spoken is English. Beverly discussed her knowledge and career experience to frame her philosophy of parent involvement but expressed caution throughout our discussion as she appeared to not want to come across as disrespecting the practices of another teacher. Beverly wears multiple "hats" and so she expressed how mindful she is of not wanting to encroach on the teacher's space because of how she thinks it would come across. She noted that if there were any issues between her and the teacher, she said she would have her husband address it. Beverly detailed her child's personality and independence levels and showed a high level of awareness of how this matched and clashed with her child's teacher.

Fu. Fu, the father to his Grade 4 daughter, identifies himself and his wife as Taiwanese immigrants. Employed full-time, Fu lives in a household where the primary language spoken is Mandarin. Their daughter was born in Canada and they have enrolled their child in Mandarin school and English learning programs since early elementary school. Fu is not as involved in his

daughter's education as his wife, who is a stay-at-home mom, but he is more involved at home with his daughter's education this year. He is also finding the transition from Grade 3 to Grade 4 to be different in terms of allowing his child the independence the teacher expects. By "just giving help" when his daughter needs it, Fu is backing away and giving space for his daughter to complete her work independently. Fu monitors his daughter's progress by talking with her after school and reading the classroom blog. An interesting phenomenon that occurred was Fu's use of pronouns that either directly or referenced his wife as part of the involvement activity (e.g., we, we're, our, she, and us).

Li. Li is a single mother of a Grade 4 student in a multi-year classroom and both are Chinese immigrants. She is the primary parent in her daughter's life, while her daughter's father lives abroad. Li has been highly involved as an advocate for her daughter who receives ELL services. The primary language spoken at home is Mandarin. She spends time at home helping her child but says that she struggles trying to teach her daughter. Li feels that her daughter should be more independent and is "trying to step back" this year, but given the observations she has made of her daughter's academic difficulties, she seems to be conflicted. Throughout our discussion, Li expressed frustration with the support her school provides her child and she mentioned wanting to interact with the teacher more. Despite feeling confused about how the teacher is instructing three different grade levels and why her daughter is not receiving the services she feels are needed, Li does what she can to better understand how to support her child. Li speaks with other parents who were born in Canada and born abroad where the primary language was not English to ascertain where her child is developmentally compared to other children. Li knew her daughter's level of social development, telling me about how her child is "a very people person [who] wants to be with other people."

Maurice. Employed full-time and the father of a son in Grade 4, Maurice identifies as a White Canadian, and lives in a household where the primary language spoken is English. Maurice mentioned some issues of concern with his child's teacher, including personality differences and openness to meet that has caused him to be reluctant to meet with the teacher. Maurice has a desire to be more involved in his son's education and while he cited limited volunteer opportunities being provided by the teacher, he also acknowledged he hasn't taken up some opportunities when they were available. These missed opportunities notwithstanding, during our discussion, Maurice focused on and showed an understanding of his son's social-emotional health and development. Though he would like to attend more school-related activities, Maurice provides informational support (e.g., advice, working out problems) and wants to ensure that he can be a source of support for his son. He says he is less involved at school compared to his wife but wants to have "a presence", so his son can go to him for support when needed. Like Fu, Maurice either directly referenced his wife or would use pronouns that included his wife, which supports his claim that his wife is "more involved with [their son] at home and at school."

Zan. Zan is the cousin and primary parent of a Grade 4 girl, is employed part-time, identifies as a Chinese immigrant, and lives in a household where the primary language spoken is Cantonese. In previous years, Zan's aunt and uncle were able to communicate with their daughter's teachers who spoke both English and Cantonese, however, Zan's cousin is now taught by a teacher who only speaks English, which has affected the parent's ability to be as involved as they hoped. Zan has training as a teacher and at the request of her aunt and uncle, Zan travelled from China to Canada to support her cousin's education and communicate with her cousin's teacher and school. In addition to Zan providing advice to her uncle and aunt to allow her cousin

to be more independent, she also implemented a behaviour program at home to support her cousin to be more independent. Zan was identified by her cousin as the primary parent who monitors homework completion, attends every parent-teacher conference and school activity, drops her off at school every day, and is there to pick her up when school ends to attend various after-school activities. Zan jokes that people often mistake her for her cousin's mother because she and her cousin often go everywhere together. In fact, when we met for our second interview, her cousin wanted to go to the café as well and sat at a nearby table completing her school work while Zan and I had talked.

Meet the Second Year Parents

Year Two Parents are ethnically diverse, have different language and employment backgrounds, and have different family sizes. Parents in their second year of the multi-year classroom exhibited greater understanding of the class routine, felt more comfortable with the teaching style, personality, and communication approach of the teacher. Table 4.2 below provides a summary of the backgrounds of Year Two Parents.

Table 4.2

Second Year Parent Backgrounds

Parent Name	Ethnicity	Primary Language Spoken in Home	Marital Status	Number of Children	Employment
Alexis	White	English	Married	2	Full-Time
Anna	White	English	Married	1	Unemployed
Heng	Chinese	English	Married	1	Part-Time
Sofieke	Indian/White	English	Married	2	Full-Time

Alexis. Alexis is a White Canadian mother of two children, a daughter and son, with the latter being a Grade 5 student with a learning disability who is enrolled in a multi-year classroom. Both she and her husband work full-time and English is the primary language spoken at home. Alexis sees her role as ‘an advocate’, which has increased over the last couple of years due to her son having experienced relational bullying from his peers. Since that time, she felt her involvement increased her advocacy and to ensure her child’s teacher is aware of situations that her son talks to her about. Most contact between Alexis and her child’s school is initiated by her and the reason for the contact is often focused on academic issues or grade concerns. Alexis views her relationship with her child’s teacher as a positive one and feels she can go to the teacher any time she has questions.

Anna. Anna is a mother to her Grade 5 son, is a stay-at-home mom, identifies as Canadian and of Central European heritage, and lives in a household where the primary language spoken is English. She is married to her husband who is of Western European and Australasian heritage. Anna monitors her child’s progress by reading the teacher’s blog and she feels more prepared to support her son by reminding him about what the school week will look like. Anna says she has “always been very involved” and her son’s multi-year classroom has led her to feel like she is part of a “community” and “actually part of the class.” Anna has seen her relationship with the teacher become more equal, where she goes to the teacher as “parent-to-parent, rather than a parent-to-teacher” because they exchange advice about their kids who are at the same age.

Heng. As a mother to her Grade 5 daughter, Heng was born in Canada and self-identifies as a Chinese immigrant. Heng is employed part-time and lives in a household where the primary language spoken is English. She is married to her husband, who is White and Canadian-born, and is employed full-time. Heng increased her work hours this school year, especially after observing

her daughter becoming more independent and taking more control of her studies in Grade 5. Heng thinks her child has a “great teacher” and sees herself as a “teacher’s helper” and a “tutor” for her child. The communication between Heng and her daughter’s teacher has caused some difficulty because she feels she does not always use the right words. This has led her to feel some discomfort in the past when expressing concerns with the teacher compared to her other child’s teacher who shares a similar cultural and language background. Though they did not talk as much during the second year, Heng indicated she is more comfortable communicating with the teacher because she feels the teacher understands her meaning and intentions, that they share some personality traits and educational values.

Sofieke. A full-time employed mother of two, Sofieke’s eldest daughter is a Grade 5 student who is in her second year of a multi-year classroom. Sofieke is Canadian and identifies as being of Eastern European and Indian heritage and lives in a household where the primary language spoken is English. She is married to her husband who is a White Canadian, works full-time, and they have another daughter who is in Grade 3. Sofieke’s children often stay after school to attend extra-curricular activities taking place in the older daughter’s classroom. On several occasions, I observed both sisters engaged in activities while their grandmother talks with other parents, the teacher, or with her granddaughters. Sofieke appeared attuned to her child’s needs, including desire for independence, and had descriptive and detailed stories about her experiences as a parent of a child in a multi-year classroom. Similar to Heng, Sofieke took it upon herself to better understand the multi-year classroom experience by talking to other parents prior to enrolling their children into their classroom programs.

Meet the Third Year Parents

Third Year Parents with a child enrolled in a multi-year classroom, like Second Year Parents, had a firm understanding of the class routine, but were also able to predict what the teacher expected. Parents also discussed the high level of comfort with and trust in the teacher, the teaching style, as well as the teacher’s personality and communication approach. Year Three Parents are ethnically diverse, have different employment backgrounds and family sizes. Table 4.3 below provides a summary of the backgrounds of Year Three Parents.

Table 4.3

Third Year Parent Backgrounds

Parent Name	Ethnicity	Primary Language Spoken in Home	Marital Status	Number of Children	Employment
Binh	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Married	3	Full-Time
Ramona	White	English	Married	5	Full-Time
Ruth	White	English	Married	2	Unemployed
Sajwa	Chinese/Indian	English	Married	2	Full-Time
Shin	Japanese	Japanese/English	Married	3	Unemployed
Wén	Chinese	English	Married	2	Part-Time

Binh. Binh has three children, including a daughter who is a Grade 6 student in a multi-year classroom, and she says her relationship with the teacher is “amazing” because the teacher has a “connection” with her daughter. Binh knew her child’s teacher a few years before when the teacher taught her daughter in Kindergarten. Binh is a Vietnamese immigrant who works part-time while her husband works full-time. While the primary language spoken in the home is Vietnamese, Binh says that beginner English is also spoken at times. She has participated in

classroom activities and has supported school-wide programs that support the community (e.g., fundraising events, activities to reduce hunger in the community). Binh discussed her awareness of the changes in her child since the first year of the multi-year program, including being more social and willing to be an active participant in class. Binh says she “will always be there” to support her child when needed, but like many other Third Year Parents, she expects her child to solve issues without needing a parent to help solve it for them.

Ramona. Ramona is a mother to her Grade 6 son who has an exceptionality, requires additional school support, and was adopted from a country in Eastern Europe. She works full-time and lives in a household where the primary language spoken is English. Ramona is married to her husband who is White, works full-time, and together they have five children. Ramona sees herself as “an advocate” and this came through during our discussion when she retold experiences of meeting with teachers to ensure her child was getting appropriate services. Ramona’s background in teaching resulted in her providing rich details of her experiences supporting her son, often going back and forth between her teaching experiences, anecdotes of students she has taught, and stories of her involvement with her Grade 6 son. Ramona is well-versed in education jargon, often using acronyms and stating different types of education programs and supports her son would be able to access. Ramona’s educational background, her prior experience with her older children having gone through their own multi-year classroom, and having known her youngest child’s teacher the past three years has given Ramona more confidence in her role as an advocate, comfort with speaking to the multi-year teacher, and adapting homework that is sent home.

Ruth. As a stay-at-home mother and parent to her Grade 6 son who has an exceptionality, Ruth identifies as a White Canadian and lives in a household where the primary

language spoken is English. Ruth is married to her husband who is White and Canadian, works full-time, and together they have two children. She has stepped back and given more space for her son, while providing more support for her other child who has an exceptionality. Ruth has noticed her son is more independent, growing out of needing her as much. Ruth says she is very involved and “always there” at the school coordinating and volunteering for activities and events. Ruth says that she and her son and the teacher have become “more comfortable”, telling me that all of the investment put into the three years with the same teacher has paid off and “it all [came] to fruition.” It wasn’t always like this as Ruth provided examples of some early struggles in the multi-year program. She mentioned that she and the teacher have different demeanours and that because the teacher was new to the multi-year structure, the first year was an opportunity for the teacher to “tweak” her “systems” or “educational processes” and “learn what works”. After the first year, Ruth felt that everybody has now “settled in”.

Sajwa. As a mother to her Grade 6 son, Sajwa is of Chinese and South Asian heritage. Sajwa is employed full-time and lives in a household where the primary language spoken is English. She is married to her husband who is Chinese, works full-time, and they have another daughter who is in Grade 3. Sajwa says that online exchanges, including through emails and teacher blogs is “more or less” the mode of communication between her and the teacher. She volunteers for field trips, but also says she and her spouse are “more laid back in parenting” compared to other parents who meet with the teacher “every two weeks or every month”. Though she works full-time, Sajwa says she has increased her involvement in out-of-school activities. Sajwa said that the teacher initiates most of the contact and the topics of the meetings are usually about setting up a parent-teacher meeting, goal setting, or the teacher relaying good news or praise about her son. Like Year Two Parents, Sajwa also spent time familiarizing herself

with the multi-year program and teacher prior to enrolling her son who was entering Grade 4 at the time. She has seen her own involvement morph over the last three years as her child has become more independent. This change in parent involvement has coincided with Sajwa having “gotten to know” the same teacher over several years, and as a result, there is trust in the teacher’s ability to educate their son, and that their son enjoys being in the teacher’s class.

Shin. As a stay-at-home mother, Shin is the mother to her Grade 6 daughter. She identifies as a Japanese immigrant and lives in a household where the primary language spoken is split between Japanese and English. She is married to her husband who is Japanese, works full-time, and they have an older son in high school and an infant. Shin and the teacher worked together to set goals for her child, and she said that the teacher is accessible whenever she has a question. The first communication between Shin and the teacher came indirectly through a letter the teacher sent to parents. Shin discussed that having a new baby has reduced her involvement in her daughter’s school. Both she and her husband have known their daughter’s teacher for several years as their eldest son had also been enrolled in the multi-year classroom for a year. Shin does not believe her relationship with the teacher is very close, but she describes it as positive, steady, and stable. In our discussion, Shin emphasized the student-teacher relationship as more important, which affected her perspective of the teacher. Although Shin seemed to have trust in the teacher before meeting her because “they teach the best”, she has also observed that her trust in the teacher has built over time after observing the multi-year teacher's ability to understand her child. Shin said her cultural background factored into her perceptions of the teacher, discussing how much respect for the "authority" of teacher there is in her culture.

Wén. As a mother of two, Wén says she has a “mutually respected” relationship with her Grade 6 daughter’s teacher. She and her husband are Chinese immigrants while English is the

primary language spoken in their home. As the primary parent who is involved in her children's education, Wén is also working full-time at a business that she and her husband own together. Wén ensures that her children are culturally-connected to their heritage by supplementing school work with additional homework and having them attend Chinese classes. Wén says she is a "very hands on parent", although how she described her involvement seems to be more indirect and supportive of her child's independence. She says her priority is "being there", providing directions and guidance, and to support self-sufficiency in her child. Wén monitors her child's education by reading teacher emails and feels that the teacher communicates with parents well. She emphasized that the teacher appreciates the personalities and strengths of all the students. Wén has a positive but distant relationship with the teacher but feels that she and the teacher have been able to understand each other more "as the time passed by."

Summary

In this chapter, descriptive features and demographic data of the community and school that served as the site of this study are provided. Background profiles were developed and described for each parent. The next chapter introduces the Grounded Theory of the multi-year classroom parent involvement process that resulted from the analysis, the results of the inter-coder agreement, and an in-depth breakdown of the results from the analysis. The chapter concludes with a meta-narrative of two fictional parents to provide an overall story of the experiences of the parent involvement process in a multi-year classroom.

Chapter 5: Results of Analysis

Overview

The purpose of this study was to develop a general theory for understanding the process of parent involvement in multi-year classrooms. This chapter begins by presenting the categories and concepts of the Grounded Theory, followed by the results of the inter-coder agreement for determining the validity of the categories and concepts. I then present the diagram of the Grounded Theory, which is accompanied by a detailed description of the development of each category and relationships between categories. This chapter concludes with a narration of the parent involvement process from the perspective of the multi-year parent as a means to pull all the data together in story form.

A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

Overview of the grounded theory. Based on the results of the analyses of parent, student, and teacher data, the *Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms* has been developed. The Grounded Theory is inclusive of eight categories: (a) Getting to Know (core category); (b) Being an Advocate; (c) Supporting the In-School Curriculum; (d) Supporting the Out-of-School Curriculum; (e) Supporting Independence; (f) Responding to Involvement Opportunities; (g) Limited Involvement and Relationship Development; and (h) Building the Relationship Over Time (core category). The concepts associated with each category are listed in Table 5.1. The total number of references per category and a breakdown of references of the lower-level concepts for each category across parent-teacher relationship years are provided in a series of tables in Appendix M.

Table 5.1

Categories and Concepts of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

Categories	Concepts
(Core) Category 1 Getting to Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Getting to Know the Routine ➤ Getting to Know the Expectations ➤ Getting to Know the Teacher
Category 2 Being an Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Resolving School-Related Issues If and When Presented ➤ Discussing Interests and Needs ➤ Taking a Leadership Role
Category 3 Supporting the In-School Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Knowing the Level of Educational Development ➤ Asking About and Monitoring School Progress ➤ Providing Instrumental Support with School-Related Activities ➤ Being Present and Supporting School Attendance and Participation
Category 4 Supporting the Out-of-School Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Planning and Engaging in Home Learning Activities ➤ Planning and Being Present for Extracurricular Activities ➤ Planning and Taking Family Outings
Category 5 Supporting Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Knowing the Level of Independence ➤ Supporting Autonomy and Problem-Solving Skills ➤ Supporting Time and Workload Management Skills ➤ Being a Source of Support When Asked
Category 6 Responding to Involvement Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Volunteering for or Attending School Activities ➤ Being Aware and Reading of School-Provided Content ➤ Being Aware and Responding to Teacher-Provided Opportunities to Meet ➤ Exchanging Information and Advice When Asked and Offered
Category 7 Limited Involvement and Relationship Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Being Unsure, Passing Up, or Having Limited Opportunities ➤ Having Family Commitments ➤ Having Communication and Language Differences ➤ Having Pedagogical Differences
(Core) Category 8 Building the Relationship Over Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communication Adapts, Opens Up, and Becomes Comfortable ➤ Getting to Know on a Personal Level ➤ Teacher Pedagogy and Instruction Gains Trust and Appreciation ➤ The Out-of-School Curriculum Becomes Individualized

Inter-coder agreement of categories and concepts. To determine the level of inter-coder agreement, the proportion agreement method was used (Campbell et al., 2013). Taking a random selection of 21 parent transcripts, I reduced each transcript to represent at least 15% of the overall number of words spoken by the participant. Year One Parent transcripts were provided to a RA for coding, who was guided by a CCPD codebook I developed during analysis (see Chapter 3 regarding the inter-coder process). After the RA independently coded the transcripts, we divided the number of times we had agreement in coding a concept or category across the body of the transcript and then divided that number by the total number of combined agreements and disagreements. We repeated this process for all three parent relationship years.

We initially reached 69% inter-coder agreement across all transcripts. Coding disagreements were discussed and after negotiating the coding differences, we reached a final inter-coder agreement of 95%, representing a 36% change in coding from our initial agreement. A breakdown of the results of the inter-coder agreement is provided in Table 5.2. A more comprehensive breakdown of the inter-coder agreement of the 21 transcripts across two interview rounds are provided in the tables in Appendix O.

Table 5.2

Results of the Inter-coder Agreement of Categories and Concepts by Relationship Year

Relationship Year	Initial Agreement	Final Agreement	Change
Year One Parents	57% (202/357)	93% (257/275)	65%
Year Two Parents	84% (158/188)	96% (181/188)	15%
Year Three Parents	63% (93/147)	95% (140/147)	51%
<i>Total</i>	69% (453/652)	95% (578/610)	36%

Diagram of the grounded theory. The diagram of the Grounded Theory (see Figure 5.1) serves several functions: (a) to illustrate the changes and development in parent involvement activities across three years of the multi-year classroom (b) the changes and development in parent-teacher relationships across three years of the multi-year classroom; and (c) the interrelations between the categories over time.

Five categories are considered parent involvement motivators. All three years of the multi-year classroom are listed at the bottom of the figure. Bars with three possible levels of parent involvement are listed for each year and are associated with five parent involvement activities. A scale for rating parent involvement is provided above a series of multi-coloured bars. The scale reflects the range (or levels) of involvement over time as indicated by the word's parents, teachers, and students used, which include high levels of involvement (black shading); moderate levels of involvement (light blue shading); and low levels of involvement (white shading). At the bottom of the figure are barriers and limitations that negatively affect parent involvement and the development of parent-teacher relationships.

Getting to Know to Build the Relationship combine two categories, Getting to Know and Building the Relationship Over Time. The Getting to Know phase covers a time period before the student is enrolled in the classroom and up until the end of the first year. Parents get to know teacher expectations, classroom routine, and other characteristics of the multi-year classroom. In so doing, parents and teachers are Building the Relationship Over Time that includes adapting and opening up during Year One, everyone settling in as parents enter Year Two of their relationship with the teacher, and finally becoming completely comfortable and trusting of the teacher entering Year Three.

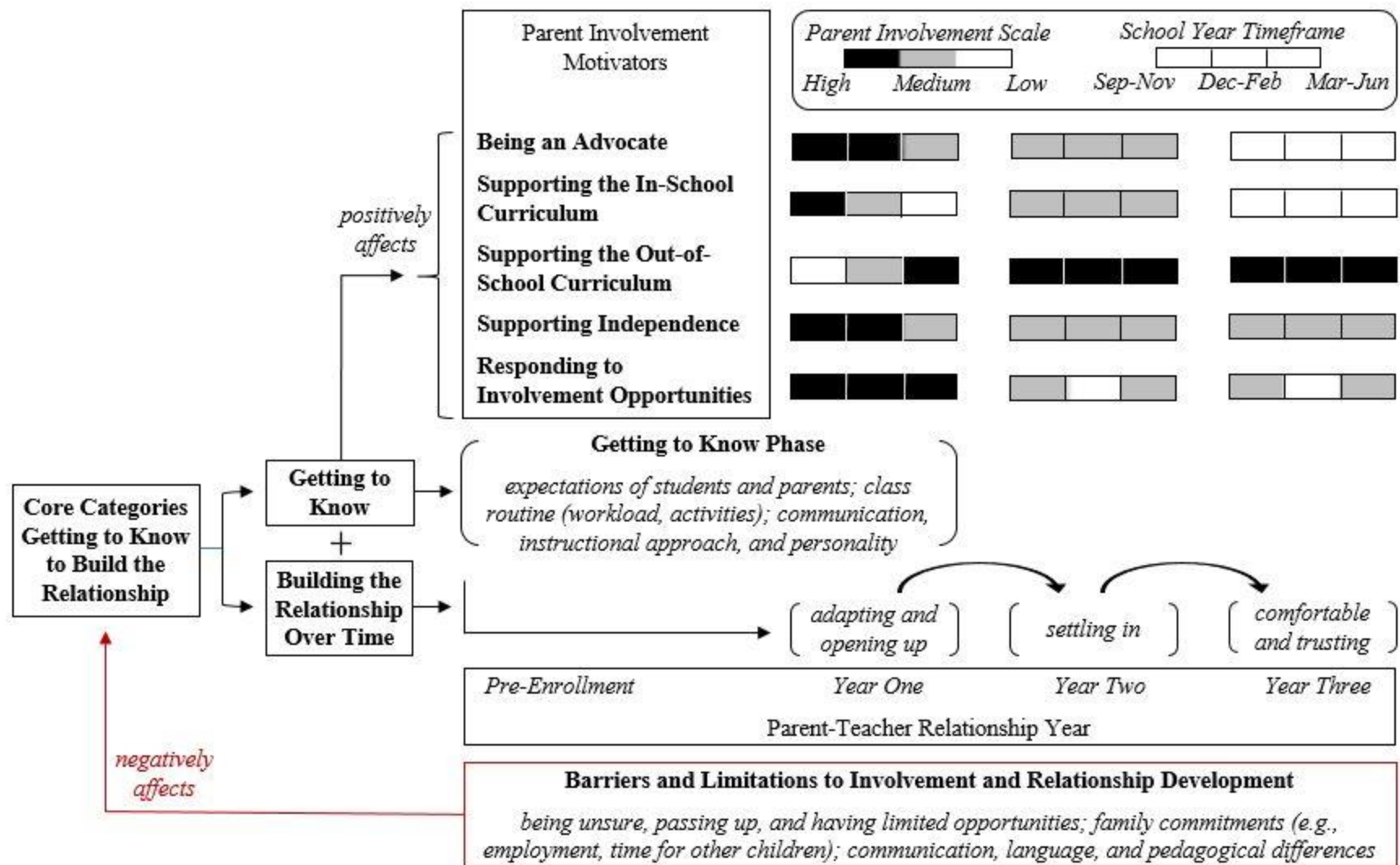


Figure 5.1

Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

The core categories of the grounded theory. The core categories that emerged from the analysis were parents Getting to Know and Building the Relationship Over Time. Together, they form the most relevant categories in explaining the variations of parent' experiences and had the greatest fit in the process of parent involvement in multi-year classrooms. In other words, the process of Getting to Know and Building the Relationship Over Time served as a coherent explanation of how parents involved themselves, responded to involvement opportunities in their child's multi-year classroom, and built a relationship with the teacher over time.

Getting to Know as a core category. The context that led parents to be motivated towards Getting to Know included several conditions. The first of which was related to how aware a parent was about the classroom routine, teacher expectations, and the teacher herself. Parents spoke of wanting to know whether the multi-year classroom is the right environment for their child and what the teacher's expectations will be. Parents who were new to the multi-year classroom structure were also less aware and were prompted to take any combination of parent involvement activities.

Parents engaged in several involvement activities including, but not limited to: (a) Being an Advocate by attending conferences and meeting the teacher before and after school to gain information as to whether the classroom and teacher are the right fit for their child (*discussing interests and needs*); (b) Supporting the In-School Curriculum by gaining information through talks with the teacher or the child, reading classroom blogs and emails (*asking about and monitoring school progress*), or becoming more acquainted with the classroom content by providing direct support to their child (*providing instrumental support with school-related activities*); and (c) Responding to Involvement Opportunities (*volunteering for or attending*

school activities), which allowed parents to talk with and observe the teacher and classroom environment.

Getting to Know was not only a motivating factor for parent involvement prior to and/or during the initial months of the student being enrolled in the multi-year classroom but Getting to Know was deeply tied to all other categories and had an important effect on what involvement activities parents would engage in across the three years. Getting to Know was a motivating factor for parents to become informed of various elements of the student's new multi-year classroom, including the classroom routine, the teacher's instructional style, and the expectations of students and parents.

The Getting to Know period generally fades by the end of the first year but provides the foundation for parent-teacher relationship development that spans the multi-year program. Getting to Know also influences when and how parents advocate for their child, the type of support provided for the in-school curriculum and the out-of-school curriculum, as well as supporting student independence and knowing what parent involvement opportunities are being offered.

Building the Relationship Over Time as a core category. The second core category, Building the Relationship Over Time, helped to explain the variation in parent-teacher relationship development. Getting to Know was a key feature in the early development of parent-teacher relationships and, consequently, led to changes in how parents involved themselves in their child's education over the span of the three years. Similarly, when limitations and barriers were present and affected a parent's ability in Getting to Know and Building Relationships Over Time, parent-teacher interactions and parent involvement were affected. When linguistic and

ethnic differences were present in parent-teacher relationships, parents would take alternative paths in Getting to Know characteristics of the classroom.

One of the effects of extending relationships beyond one academic year is that Building the Relationship Over Time takes place and supports building parent-teacher trust and comfort. The developmental nature of the parent-teacher relationship in multi-year classrooms is a process that begins with a parent's motivation to get to know the classroom and teacher's expectations. The first year of the parent-teacher relationship development begins with parents Getting to Know the teacher, the expectations, the curriculum focus, and other characteristics of the multi-year classroom. Parents and teachers come to the relationship with different philosophies of how students learn, how teachers should teach, as well as differences in personalities and approaches to communication.

During the first year of their child's multi-year classroom, First Year Parents adapt to the teacher's preferences for communicating (e.g., when parents can visit, when emails will be responded to) and align with the teacher's expectations of parent involvement (e.g., how much support and independence to provide the student). The teacher "opens up" towards the end of the first year, and parents and teachers get to know each other on a more personal level by the end of the year and each year thereafter. During the second year, the parent-teacher relationship is becoming more comfortable and as such, "everyone just settles in". Parents have a greater appreciation for the teacher's instructional approach and the teacher is better able to support the parent in developing an out-of-school curriculum as a result of better understanding the student's needs and interests. By the third year, everyone is comfortable, there is a high level of trust in the teacher, and the work that has been "invested" over the first two years all "comes to fruition" in the final year.

Responding to involvement opportunities. Responding to Involvement Opportunities was a motivating factor for parent involvement that was distinct from other motivators as the locus of motivation was external to the parent. First Year Parents were Responding to Involvement Opportunities more often, while Second Year Parents and Third Year Parents responded to involvement opportunities during the early and late portions of the school year when more events and activities were planned, and parent presence and support was expected by the teacher. Teachers provided more involvement opportunities that required physical presence in the school during the first year, as this was the time that issues needed to be addressed and parents could engage in Being an Advocate for their child. Additionally, teachers were still learning about the student during the first year and would ask for advice from parents.

Parents of all year levels were provided opportunities to be involved by monitoring the activities in the classroom through teacher-provided blogs and emails. For parents in their first year, this served as an additional source of Getting to Know the classroom and teacher, while Second Year Parents and Third Year Parents used these sources of information as their primary source of staying updated with classroom activities and monitoring the progress of the student. This category also influenced each parent's involvement in supporting the out-of-school curriculum as teachers offered ideas for parents and students to engage in learning activities at home and in the community that were unrelated to the classroom curriculum.

Negative effects of barriers on involvement and relationship development. All parents faced some barrier or multiple barriers to their involvement. Barriers that limited parent's desire to get involved occurred most often by parents in their first year. Parents faced barriers in getting involved in the student's education often due to being unaware of involvement opportunities and when there was limited amount of teacher-provided opportunities. Parents of

all year levels had family commitments that, at times, restricted their involvement levels. Employment was most often a barrier for fathers, while employment gradually became a barrier to the involvement of mothers as they felt they could back away and given their child more independence. Additional barriers included shifting greater attention to other children in the family, particularly younger siblings or a sibling that had been diagnosed with an exceptionality.

During the first year, parents were Getting to Know the teacher's expectations, the role they will have in supporting the student, and when and where opportunities for involvement in the classroom will occur. After Getting to Know the teacher's instructional style and expectations, parents determine whether the teacher is the right fit for their child. Parent-teacher relationships where pedagogical differences existed would cause parents to be reluctant in approaching the teacher and consequently, limited parents and teachers in Building the Relationship Over Time. Parents who continued having their child enrolled in the multi-year classroom despite pedagogical differences were able to adapt to the teacher's expectations and instructional approach, or viewed the teacher as the expert as part of the values within their culture, and/or were influenced by the student's perceptions of the teacher.

Parents who did not adapt or whose child had incidences of conflicts with the teacher were more likely to remove the student after the first year concluded. Added to this, when parents came to know of pedagogical differences through word-of-mouth (e.g., from other parents prior to meeting the teacher) and were unsuccessful in placing the student with their preferred multi-year classroom teacher, there was a greater chance that the student would be removed from the classroom after the first year.

Language differences that existed in the parent-teacher relationship, at times, affected parent involvement and reduced parent's efficacy to support the student. Language differences

alone did not negatively affect the parent-teacher relationship. Language differences in the parent-teacher relationship took more energy on the part of parents towards Getting to Know the teacher, leading to less involvement in the school and classroom at the start of the year.

However, the presence of these parents increased over the first year as they became more comfortable with talking to the teacher. As one parent noted, it took time for the teacher to understand her feelings and the words she was wanting to get across.

Pedagogical and communication differences, on the other hand, affected both parent involvement and the Building the Relationship Over Time. Barriers that limited involvement after the first year were more related to decisions by parents to back away after Getting to Know the teacher and the trust and comfort that built up, and therefore had less of an impact on the parent-teacher relationship the second and third year of the multi-year program.

To orient the reader further to the categories and concepts of the Grounded Theory, the following subsections provide results of the analysis of parent interviews supplemented by student and teacher data across the eight categories and their associated concepts.

Category 1: Getting to Know

The first category presents the results of Year One Parents who recalled their experiences of going through a Getting to Know period during the first year. For Year Two Parents and Year Three Parents, this category is a retrospective and presents the results of parent' experiences of the Getting to Know period during the first year.

Concepts for getting to know.

Getting to know the routine. Transitioning from Grade 3 to Grade 4 prompted parents to Get to Know the routine of the new classroom, including daily activities and curriculum focus, by speaking and exchanging emails with the teacher, reading classroom or school blogs, and for

some parents, speaking with other students and parents with multi-year classroom experience. Parents emphasized an uncertainty with the new multi-year classroom. *First Year Parents*, like Beverly, spoke of their uncertainty with the types of classroom assignments and workload. “[W]hen I saw what the work was, I was like “Oh, this is what you’re doing in school?” And that was in September...and I was like wow! Already?” Parents identified the jump in the amount of homework from Grade 3 to Grade 4 took “a little bit of an adjustment”, as Maurice mentioned.

Second Year Parents noted their anticipation of Getting to Know the new classroom. Sofieke reflected on the “great eagerness” she had in wanting “to know and understand” how the multi-year classroom was “going to work and how it was going to be.” She said there was a “newness piece”, which was similar to Heng’s experience of Getting to Know the homework routine. Heng recalled that at the “Start of 4th, [the teacher] was doing something new as well for her...But it is something new but after work on few months and you get the hang of it.”

Third Year Parents also saw the move from Grade 3 to Grade 4 as a transitional period that required Getting to Know the class routine, adjusting to a greater workload. For instance, Sajwa noted that “they definitely had more homework.” Parents like Sajwa described that part of Getting to Know the curriculum led to an adjustment of how they interacted with their child, who also was in transition. “With my son”, Sajwa recalled, “he needed a bit more encouragement to actually sit down and do it.”

Getting to know the expectations. Parents of all year levels identified their interest in Getting to Know the teacher’s expectations of students and parents during the first year. Expectations for greater student independence was a transition for *First Year Parents* like Fu, which helped shape the way parents supported the student’s education for the remainder of the multi-year classroom. “Because this is one of the things her school teacher is asking for, is let

them do their work and let them be independent, so that's what we're doing." Fu and his wife, like other parents, were uncertain of the teacher's expectations of parent involvement and would check in directly with the teacher to ask, "If you need any help, just let us know because we don't know what you need." Parents like Li, however, had difficulty getting to know the curriculum and felt the expectations the teacher had of her were not communicated,

The only communication we had direct, one-on-one, is the conference...the teacher gave us a sheet with set expectations for several areas and let us fill in. So we prepared to use...So basically when I got in, the whole process was the teacher listening while I was telling the expectations...It really is me reading aloud my paper, that's about it. I didn't know what is the – so I was kind of a little bit lost when I stepped out of the meeting and I was like, oh, the teacher didn't give me any monitor on time, expectation for how many minutes I had about this.

The uncertainty parents felt was partially due to the changes in expectations and responsibilities of students moving from lower to upper elementary grades. *Second Year Parents* like Sofieke remembered the changes in her parent role because her child was making a transition from Grade 3 to Grade 4. "The expectation of you is different in 4th grade. I think there is a certain level of you being more responsible for your own things and your own work that is not the same in the lower elementary classrooms."

This Getting to Know period had greater levels of parent-teacher interactions, which declined as students moved up grade levels. *Third Year Parents*, like Sajwa, recalled that during the first few months of the student's new multi-year classroom was part of Getting to Know the teacher's expectations. "Parents are trying to get to know a new teacher more", which can affect the level of involvement because "[parents] feel they have to communicate more with them more in their first year."

Getting to know the teacher. Parents of all year levels described Getting to Know the teacher's personality, instructional style, and communication preferences their first year. Getting to Know came through direct interactions, observations, and talking with other parents and students. Some *First Year Parents* consulted with other parents either prior to their child enrolling in the multi-year classroom or during the first few months of the academic year, like Beverly, who had conversations with parents about the teacher and learning that "they absolutely love her." Amelyn recalled hearing comments about the teacher from her child, "Yeah, I mean I think this teacher is wonderful...I hear a lot of positive comments that she tells me – things the teacher talks about with the kids."

Second Year Parents discussed that getting to know the teacher helped them to learn about the teacher, which helped to inform their enrolment decisions. Heng said about her daughter transitioning into Grade 4 that, "she is going to change a teacher, change a class, so there are three choices, so I talked to other parents and the other parents had very positive comments."

Third Year Parents cited other parents as a source of information as well, which helped to establish some level of trust going into the new classroom prior to meeting the teacher directly. Sajwa recalled hearing about the teacher "from other parents...we heard good things about her, so I guess we were somewhat trusting that she'd do a good job in Grade 4." Some parents had known the teacher after having an older child enrolled in the classroom, like Shin who came to know her son's teacher first through her oldest child. "First time, because my son is older than my daughter, he had [the teacher] first. I didn't know [the teacher] until then...". Other parents used volunteer activities or attending school events as opportunities to Get to Know the teacher. Ramona, for example, said "I've been on field trips with the class as well and so I can see how

she interacts with the kids...or at school events and things like that. I feel like I've kind of gotten to know her over the years. As a person, I know sort of where she comes from..."

Teacher and student voices. Interviews with teachers and students corroborated the experiences of parents going through a Getting to Know period. Teachers recalled interacting more with parents of students who were in their first year of the multi-year classroom and that these parents had a greater presence in the classroom compared to parents of students in their second or third year of the program. Moreover, teachers observed that First Year Parents' classroom presence had dropped off as their child graduated grade levels. Teacher 3, for example, said "It's all the first-year students when I need to have a conversation with the parents" and "[W]ith the first-year students, we're getting to know each other..." Teacher 2 observed that First Year Parents were anxious entering the multi-year classroom but going through the getting to know phase eased the anxiety,

I think it's just they get to know me. They get to know the classroom. It's just a different ballgame. Because of these kids go from 1/2/3 together and then they go to 4/5/6. So, it's just a different class. And then also I do have quite a few students who come in from other schools so just the first year that they enter our school, it's so different from the school they come from. So, it's just the anxiety about how is it different, what are the expectations, what is this teacher going to be like. But it does lessen every year that they're with me.

Students had observed their parents Getting to Know the teacher's expectations, including Student 23 who said "Grade 4 parents like to talk to the teacher on field trips too because it's a time to get to know them. How the teacher works with the class. How they put things under control I guess." Students discussed a Getting to Know period as a factor for increased parent involvement early in the multi-year program, including Student 25 who said,

“Especially for some new students, who don’t know the teachers, like parents get to know the teachers very well, that’s why it increases.”

Student 14 said his parents “gradually got to know it [classroom routine] because they really like to know, and I tell them what I did because they like to know.” Students talked about observing a drop-off in parent presence in the school as they progressed through their multi-year program. The student mentioned that there was a difference in Grade 5 which they were “kind of like new to the concept of homework so it was like a transition. Year 4 is a transition year that you start getting homework and you start getting due dates.” Student 12 was asked to illustrate how she thought her parent’s relationship was with her teacher. In the student’s picture (Figure 5.2) she included her mother saying “Hi!” to the teacher and her father saying “Nice to meet you!” Asked what the picture represents, the student talked about how her parents have gotten to know her teacher,

Well, they’re more used to her I guess, you know, like, um – they’re not – well, I know her better than they do, right? But um, they still like they saw her, right? Like they talked to her before so they sort of know her right? Her personality and what she wants. What she likes in a student. Like what she focuses on, how she’s a good teacher... Because it’s just at the beginning of the year, that’s why they wanted to put me in her classroom, that’s why. Because they knew about her, like she’s a really good teacher. They heard from everybody else and so they repeated that to her.



Figure 5.2

Grade Five Student Illustration of Her Parents Getting to Know the Teacher's Personality

Category 2: Being an Advocate

Concepts for being an advocate.

Resolving school-related issues when presented. *First Year Parents*, especially mothers, were prompted to resolve education issues by talking with the teacher after observing concerns with the student's academic performance at home. Zan, for example, said, "I found some problems that are really big issues, so I sent emails to her teacher and really want talk about the problems." Fathers, however, were more likely to get involved when prompted by the student, teacher, or other parent and would join their spouse in resolving an issue. Fu noted that he and his wife were asked by his daughter to speak with her teacher, but said, "So far, I think only a few times that she needs us to ask the teacher." Li was unsure why some services for her child have reduced so she has been in constant communication with the school to ensure her child gets the services she feels would be needed for her child to succeed academically.

So, I'm thinking we make another appointment...but I really think – she had three ELL classes last semester, Grade 3, now it's reduced to one and that's after several repetition – repeated asking about, “Why she's not at ELL?”

Second Year Parents were less likely to need to advocate for their child, citing their resolution of academic, behavioural, and social problems the previous year. Alexis was one parent who went to the teacher to resolve an issue on her son's behalf,

The first year my son was in the multi-year program he was in the youngest group in the class as a Grade 4 student. He was new to the school and the boys who were in second or third year, Grade 5 and 6, were not inclusive. I went to the teacher to explain the problem and she worked on rectifying it.

Parents were less likely to need to ensure the teacher is aware of the student's needs and interests compared to the year before as the teacher and student relationship had a full year to develop and they could get to know each other. When parents in their second year discussed Being an Advocate, they cited their experiences the previous year and taking up leadership roles in the school. Parents of students with exceptionalities did mention the need to advocate for their child as part of Individualized Education Planning meetings.

Many *Third Year Parents* cited their resolving of school-related issues during the first year of the multi-year program, while student independence and academic success were cited as reasons why parents felt they could reduce the need to advocate on behalf of the student.

“Fortunately, they are quite independent and are doing well at school” Sajwa said, adding,

“Should our children have had any difficulty in school, we would have stepped up our involvement with more frequent meetings with the teacher, developing a plan to help, and engaging a tutor.” While most parents needed to resolve school-related issues during the first year of the multi-year program, Ruth mentioned having conversations with the teacher about her

son's behaviours. "He had a hard year last year in terms of finding his place and finding his way through this year when he was in a bit of a funk, I guess you could call it."

Discussing needs and interests. First Year Parents were motivated to discuss their child's needs and interests with the teacher, including offering information and advice as part of parent-teacher conferences so that instruction could better match the needs of the student. Parents were motivated to discuss the needs and interests of their child as part of a Getting to Know period to determine if the teacher is the right fit for their child. For example, Beverly began the year having a conversation with the teacher about her son's auditory impairment, suggesting to the teacher that her son "may need to be close in proximity" to the teacher so the student can hear the instruction.

The experiences of *Second Year Parents* speaking to the teacher about the student's needs and interests were part of parent-teacher conferences during the first year. Entering the second year, teachers were more likely to initiate contact if there was a concern. When parents initiated contact to discuss the needs of the student, it was to check in with the teacher about any concerns the parent should be aware of and the academic status of the student. "I probably talked to her two or three times in person outside of the parent-teacher conference" Heng said. "I was just going to, because when I was picking up [my daughter], I was just going to briefly chatted to see any concern." Here again, Heng is Getting to Know if the student is meeting expectations or if there are any concerns that need to be discussed.

Third Year Parents talked about the informal meetings and formal conferences they had with the teacher in the previous years and the current academic year where they could discuss their child's needs and interests. Ruth mentioned having "one chat" about her son's goals and so

did Shin, who said “we had a parent-teacher conference to set the goal for the children about October.”

Taking a leadership role. *First Year Parents* were less likely to describe having a leadership role within the classroom, school, or broader school district compared to parents in their second or third years. However, there were Second Year Parents and Third Year Parents who discussed having leadership roles (e.g., class leader, PAC member, coordinating school events) that started in their first year of the multi-year classroom.

Second Year Parents were more likely to describe advocating for their child or other children by taking a leadership role within the classroom or school and broader district (e.g., PAC leadership) than any other parent year level. However, some parents, like Sofieke, did reduce her leadership role.

Part of my involvement with the school – one has to do of course with just my children, my children’s needs in their classrooms, but the second part has really been around parent voice in the school and that part didn’t require me to be there in person as much anymore in year two as I felt I could do it differently.

Third Year Parents discussed being part of committees to help fundraise for school programs and community issues (e.g., food drives to fight hunger), attending PAC meetings to understand and voice issues related to the needs of students and schools, as well as being team leaders of classroom-based and school-based competitive projects and challenges that support collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

Teacher and student voices. Interviews with teachers and students helped to validate the findings of parents, including Teacher 3, who said, “I don't have a lot of contact with the second- and third-year students. Unless their parents are like – three of my parents are all involved in the PACs so they’ll email me about things that are going on...” Students observed a reduction in

parents needing to advocate for them as issues were often resolved the first year and students were taking more responsibility for solving problems as they progressed through the program. For Student 14, he had described being shy in the past but opened up in the second year and would go to the teacher if he had questions about homework. In his story of losing his homework (“supposedly”), he rejected his mother’s attempt to solve his problem by going to the teacher directly to ask for a copy of the assignment,

So I had this piece of paper that I supposedly lost but [my teacher] has a way of like – first you have a really hard look in your desk, then you ask your classmates, and then you look in your house, and then you ask your teacher for another copy. And my mom’s like ‘Well just ask for another copy’ and I’m like ‘But it doesn’t work that way’ and she’s like ‘Why can’t you just ask for another copy?’ I guess she didn’t like understand the ways so I have to go explain it and she’s like “Ugh! So you’re telling me I have to go in and ask?” And I go “No, no, no, no, no, no! You don’t have to do that. I guess I’ll just make due with what I have to do.” And I did it and I got my copies.

Student 7 spoke positively of his parent’s relationship with the teacher, saying that when there are school difficulties, his parents will work with the teacher to “sort [issues] out together”. In his picture (Figure 5.3), the student drew a web of responses to the question, “How do I view my parent’s relationship w/ my teacher”. The student answered, “When something not good or good happens they sort it out together”. The student then identified two formats how his parents and teacher “sort it out”, “via parent-teacher conference” and “via email.”

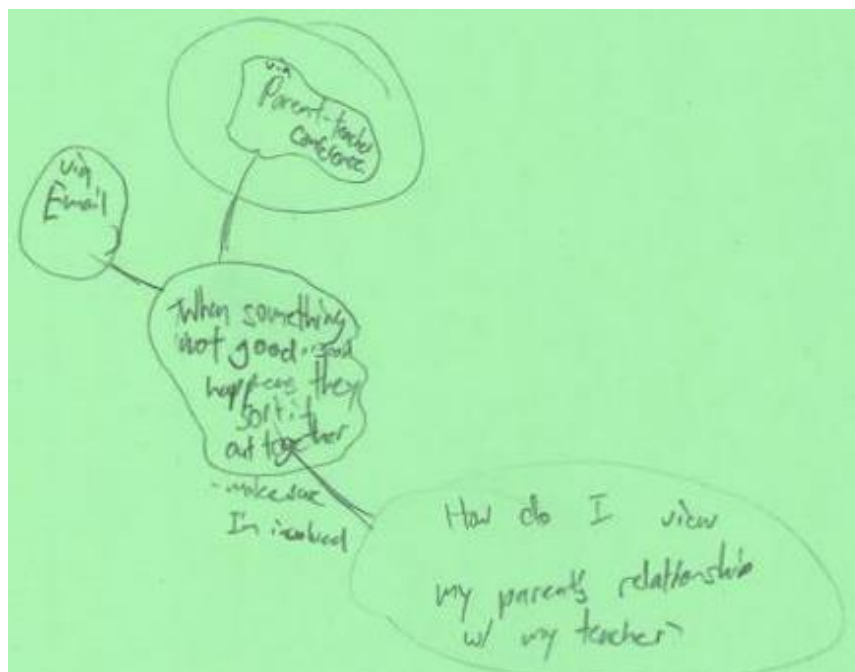


Figure 5.3

Grade 4 Student Illustration of Parents Being an Advocate

Category 3: Supporting the In-School Curriculum

Concepts for supporting the in-school curriculum.

Knowing the level of educational development. Understanding student' level of development was a way *First Year Parents* were guided to the type of support they could provide. For Beverly, knowing the student's developmental level changes a parent's support, saying "I'd say there has been a change in the support because his learning level has changed...and so our interactions with him have changed because of that." Other parents like Li knew their child's level of academic development but were unsure of their role as a parent in advancing their child's academic skills.

Second Year Parents provided details about student' academic development and personality, including having conversations with their child to gauge their academic interests and

goals. Sofieke talks with her daughter to “see what she is interested in, honour the things she wants to learn, and accomplish and what her goals are.”

Third Year Parents were especially adept about their children’s developmental level and using their knowledge to supplement the in-school curriculum with additional learning activities at home. Some parents were aware of changes in their children, including being more active in the classroom, more social, and asking more questions.

Asking about and monitoring school progress. From Grade 3 to Grade 4, *First Year Parents* transitioned into a more hands-off approach by providing less direct support and stepping back and asking about and monitoring school progress. Fu said, “This year is a little bit different. We still try to be supportive...but other than that it’s just following the school work.” Li monitors her child’s social wellbeing given past social rejection from peers,

This class is more friendlier, yeah. I ask her all the time. She’s pretty happy about it. In Grade 3, she had challenges. She’s a very people person. She wants to be with other people. It’s big thing for her but she got rejected all the time. That was Grade 3. This class more friendly.

Second Year Parents also monitor student progress by asking about the student’s day. Anna, for example, said “I like to know what’s going on in their day and I like to know how they’re doing. Yeah, I’ll purposely walk so that he has to walk home with me so that he’ll actually open up and talk.” Anna felt that walks were better than “a ten-minute car ride” where questions are not being asked and there is less interaction and discussions about their days.

Third Year Parents monitor student progress by observing and connecting with the teacher. For example, Shin said “I just observe how she’s doing and if she’s not doing as a scheduled, I notify her.” When Shin was asked what the primary reason was for the contact between her and the school, she said it was “about what [her child] is doing or what [she] needs

to do at school.” Sajwa also monitors her student progress by attending “all parent-teacher meetings to gain feedback as to how [our child] is doing.”

Providing instrumental support with school-related activities. *First Year Parents* were motivated to ask and provide direct support with the student’s school-related activities when observing the student having academic difficulties, like Maurice would support his son “if he’s challenged with certain things like math [and] help him work through that.”

Second Year Parents provided less instrumental support with student school work, but instead set the space and provided the tools necessary for students to complete their work, providing guidance when asked. Sofieke said her way of supporting her daughter “is simply to provide [my child] a place where she can do her work at home, to make sure that she’s not crazy scheduled so that she would have no time at home.”

Since the first year, *Third Year Parents* gradually reduced helping the student with school-related activities at home, now only providing minimal support when requested. Sajwa noted that “we try to provide support to our children as needed. For example, helping with homework, assisting with projects when they request it.” She goes on to discuss the amount of instrumental support since Grade 4,

I think in the project work when she was in Grade 4, we’d help her out with a project a little bit, but I think going into Grade 6 it’s very minimal. I wouldn’t say like tons more but yeah. Not so much the homework but the big projects, like the Science Fair projects. So things that were a bit more involved.

Being present and supporting school attendance and participation. *First Year Parents* had a greater presence in the school compared to other year levels, which resulted from a combination of parents Getting to Know the classroom routine, advocating on behalf of the student, and attending school events. A parent was more likely to drop off the student at school

and pick them up at the end of the day. However, parent' presence tended to increase as the year progressed, including Zan who said, "I saw [teacher's last name] more in Term 2 than Term 1."

There was a noticeable decrease in *Second Year Parents'* interactions with the teacher and presence in the school. Anna, for instance, said "my husband and I did volunteer to be the team managers for their [name of classroom program], but other than that, we didn't do anything." Sofieke discussed why there was a decline in classroom presence and teacher interactions in the second year,

In the beginning there's an early need to want to learn as much as you can about them and make sure you let them know how eager and willing and supportive you want to be and later on it's not any less of that but I think the energy you put towards wanting them to get that message drops because they've already got that message now and you turn your energy towards actually doing and supporting and trying to be as reflective at home as I can be about what's happening at school.

Third Year Parents had a reduced presence in the classroom from previous years, but still maintained broader school and district-level involvement. Parents in their third year often spoke of their past experiences volunteering in the classroom, taking part in classroom activities, and how parent involvement impacts the students. When asked how her presence at the school affects her child, Ruth described the result of school feeling like a community and her child Getting to Know more teachers,

Just because I'm always there, I'm always helping, I run all of the events, I do the volunteer coordinating so I'm always there, always chatting and talking so i feel like – it's like community. It's like anything, the more invested you are, it all kind of trickles down right to your kids too, like they know more teachers than they might otherwise because they're with me while we're chatting or working at events and yeah.

Teacher and student voices. Teacher and student interviews corroborated the parents' experiences Supporting the In-School Curriculum. The use of blogs and emails were used to keep parents informed of the in-school curriculum. Teacher 1 used different modes of communication for different purposes,

The blog and email serve sort of two different purposes. Blogs serves the purpose of informing the parents of what's coming up, with a little highlight of cool stuff we did last week...It's like 'Oh, now you know that there's homework this week', or 'the plays coming up' and 'we have a field trip and get the form in', right? It frontloads the information. Whereas I feel email is more personal follow-up.

Teachers observed a general decrease in parental presence from Grade 4 to Grade 6. However, grade level was not the key factor, familiarity and comfortability with the new classroom were. For example, Teacher 3 said,

It doesn't matter what grade they're in, but the first time I had them, they typically – If they're going to be more anxious – it's going to be at the beginning, or more involved it's going to be at the beginning. And then it – like I said, I have a few parents where it stayed the same but for the majority of them it definitely decreases over time, so I don't see them as often. I don't receive as many emails.

Interviews with students revealed an overlap with parents Getting to Know, including needing to learn the class routine. Some students spoke about parents learning about the school work, and as a result, would know to monitor and remind the student to complete it. One student spoke of needing to be reminded a few times by his parents to complete his homework before he monitored his own out-of-school time.

Students observed a reduction of instrumental support from the beginning to the end of their first year of the multi-year program. For example, Student 8 said his mother supported him in the first few months of the school year because it took time to get to know and adjust to the

increase in class workload. “At the beginning of the year, my mom said, “We’re going to help you at the beginning but slowly decrease the help as you go on.” The reduction in support was related to parents Getting to Know the teacher’s expectations of parents and students, which translated into parents supporting the student’s independence. Student 16 mentioned that her parents and teacher have developed a communication system, which has been effective for her parents to monitor her academic progress and class activities.

Well, they always know what’s going on. I can usually – I don’t think I’ve ever been able to sneak like a test or something. But part of that is because [my teacher], usually every two weeks or so, she sends an email over the next two weeks which has, um, like – so she has what’s due, what’s going on. So, say there was a concert, that would be on there. Or, um, an assembly, that would be on there. And then she even has our normal things like computer lab and P.E. There’s a really good communication system.

Student 22 was asked to illustrate how he felt his parent’s relationship was with his teacher. In the picture (Figure 5.4), he drew the teacher on one side of a round table and him and his mother on the other side. He said, “They get along pretty well.” Asked to describe his picture, he said, “That’s the mom and the teacher. They’re talking about us next to students. They’re talking about how I’m doing, how’s it going, about how the term is going. Stuff like that.”



Figure 5.4

Grade 6 Student Illustration of a Parent Asking About and Monitoring School Progress

Category 4: Supporting the Out-of-School Curriculum

Concepts for supporting the out-of-school curriculum.

Planning and engaging in home learning activities. As part of an out-of-school curriculum, *First Year Parents* were motivated to organize home learning activities that included spending family time together, reading together, and doing academic work unrelated to the school curriculum. Amelyn noted,

I'm very interested in education and education is very important to me. I also view it as a way for me to spend time with my children. I enjoy teaching my children how to read. I enjoy reading aloud to my children. I think literature is important so I like to make sure that they're reading good literature.

Other parents provided activities to support behavioural and independence development. Zan, for example, implemented a reward system at home to improve her cousin's independence, "You do

everything good, you got like points. You do like laundry or you clean table, you also get points. She loves it because she wants to earn money.”

Second Year Parents also organized home learning activities that included spending family time and reading together, assigning chores, and doing academic work unrelated to the school curriculum. “We also have some additional math homework at home to make sure that math skill is practiced”, Heng noted. Parents in their second year also emphasized particular skill sets, including Anna, who organized activities that would enhance the student’s life skills.

Similar to parents in their second year, *Third Year Parents* also engaged in home activities but were less formal, more discussion-based, and with greater student input and control of out-of-school time. Ruth for example, said that, “After school everybody comes and connects with me” Ruth said, “then they usually go and play with their friends or that kind of thing for the next few hours.” Family time around the dinner table was an opportunity to catch up with each other’s days. Ruth said, “Depending on the day we usually all try to come back and have dinner.” She and her children have breakfast together every morning, saying “We talk about our lunches every day, what they want in their lunch, what they don’t want in their lunches, healthy choices.” Ruth uses that time as an opportunity to “talk about the day ahead. What that looks like.”

Planning and being present for extracurricular activities. As part of the out-of-school curriculum, *First Year Parents* would plan with the student, coordinate, and attend extracurricular activities. Beverly, for example, said, “I push one on him and that’s it. But the rest is like, ‘Well what do you want to do? Do wanna’ do it or don’t wanna’ do it?’ Look at your schedule. Can you manage it? Think about that.” Parents enrolled the student in sports, dance, and music activities, and learning programs to support language development and subject-specific skills. Parents whose primary language spoken in the household was not English were

more likely to enroll the student in additional academic and language learning programs. Fu said her daughter “still has extra work outside of school. A little bit of math and a little bit of English. Mandarin is our first language, so we put her into Mandarin school.” Li noticed that other parents had enrolled their children in learning services and it appears to have encouraged her to do likewise. “Especially Chinese parents, they take them to many classes after school”, Li observed, “I’m thinking of actually setting [her daughter] up on Kumon.”

Similar to parents of other year levels, *Second Year Parents* helped establish an out-of-school curriculum for the student, but students were included in the discussions and planning. Sofieke, for example, said that, “when there’s things she wants to do, then we have to negotiate between us and come to some kind of discussion.” Part of the discussion and negotiation for Sofieke was to ask her child questions, “Why do you want to do that? What is it that you want to do?”

Third Year Parents remarked on having less presence in the classroom while providing more support with organizing and providing transportation to and from the student’s extra-curricular activities. When asked whether her involvement had changed in any way, Sajwa said,

I’d say probably increased involvement not necessarily in the classroom but things like [my daughter’s] started joining the track team in Grade 5 and 6 and so then I’d be driving some of the kids to the meets. So I think that’s probably things like that would be the only thing that’s been increased since Grade 5 and 6. Like as her involvement increases in school activities, so does ours.

Wén said that she would provide additional homework for her daughter to support learning at school, “I found that although she grasp concept of math completely, she need more exercises at home to reinforce the math she learned from school.

Planning and taking family outings. A couple of *First Year Parents* discussed going on family trips, taking walks, going camping, visiting museums, and aquariums. Parents used these opportunities to have conversations with the student, including Beverly who goes on bike rides with her son to have discussions about how school is progressing.

Second Year Parents plan for and take outings as a family, including Anna, who says, “we do a lot of things like go to Science World or go to the aquarium.” Similar to planning out extra-curricular activities the student wishes to participate in, parents talked about their discussions, including Sofieke, who described a process of “negotiation” when her child wanted to take part in activities that may have been at a higher level of independence. As a result of the discussion, Sofieke and daughter “ended up doing was negotiating time” to get to the errands that needed to get done, “but then spend time outside and honour that there was going to be something family and outdoors that we can still do together.”

Third Year Parents also organized and took part in family activities in the community that was meant to expose students to different cultures and new ideas. For example, Sajwa listed off activities she and her family participate in the community, including “visiting bookstores, book fairs, and libraries.” She goes on to say, “We have tried to provide as many educational and fun opportunities outside of school within our means [including] trips to the Aquarium, Science World, or enjoying the outdoors.”

Teacher and student voices. Teacher and student data validated the experiences of parents who were motivated to support the out-of-school curriculum. Teacher 1 observed that one of the reasons for parents to come to the class is to find way to better support their child at home with additional homework or academic classes. Teacher 3 reflected on the ages of her

students being at the right stage of development when parents support the establishment of a routine of extra-curricular activities,

Particularly at this age, this is the time for them to be like they're setting up those routines. They're setting up habits, going home and even like I always say, whether it would just be that they read a book...but even just reading a book with them is like setting up a homework routine, like an expectation that we sit down and do this now. I mean, right now parents schedule their kids to do so many things after school. They're definitely – they seem to be more of the instigator of that external study. It doesn't seem as though the kids are really involved in that. It seems like really its parents determining that you need to do more or you need to this as well.

Additionally, students noted that parents helping to establish an out-of-school curriculum supported their independence. Student 14 says that he is “pretty independent” with his extra-curricular activities. “I’m a big soccer player and my dad and my mom said they’d give me more independence”. By the third year of the multi-year program, students observed their parent’s support of the out-of-school curriculum took up a greater portion of their involvement. Students cited the community as the location where their parents were most involved compared to involvement at school or in the home, including Student 23 who said his parents are involved with him and his brother in the “community a lot because my brother and I do a lot of activities and they also really like going to the library.” Student 27 said,

My mom sends us to after school classes, so she’ll pick us up at school and then we’ll go to gymnastics or piano or painting or whatever it is. And so I guess that would be like community because she does that basically every day and that’s involved a lot. But then cooking our meals, taking care of our pets when we’re away.

After Student 8 drew a picture (5.5) illustrating how he believed his parents were involved, he described his parents enrolling and attending his soccer matches.



Figure 5.5

Grade 4 Student Illustration of Parents Support and Presence for Non-Academic Activities

Category 5: Supporting Independence

Concepts for supporting independence.

Knowing the level of independence. To support the student's independence, *First Year Parents* would observe how the student adjusts moving up a grade level regarding maturity and independence levels. Fu, for example, said the expectations for student independence is "a little bit different, but I think it's good for her." Beverly said that her son is "at the early stages" of independence. "There's an emotional maturity in him for sure. For sure I see that." She noticed that her son was coming to her less frequently to advocate for him or to offer emotional support when he had a bad day. "And from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, he wasn't coming to me upset about stuff. He was actually addressing it on his own in the classroom." Li, however, was conflicted in giving too much independence for her daughter given her academic difficulties. "these three weeks I got more and more nervous because I'm thinking if I step back,

she's going to learn maybe adding and subtracting in Grade 5, and that's horrible." Still, Li's hope was to provide less direct instruction for her child, saying,

I don't like that I'm like the helicopter and she never learns to learn by herself and relies on me, this is her learning, not mine. She needs to learn how to learn from the teacher, so this year I'm really trying to step back.

Second Year Parents were aware of the student's development of independence both in and out of the classroom, like Heng who said her daughter, "takes more control now". Parents discussed needing to evaluate how much control their child should have and how much to step in and provide support. Sofieke said that "it's a bit of a struggle because I think she wants levels of independence that are inconsistent with her ability at the moment."

Third Year Parents were able to detail the change in their child's independence and when and how much support should be provided. Parents talked about respecting greater desire for student' control over their education and when they preferred to complete various tasks independently. Sajwa said that going into Grade 6 her involvement has been "very minimal", that she "does all her homework by herself. She won't let us help very much. She absolutely hates help, so that's a big thing for her." Ruth observed changes in her son, who likes to read to himself and "doesn't like to be helped anymore...He sort of grew out of needing me as much". The level of her son's independence shifted how she would be involved, saying, "just because of his age, I've just let it go to some degree.

Supporting autonomy and problem-solving skills. *First Year Parents* discussed building and supporting the student's problem-solving skills, allowing for making mistakes and to have the student speak up for themselves. Beverly would accompany her son to meet with the teacher and encouraged him to speak on his own behalf, "I'm not doing the talking for him...He's incredibly shy. Painfully shy so it's been a lot of gentle coercion and showing and modeling and

saying “Okay, today I will go ask but tomorrow I want you to do the asking.” Supporting autonomy included providing advice to other adults to support student independence, as Zan had done when family members were providing too much homework support for her cousin, “I gave her mom advice. Don’t do that. Let her just do it.” Some parents like Li, wanted to step back and allow their child to do their own work, but were reluctant at times out of fear of their child falling behind academically.

[S]o this year I’m really trying to step back...these three weeks I got more and more nervous because I’m thinking if I step back, she’s going to learn maybe adding and subtracting in Grade 5, and that’s horrible. I’m thinking if that’s the case, the teaching of this school is failing the parents.

Second Year Parents felt more comfortable stepping back, having the student speak for themselves, and to problem solve by building up language skills. Sofieke, for example, said,

I do feel that I can easily tell my child when she tells me she has a problem, “You know who you need to speak to? You need to go to your teacher” and help her develop some language about how to do that so I don’t feel the need to be the one who goes in to save them and protect them all the time, I guess. But I do certainly get involved with her in trying to help her develop her language and her confidence and trying to deal with issues on her own.

Entering the final year of the multi-year program, *Third Year Parents* continued to build student autonomy, including home activities meant to enhance “life skills” (e.g., cooking together as a family) and to “provide directions and guidance” with activities for the student “to be self-sufficient.” Parents gave space for the student to do their school work with minimal support or reminders, including Ruth, whose motivations were to give the space her son needs, “I backed off as much as I thought he needed me too as far as how much I’m around.”

Supporting time and workload management skills. From reminders to teaching study skills, *First Year Parents* were motivated to get involved in supporting student' independence. Zan would tell her cousin, "You have to know how to study." Beverly discussed being "more involved now" than in previous years because the student is doing "a lot more independent work", so she supports time and workload management, provides reminders, and gets her son to think about "what is coming up that he needs to be thinking about and helping with studying.

Second Year Parents had less of a need to build up their child's workload and time management as students became accustomed to the expectations of their classroom, instead, focusing on providing the space and time for the student to complete their work independently. Sofieke, for example, says, "My way of supporting her and supporting what she does with that is simply to provide [my child] a place where she can do her work at home, to make sure that she's not crazy scheduled."

Year Three Parents discussed how students entering their final year had established routines for managing their time and school work. In prior years, Shin modelled to her daughter how to develop a schedule to manage her activities and time, then allowing the student to create her own schedule, "I tried her to make plans if she has something that she should finish. I will give her example and then for her to do and then I make her to make a plan by herself."

Being a source of support when asked. *First Year Parents* were motivated to step back and give space for students to complete work independently, but ensure they have a "presence". As the year progressed, parents observed more maturity in resolving school-related issues. Fu said that he and his wife are a source of support for their daughter when needed. "If she has questions she can come to us and then we'll help her to find answers, but otherwise, it's pretty

much just she has to figure things out herself.” Maurice said, “I just want to make sure that I’m a presence there that he knows he can go to and support him if he needs it.”

Second Year Parents were more likely to give greater space for students to complete their schoolwork than the previous year, providing support when asked. Sofieke considered herself “less involved” compared to other parents because of the space she provides the student,

I guess I’m less involved because I know a lot of others who do a lot more than I would with that, I don’t sit down next to them at the table as they’re doing each problem but I will be around, I make myself available so that if you have a question I can come and help you.

Despite being available as a source of support, *Third Year Parents* were less likely to be asked for schoolwork assistance by students compared to the previous year. Sajwa had discussed her child not wanting help with homework, noting that “as a parent, I would say we are moderately involved in our children’s education in that we try to provide support to our children as needed. For example, helping with homework, assisting with projects when they request it.”

Parents were comfortable with their children having the space to complete their work independently, like Wén who said, “I am there to support her when she asks for it, otherwise, she is pretty much on her own.” Parents also encouraged their children to work independently and only ask questions when they need it. Binh for instance, had said, “At home, I have been supporting and encouraging my child to always ask questions when she’s stuck. I have also told my child that if at any time she needs help in her assignments to also ask for assistance.”

Teacher and student voices. Teacher and student data corroborated parent’ experiences with supporting student independence, including setting limits on student independence, building up skills, and providing support when the student requests it. Teacher 3 related the decrease in parent interactions she observed to the increase in student independence,

I would say like it's the same as they go a long in the years. There's less parent interaction. You know, at the beginning of the year, especially the new students, they've just come to intermediate and the parents aren't really supposed to be picking them up anymore. You can let them go without them having a parent. Like there's less contact because the parents – even now, I've noticed there's one parent whose still – she used to come to the top of the stairs to make sure her kid got in and now she's waiting at the bottom of the stairs or like one flight down from the classroom. So it's kind of like that. Like as it goes on, they step further and further back as their children get older, to let them have more and more independence.

As part of establishing an out-of-school curriculum Student 12 said that her mother also supports her independence by giving her space to complete her work. “She usually doesn’t help me. She doesn’t have to check that either because there’s keys in the back of the book so I can do it myself.” Student 23 said that she “definitely used more help” with school work in the past because “everything was new, different from primary.” She said, “if I had trouble with homework, instead of asking a friend, I would probably ask my parents. They don’t check up on me as often because they, I guess, they know what I’m doing.” The student then broke down the transition in school support from Grade 4 through Grade 6,

They would just look over my shoulder and if they see I’m doing okay, they don’t ask as much. 5th grade was more like 4th grade because they would still ask more but not as much as the 4th grade. Because it was a sort of transition into different, harder studies and stuff because primary is easy. When you get into 4th grade, it’s harder so they probably want to make sure I was doing okay.

After Student 26 drew a picture (5.6) illustrating how she believed her parents were involved, she described her mother expecting her to do things for herself, to be responsible, and to help with chores at home (e.g., sweeping, cleaning the bedroom, etc.).



Figure 5.6

Grade 6 Student Illustration of a Parent's Expectation of the Student to Have Responsibilities

Category 6: Responding to Involvement Opportunities

Concepts for responding to involvement opportunities.

Volunteering for or attending school activities. *First Year Parents*, especially mothers, volunteered more often in the classroom. Fu said that he volunteers less than his wife, “Usually it’s my wife who is doing some volunteering work...things like being a driver to and from field trips or sometimes just doing a little bit of help in the classroom like handing out papers.” Across year levels, parents of ethnic and linguistic minority discussed that in their first year, they needed more time to volunteer in the school or were not volunteering at the same rate as other parents. “I think this term, it’s a bit more”, Zan recalled, “because a few field trips and two times I was volunteer.” Fu had a similar experience,

Because I know there are parents that they volunteer to be in the classroom as the helper. I know there are parents who spend a lot of time after school helping the teachers or the school. Yeah, but like compared to that our involvement is really, really minimal.

Moving into the next school year, *Second Year Parents* were better able to identify when opportunities would be made available, understood what teachers expected from parents in volunteering, and parents could better prepare to meet those expectations. Sofieke mentioned that she was more involved in activities “at the end of the school year [because] there’s a lot that happens at the end of the school year. Everything has a party, a finale, a show, a something.” However, she followed up by noting, “I would say I had more school involvement last year than this year.” Parents also noted that how much parents are involved is also related to the amount of teacher-provided opportunities. Anna, for example, was approached by the teacher to come in the classroom to lead an activity but also remarked that the teacher “doesn’t have parents involved too much in the classroom.”

Third Year Parents volunteered more often for school-based activities and events but less often in the classroom. Sajwa, for example, says “I try to volunteer at the school as much as possible. For [my daughter] it would be field trips.” While her involvement in the school increased, Sajwa says it is “not necessarily in the classroom.” Similarly, Ruth said, “I do lots and lots of volunteer work at the school...Maybe like 5 or 6? I go for events. Like I go to set up events. Not for the kids though, it’s for the whole school.”

Being aware and reading of school-provided content. Teachers helped introduce *First Year Parents* to the classroom routine, including weekly activities, school events, and opportunities for involvement through an introduction letter, weekly emails, and classroom blogs. Maurice found the blog “as one pretty good way of finding out how things are going in a general impression.” Fu said the teacher “wants us to be involved. She wants us to...Like she will give us a weekly update on what they’ve been doing and what’s coming, you know, this

week or next week. So yeah, she has a classroom blog where we can go on and check everything.”

Because the presence of *Second Year Parents* in the classroom declined, parents kept up-to-date of class and school activities and events primarily through emails and blogs. Heng says, “[The teacher] usually communicates through blog. She posts weekly blog to keep us parent, mostly parent updated on the progress about what they’re going to do at school. So that gives us some insight into the classroom...”. Additionally, the online medium became an even greater source of communication between teachers and parents in their second year. Heng, for example, said that online communication was “mostly the communication most of the time.”

Third Year Parents accessed school and classroom blogs to stay-up-to-date with school and classroom activities, as well as teacher expectations. Similar to parents in their second year, online communication was a greater source of communication between teachers and parents in their third year, including for Sajwa, who said the blog was “more or less how we communicated.”

Being aware and responding to teacher-provided opportunities to meet. First Year *Parents* discussed being aware of opportunities to meet with the teacher and also meeting when asked (e.g., parent-teacher conferences and student-led conferences). Parents and teachers met “in passing” at school, like when Beverly was stopped by the teacher in the hallway, “she grabs me and she’ll say, ‘I need to tell you something about your son!’” What distinguished parents in their first years from other year levels were the number of school-provided and teacher-provided opportunities to get to know about the student’s new classroom and teacher. Maurice remarking on the teacher-provided opportunities, said “I think she’s kind of unique in that she provides the opportunities for us to come into class and see what’s going on.”

Between volunteering less and transitioning to online communication as the primary medium for communication, *Second Year Parent*' interaction with teachers were seen more as "drop-ins" and "check-ins". The teacher initiated more of the interactions and as Anna recalled about the teacher talking to her about her child, "it's usually she finds me in the hall." Sofieke also said her interactions are often when the teacher approaches her by "stopping in the hall" and providing updates.

Third Year Parents knew when the teacher was available to meet and opportunities to get involved, including Ruth who said the teacher is "always sending things out, so I think in a way she is quite good at trying to find ways to involve parents, encourage parents, and also keep parents somewhat in the loop." However, parents were less likely to take up these opportunities by the third year, shifting their involvement towards the broader school context and supporting the students out-of-school curriculum. Sajwa, for example, said "I do attend all parent-teacher meetings... although we only see her at parent-teacher meetings... We haven't had too much communication outside of the standard parent-teacher meetings."

Exchanging information and advice when asked and offered. Teachers discussed expectations with *First Year Parents* to allow their students to do their own work, which was a transition for Fu who said, "because this is one of the things her school teacher is asking for, is let them do their work." Parents were motivated to be involved by the information and stories offered unsolicited by the student. Beverly was influenced by her son to be conscious about how she views the teacher's instructional style, saying, "Probably he was talking about his day and bringing her up in a more positive light. So that influences us." As the year progressed, parents felt the teacher was more open to initiate conversations and ask for the advice of parents, including Beverly,

I would say that I would give her credit for being a bit more open by the end of the school year. But being more open and coming to me with things. Questions or – yeah, usually it was like, “He’s struggling. What do I do?”

As the number of interactions between *Second Year Parents* and teachers accumulated into the second year, parents and teachers discussed Building the Relationship Over Time as more personal information became exchanged, shared experiences were identified, and advice was offered more. Anna and the teacher had conversations that included a discussion of their children being the same age and advice being requested. Anna said, “so when we have parent teacher conferences she’ll ask, “So what do you do in this situation?” We’ll talk about the stages that our boys are in and be like “does yours fidget like that too?” Or you know what I mean? So yeah...like it’s more offered.” Teachers were also in a better position to offer advice and suggestions in implementing an out-of-school curriculum that was individualized to the needs of each student, an experience Sofieke detailed,

[O]nce they get to know the child, I think they get a better sense of ideas and suggestions of things you can be doing with them to support what they see in the classroom, whether that be support to try and bring up the level of something or whether that be support of “They clearly have this identified passion and did you know? Is that something we can work with?” So I think there are two sides to that.

Similar to other parent year levels, *Third Year Parents* talked about the teacher sharing information and offering advice with how parents could support their child at home. Shin supports her child to read at home because “that’s what was asked by [the teacher] to do.” The student was also an informant for the parent, relaying information about their school life, which had positive effects on the parent-teacher relationship, as was the case for Shin,

My children liked [the teacher] very much, both of them and then they talked about her and they talked about the school life at home and so that made me very comfortable for them to go to school...I think for children and the teacher's relationships is more important than between parents and teachers. Because if I feel something wrong with her but the kids are very happy to see her and ask me to correct maybe view and how to face to her.

Teacher and student voices. Interviews with teachers and students supported the results of the analysis of parent data, including students confirming that their teachers provide opportunities to get their parents involved. Teacher 2 has a couple of parents whose English language skills are low and are involved often by their children who translate newsletters and emails sent by the teacher, including volunteer opportunities. "The one whose language is quite low, she still comes on field trips and she still volunteers. She just won't speak." Teacher 2 noted. "She is involved. So her daughter's obviously doing a good job of letting her mom know what's happening." Teacher 3 noted that she provides opportunities for parents to go on field trips, "I have a lot of parents who will volunteer. I feel very supportive that way. I don't have to kind of, you know, beg for drivers." However, there is a limited diversity of volunteer opportunities and parents also are more likely to reduce their involvement once there is trust, saying "If the parents seem to trust me and they get where I'm going, there's way less involvement...I have lots of helpers, but there's not a ton of opportunity for them to physically be involved in the class."

Students in their second year said that their parents volunteered but to a lesser extent compared to the previous year. Students themselves also talk with their parents and get them involved by asking them to volunteer for activities and keeping them informed. Student 17 said that by informing her parents, she is allowed more independence,

In the beginning I think, my mom was more involved because she wasn't really sure what I was learning 'cause I didn't exactly tell her a lot of stuff and then I think now in Grade 5, it changed a lot. Now I tell my mom more of what I do instead of not telling her. So I think she lets me be more independent if I tell her more stuff so she understands it I guess.

Some students discussed intentionally getting their parents involved, which positively impacted parent-teacher relationships. Student 14, for example, said

I once set my mom up. My teacher asked because we were doing a song for Christmas and then she asked, "Hey, does someone drum?" and I said "My mom does the drum" and I kind of set her up and I went home and I told her and she's like [makes surprised face] but she did it and the teacher was thankful that she did it and I think the relationship grew.

Students discussed providing information to their parents that was unsolicited, and in some cases, was meant to positively impact parent-teacher relationships. Student 27 was asked whether she believes she has affected her parent's relationship with the teacher, to which she confirmed she had because of the information she provides her parents,

I mean, a first impression is a pretty good way to start off a healthy relationship, but I've always told my parents that I like my teacher, and really, she's been my favourite teacher I've ever had and that's pretty important to my parents because sometimes when they don't get along with people, it's kind of hard for them. Or even when I don't get along with people. So that's why I moved schools because my teacher and my parents weren't getting along.

Student 14 was asked to draw a picture that illustrates how he believed his parents were involved in his education. In his picture (Figure 5.7), the student drew two scenarios where the teacher asks his parent for help with a field trip, one where the parent refuses the opportunity and

a scenario where the parent accepts the invitation. He indicates that his parent would accept an invitation to volunteer if the teacher asks.



Figure 5.7

Grade 5 Student Illustration of His Parent Accepting the Teacher's Offer to Go on a Fieldtrip

Category 7: Limited Involvement and Relationship Development

Concepts for limited involvement and relationship development.

Being unsure, passing up, or having limited opportunities. First Year Parents had more opportunities for involvement but did experience some barriers from limited teacher-provided opportunities. When Amelyn was getting to know the expectations of parents volunteering in the classroom, she found there were limited opportunities and less of a role for parents to support the teacher.

Less of me is being required of me because without a doubt there is less. They're not asking me to help with projects really. There's been opportunities to help on field trips

and stuff. In fact, I said to [the teacher] “How can I help? I’d love to come in once a week and just even be in the classroom.” ...so I guess I’ve made myself available and I’ve expressed early on that I would enjoy working with the actual students, but the only thing she’s called upon me to do is more like field trips or, you know, like an administrative role and I said no to that, but I said yes to field trips.

Similarly, Maurice said that the teacher “does provide some opportunities” for getting involved in the classroom “but not the whole time”. Then again, Maurice adds, “I haven’t stepped up to take any opportunities would be the other side of it.” Zan says that there were a limited number of opportunities to interact with the teacher and get involved. “Like only once a year for the meeting, and after that, none really, no conversation with the teacher.”

Limited opportunities tied to the teacher’s personality and uncertainty with how to get involved were cited as barriers among *Second Year Parents*. A parent cited the teacher being “self sufficient” and “doesn’t have parents involved too much in the classroom” as barriers. Though Sofieke did not state any personal experiences with having limited involvement opportunities, she discussed how “some people want to [get involved] but don’t know how to best do that.”

Third Year Parents generally had lower involvement in the classroom and interactions with the teacher, attributing this to the limited opportunities provided by the teacher. Sajwa remarked that in the lower grades, she and her husband were invited to volunteer in class frequently but her interactions with the teacher are rare occasions that occur “only at parent-teacher meetings”.

Having family commitments. Family commitments were cited among *First Year Parents* and included employment, which was more often a barrier to fathers being involved the way they

would like to. “I’m the only working person in the family”, Fu said, “so usually it’s my wife who is doing some volunteering work.”

Across all year levels, including *Second Year Parents*, family commitments affected the involvement of fathers more than mothers. However, mothers were more likely to increase the number of hours of employment from the previous year, which affected their ability to be involved at the same level. Heng noted,

My work is pretty busy. I’ve increased my work a little bit. So I don’t get the time to mark their home homework...Just Grade 5, I did not volunteer as much. That’s true too. Partially is about work. Work get really busy and stressful.

Year Three Parents also had family commitments that caused barriers to their involvement. Sajwa’s employment was a barrier as she works full time, while family expansion caused Shin to shift her involvement, “This year, I had a new baby born so I had a little bit distance from school life.”

Having communication and language differences. Not all information provided by the teacher was seen as valuable by *First Year Parents*, which affected their ability to monitor and support the student’s education. Li discussed her communication with the teacher, “I don’t think I had a very good exchange of communication with the teacher. So yeah, I kind of feel frustrated a little bit.” Li said her relationship with the teacher is “remote, not very close” and the differences in communication has affected her ability to get involved. “I think our communication style is a little different”, she said. When attempting to volunteer for activities, she noted that it took “many days later” to get a response. “I had totally given up. It ws a little bit frustrating.”

Parents also discussed transitioning from the previous year’s teacher who they were accustomed to and having to learn the communication system or preferences of a new teacher.

Language differences also posed barriers for some parents in supporting the student's education like Zan, who said "cause the language barrier, we can't help [my cousin] a lot in school works."

Language differences had some impact on *Second Year Parents* whose primary language was not English. Heng said she had difficulty supporting the student, "Every day you have to read something and write about it. That piece we quite struggled with it too...I can't do that kind of thing with her." The language difference also strained Heng's relationship with the teacher,

I think for me, I'm Chinese actually. It's harder sometimes for me to express my concern or it's harder for me to communicate with a Canadian teacher I would say...I still volunteer the same way as I would do field trips. It's just affecting how I would – how easy I would feel to talk to her...maybe language, I don't use the right word sometimes. That's the language – comfortability with language...My other child has a Chinese teacher. I feel much more easier talking to her.

Third Year Parent who discussed language differences as a barrier to getting involved was Shin, whose first language was not English. She says, "It's not barrier but it's kind of barrier for me because...the language. So if somebody say, "Please do this. Please do that", I can do that, but I can't lead the kids as an authority."

Having pedagogical differences. *First Year Parents* were still Getting to Know the teacher's instructional style and for some parents, there was a reluctance to address disagreements in how the student should be taught. Beverly said she is "cautious [about] not wanting to say the wrong thing" and feels as though she and the teacher are "walking on eggshells with each other still".

Pedagogical differences were cited by *Second Year Parents* but were a concern the previous year and either got resolved by the end of the first year or the parent adapted to the teacher's instructional approach and expectations. Heng said "there's a little of cultural

difference” between her and the teacher when it came to how much additional work her child should complete outside of school. When she asked the teacher, she was told, “I can’t put on any harder on her. I can’t do anymore.” Heng was wanting to push her child further, “I was thinking to take mastery, you always just more practice. That’s all. That’s the difference, that’s all. That’s why we have a little bit different opinion there so sometimes I feel a bit uncomfortable talking to her.”

Shin was the only *Third Year Parent* who discussed having pedagogical differences that reduced her attempts to involve herself in the classroom. She says, “I don’t get too close to the people, especially the teachers because in Japan, we are taught to respect the teacher, because they are great, they know everything, and they teach the best.” Because Shin says she has to “admire the teachers” and was “taught to respect them”, it has affected her ability to learn more about the Canadian education system with which she says she is not familiar.

Teacher and student voices. Teacher interviews corroborated the experiences of barriers parents described. Teacher 1 interacted with parents who had experience with an older child going through intermediate grades and feel they can have less of a presence in the classroom of any additional children they have. The teacher said, “Especially if it’s their youngest kid, they go back to work. A lot of parents are going back to work.” Teacher 2 noted the limited time parents may have due to employment. “So maybe the parents are getting home late and they just don’t have time.” Teacher 2 also has experience with communication between parents who are separated or divorced, and the student is “going from household to household and they do leave things behind. One parent thinks the other one’s read something or returned something. So that’s out of the child’s control.” Teacher 3 discussed how she has less interactions with parents who “don’t have strong English”. In talking about some of the curriculum content, she said, “I think

perhaps they just don't understand. I know that one parent, he came and explained that to me that his wife didn't understand.”

Family commitments were also discussed by students. Student 23 talked about her parents' barriers to attend classroom functions, “They don't really volunteer for field trips because they work.” Other students had noticed changes in the economic conditions of their neighbourhoods and its impacts on their parents in being able to be physically present in their school and classrooms. Asked why some parents are less present in the school, Student 24 described his own family's experiences,

Well I think it has a lot to do with, especially with my circumstance, I actually think it has a lot to do with the city. I don't know if this is what you're finding all over the place. My idea would be since the city is growing more expensive, everything's getting more expensive, I think it's primarily just everything is getting more expensive and everyone is going to have to work more.

When Student 24 was asked to draw how his parents are involved, he drew a barrier between his father and teacher and how there has been a reduction in the communication between his mother and teacher (Figure 5.8). “[H]ere it's kind of like my mom and teacher talking but not my dad. He's like somewhere else doing something. And then this is just a clock, kind of ticking.” When asked about what the clock symbolizes, the student said, he described how his parents are interacting less with his teacher but the conversations are of greater quality,

My issue mostly with what I understand about parent involvement is it doesn't really happen that much, like it's mostly my brother this year that they're with his teacher mostly...and they don't really do that much with my teacher anymore...it's good when it happens, like it'll be a long time and it'll be a good conversation but it just doesn't happen very much.

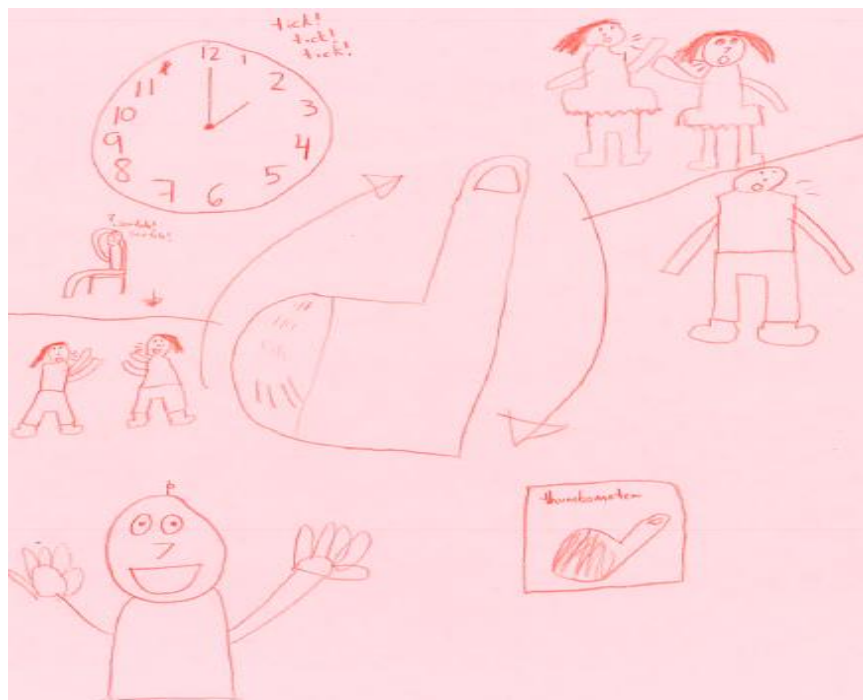


Figure 5.8

Grade 6 Student Illustration of Long, Thoughtful, but Reduced Parent-Teacher Conversations

Category 8: Building the Relationship Over Time

Concepts for building the relationship over time.

Communication adapts, opens up, and becomes comfortable. As the year progressed, communication between *First Year Parents* and the teacher opened up and became more comfortable. Beverly felt the teacher’s “openness, her willingness to listen” and to come to her and ask for advice about her son had developed over the first year. Zan’s interactions with the teacher increased and improved over time, and so did her comfort levels,

Because just like when you first, to talk to like someone you don’t know, like for a stranger, but it’s really hard like you open a topic to talk. But once you talk more, you feel more comfortable, then you’re eager to talk more. It’s just same thing. Because first, we don’t really know each other. But over time and time, you think, “It’s good to talk to teacher” and you feel very comfortable and I think the result is good after you talk to teacher. You

got more information about [my cousin] and you think it help. So that's why you want more.

Second Year Parents felt the teacher was open, comfortable, and more of a partnership. Anna said of the teacher, "She's open. You can joke around with her. I mean it's not the strict parent-teacher relationship." Since the beginning of the first year, Sofieke's daughter went from being "sort of new" in the classroom to "feeling really settled and comfortable in the classroom". This led to backing away and not keeping as close an eye "partly because she was able to talk more about her classroom. Partly because I had a stronger relationship with her teacher and felt comfortable and able to not have to be there in person." Heng, who discussed language differences as barriers to her involvement, discussed how she and the teacher are similar,

I totally understand her. I can see she is quite – she's not a salesman type of people. You can tell. She doesn't smooth talk everything. She's quite, I would call, technical-oriented and actually quite like that because I'm that kind of person as well. No, like uh – straight talk. Up front. Yeah, I like that...But personality-wise, I totally understand her. She's not a smooth talker which is fine by me because I'm like that too....I feel very comfortable talking to her.

The communication between *Third Year Parents* and the teacher was open, direct, and honest. Parents say it is "very open and communicative", "more direct" and "frank" and teachers feel comfortable asking for advice from parents. The teacher "doesn't seem to reach out for help as much" as in previous years and parents simply "drop in" on an as needed basis. Over time, Shin found that her communication with the teacher became easier and the teacher was better able to understand and empathize with her concerns,

Oh communication. You know my first language is Japanese so English is a little bit difficult to communicate for me, but she is very capable to understand my feelings and

what I want to say so it was very easy communication with me [and] for me...she can understand if I ask her something deeply. She is easy to feel how I feel.

Communicating on a personal level. *Year One Parents* were able to describe – with less certainty – some personal details about the teacher that was shared during conferences and informal meetings, including knowing the ages, gender, and grades of the teacher’s children. Beverly talked about the teacher’s children, but said, “I don’t know the other one. I think she might still be in elementary school.” Beverly though, was more cautious the first year, saying “I don’t share a lot of my personal information. I tend not to share a lot of personal with the teacher.” When asked if there were any changes to her relationship with the teacher, Zan said, “Yeah, for year one, for me and the teacher, we are kind of getting to know each other. If [my cousin is] going to stay another two years, I think we are going to know more about each other.”

Building the Relationship Over Time resulted in more personal details being exchanged between the teacher and *Second Year Parents* during conferences and informal discussions, including family background and values. Heng, for example, mentioned that her child’s teacher is a “great teacher”, saying, “Like my preference of her, I think her values and mine probably align as well. We all value charities. All those things. Communities... We all value volunteer, community service and I think even political views are – would be aligned.” Anna’s relationship with the teacher became “a little more personal” and equal “the middle of Grade 5. Roughly, maybe November.” She began to approach the teacher as though it were “parent-to-parent rather than a parent-to-teacher ...[because] you’re both kind of going through the same thing. So yeah, it’s more personal that way.”

Third Year Parents and teachers are often on a first-name basis and are familiar with the personal lives of the other, including immediate and extended family (e.g., grandparents), hobbies, and sharing of other stories. Ruth says she and the teacher have had “some banter a little

bit” about their personal lives. Sajwa said the teacher “shows interest in how the rest of the family is doing” and the relationship “has definitely grown as we and [our child] have gotten to know [the teacher] more ...every time we have a meeting she’s always interested in finding out what we do as a family.” Parents felt discussions were more personal during the second year and that it took the teacher to initiate discussions that went beyond academics and topics concerning the student. Sajwa recalled when she and the teacher began communicating on a more personal level,

Probably more so in Grade 5 than Grade 4. There’s a progression I mean. Sort of to the end of Grade 4 into Grade 5. Starting in the parent-teacher meetings, she’d talk about her grandfather and so you kind of respond with personal stories about your own family and things like that, so I think that’s where it starts.

Teacher pedagogy and instruction is trusted and appreciated. With the passage of time, *First Year Parents* felt greater trust and appreciation in the teacher’s instructional approach. Some parents, like Amelyn, became trustful of the teacher when hearing the positive experiences told to them by their child, “I’ve grown in trust because of the good things that I’ve been hearing from [my daughter].” Other parents felt they and their children needed to adapt to the teacher’s instructional approach. “I would say that we have adapted”, Beverly recalled, adding that this was important to the multi-year relationship with the teacher, “I don’t want to jeopardize his three years because it *is* three years.” As the year continued, she noticed and appreciated that the teacher individualized instruction to meet her son’s needs,

A lot of teachers only take – they take a shorter time and so they’ll do a month or two months of “Do this and let me see what you can do and then I’ll individualize it for you.” For her it just took more of the year I would say.

Over time, *Second Year Parents* got to know and trust the teacher's instructional style as being beneficial to students. Building the Relationship Over Time led parents to become more comfortable with the teacher. Anna said, "My son is a kid who needs to be challenged, otherwise he just gets bored and [the teacher] recognizes it instead of letting him flail and do his own thing." Sofieke discussed her learning that through time, the relationship becomes "a lot more relaxed",

There's definitely another level of comfort with knowing the same teacher for a long period of time...One, either your child has a great level of comfort because they have the same teacher and that I think builds a certain level of trust between you and your teachers...They have a very good understanding in your child, you have a great deal of trust in the fact that they understand that...it's easier to speak to them about what's happening in the classroom because you understand the teacher's style more.

Third Year Parents were highly trustful and comfortable with the teacher's style of teaching students once parents were able to learn the teacher's instructional approach. Ruth felt that "just by the passage of time", the relationship "became more comfortable" but initially, "there was a lot of learning that first year for everybody" including the teacher's "systems". Ruth went on to say,

I guess just maybe like her systems, like her educational processes and her demeanor in general, like she had that first year was a year for her to learn what works, what doesn't work, and last year was a year for her to tweak all that and this year has been very comfortable and easy and she knows what works and we know what the program is because it's our third year so [my son] in particular knows what's expected of him. It's just the benefits of multi-year in a way...that's what I mean by comfortable, I think now everybody has just settled in.

Student perceptions of their teacher had some influence on their parents' trust and comfort. Sajwa said she has "a comfortable relationship" with the teacher and "there is a trust that she is teaching well and [our child] enjoys being in her class." Shin said the relationship with the teacher "needed to have time. Maybe after the end of the school year, it gradually – hmmm, yeah, I could trust her. Yeah." Shin had discussed the influence her child's positive attitude of the teacher influenced her. Over time, she felt the teacher was able to understand her child's personality, even though "it's very hard to see individual student's personality", which gave her evidence that the teacher is "observing the students closely very well" and that made her "more comfortable to stay with [the teacher]." For Ramona, she said, "All I can say is she gets him...I know that she's kind and caring and sees each child as an individual learner and not just a curriculum machine."

The out-of-school curriculum is individualized. *First Year Parents* received general information about activities families can engage in at home or in the community. Zan, for example, said, "Even like I got emails say what you can do for the activities." She said the teacher is "really good" because "she's not even like doing in school. She's thinking what you can do with your children or to do outside part. That's good."

When given an additional year to build the relationship, *Second Year Parents* felt the out-of-school curriculum was more personalized because the teacher was able to get to know students more, including their interests and academic needs. Teachers were in better position to develop and transfer strategies and activities to parents in support of the student's academic development away from school. When asked whether there were any changes in the way the teacher supported her involvement, Sofieke said, "Yes, I think so, and I think that comes from the teacher getting to know the child well". She goes on to say,

I also think as they get to know the student, they also have terrific insight into what limitations there are in the classroom or in the school simply by the fact that's it's a school and there are certain rules you have to follow and there are certain things you can and can't do and you are dealing with 24 kids in a class, not just one, and there are all kinds of limitations with that...so I think that as our relationship has developed, they have been able to better voice those frustrations and help us brainstorm and come up with ways that we could support those things that I don't know I would have gotten after only one year. That's taken time to develop.

Year Three Parents discussed interactions with the teacher who would ask about the student's life away from school, the extra-curricular activities the student is engaged in, and the way in which the family is involved in the student's education. Sajwa said that the teacher "very supportive of parents" and was "always interested in finding out what we do as a family." She mentioned that the teacher is "always interested in how the child is doing out of school as well" and has "always shown an interest in the extra-curricular activities of the children in her class." Additionally, Sajwa receives emails from the teacher recommending "various programs or camps she feels the children will enjoy while learning at the same time." For Binh, she found that the more the teacher got to know the student, the better the teacher became in offering advice to her in supporting her child's education at home,

[The teacher] has been a wonderful teacher to my child. She has been very informative in terms of my child's needs and improvements. [The teacher] has been informative in how to increase my child's education of math and writing even though my child has a perfect fully meeting expectations.

Teacher and student voices. Interviews with parents and students helped to corroborate the experiences of parents who described the greater openness and comfort in communicating with the teacher. Teacher 3, for example, observed that she "just feels more comfortable" with

Year 3 parents. “I don't know if the relationship is necessarily more positive or better”, she recalled, “but – just it's easier to tell them if something's going wrong with their child, right?”

Interviews with students also supported the findings from parent interviews as it relates to the positive development in parent-teacher relationships. Student 14 said that “over time”, his parents and teacher “got to like know each other more and stuff” and were “more open to ask for help or a favour.” Asked what goes into “getting to know each other”, the student answered, “my mom's really chatty so she'll spring into action I guess and talk and keep talking for like ten minutes. Sometimes it's about me, sometimes it's just about topics they're thinking about.” Student 16 also noted how time has affected her parents and teacher in opening up, becoming comfortable, and building trust. She said,

It's like a gradual thing...like a clock sometimes where it's, like you can't – by looking at it directly, you can't actually see it ticking away but if you look at in half an hour and then the next half hour you notice it.

Student 25 said that during the first year, parents are “getting used” to the teacher. Asked what she meant, the student said, “Like getting used to [the teacher], like talking to her, being comfortable around her as your child's teacher.” In the follow-up interview, the student said that her parent's relationship with the teacher is “maybe a tiny bit stronger because they had a parent-teacher conference like few months back, maybe in March, and it seemed like they were talking casually like they are friends.”

The impact of parents becoming comfortable with the multi-year environment and having the same teacher responsible for their children for three years went beyond their immediate child and led to benefits for their younger children. As one student noted about his parents having experience with multi-year classrooms, “It gave them some experience. They are basing off [my older siblings] and transferring it to me.”

Student 17 was asked to illustrate how she felt the relationship was between her parents and teacher. In the picture (Figure 5.9) is her mother and teacher smiling, which the student said was “because they understand that they need to help me...they like need to work – I need to work on my skills.” The student went on to describe the understanding her mother and teacher have of each other,

So they understand each other and then they like know that my mom trusts [name of teacher] cause’ even though we’ve been there for like a year and like a half I think, she trusts her so then she’s smiling and then she likes – and [name of teacher] trusts my mom to help me with my studies if I need help on that.”

When the student was asked what she meant by “trust”, she described her mother and teacher knowing each other will support her when she needs help. “[T]hey know that my mom knows [my teacher] will help me with things I need help on and like [my teacher] knows that my mom will help me with things...because some things I may not understand.”

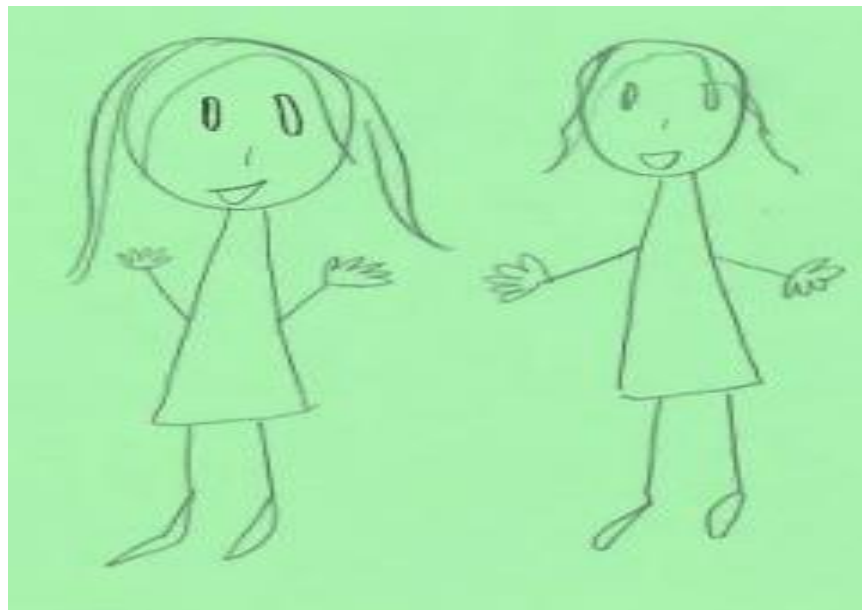


Figure 5.9

Grade 5 Student Illustration of Parent and Teacher Trusting Each Other

A Parent Involvement Journey in a Multi-Year Classroom

A meta-narrative of two fictional parents. Below I provide a timeline of two fictional parents, Lynn and Jia, whose children are enrolled in the same multi-year classroom. The meta-narrative provides details of the more salient experiences of parent participants in this study that were captured and represented in the Grounded Theory presented earlier in this chapter.

The Getting to Know phase during pre-enrollment. Lynn is a First Year Parent who wants to enroll her child in the multi-year classroom because she perceives this class structure as an environment where more attention can be provided to her child and there will be stability having the same teacher for more than one year. Lynn views the multi-year program as an “investment” and wants to know whether the classroom will be the “right fit” for her child. Lynn enters the Getting to Know phase well before the year begins and solicits information from other parents about their experiences with multi-year classrooms. She speaks with school administrators and reads school and classroom website content to familiarize herself about how multi-year programs function and with which teachers her child may have.

Lynn heard good things from other parents about one multi-year teacher and she was appreciative that she was given the opportunity to enroll her child in the classroom of her choice. Lynn knew other First Year Parents who did not get the teacher they preferred. Added to this, First Year Parents come to know aspects of the teacher (personality, instructional and communication approach) indirectly through other parents *poisoning the well*, which caused tension in Building the Relationship Over Time with the teacher.

The Getting to Know phase during the first year. It often happens that First Year Parents, like Jia, begin the Getting to Know phase at the start of the school year. Jia attends open house to find out more about the classroom routine, how three grade levels will be taught, and

what she can do at home to support her child. Jia is invited to attend a parent-teacher conference where she discusses her child's needs and interests, to hear what the general goals will be for students, and to ask questions. Similar to her experience during open house, Jia speaks less than the teacher during the conference. Jia wants to learn as much as she can, but she also doesn't feel too comfortable speaking English. Jia feels she can trust the teacher who she views as an expert and who will be able to effectively teach her child.

Lynn, however, has a more balanced conversation with the teacher because she knows quite a bit about what the structure of the classroom will be like after speaking to other parents. Lynn attends open house and the parent-teacher conference to learn about the teacher's personality, preferences for communication, and how the teacher plans to instruct her child. Both Lynn and Jia read the newsletter and email the teacher sent to parents welcoming them and their children to the class. Lynn who began the Getting to Know phase during pre-enrollment uses the first few weeks of school to confirm or reject her opinions she had formed when speaking with other parents. Jia also uses the Getting to Know phase to learn more about the teacher's personality and whether the classroom will be the right fit, but she learns this indirectly by listening to her child talk about experiences in the classroom.

The Getting to Know phase is a time of transition for Lynn and Jia who are constructing their roles as the expectations for student independence will be greater entering Grade 4. Lynn and Jia look to the teacher to understand the expectations for parents supporting their children. Lynn knows other parents with same-aged children who she talks to. During the first semester, both Lynn and Jia provide support of the in-school curriculum at home (e.g., homework support, attending class and school activities).

To support the student's independence, First Year Parents will support their children's independence in developing problem-solving skills, time and workload management skills, and they will help their children to develop communication skills so they can advocate for themselves (e.g., asking the teacher questions when struggling, managing difficult peer relationships). As the year progresses, First Year Parents, like Jia and Lynn, advocate for their children, but it is more often a response to the student's request. This decrease in advocacy is a result of many problems that need resolving often occur during the first semester as students adjust to new peers, routines, expectations, and classroom spaces.

When speaking with her child after school, Lynn learns from her child that there are instances of bullying from other students. She wants to trust that her child's needs will be addressed, so these moments of advocacy are critical to the success of not just the parent-teacher relationship, but whether Lynn will continue to keep her child enrolled in the current multi-year classroom the following year. Lynn requests a meeting with the teacher and after school, she and the teacher discuss the issue and work towards a resolution.

Jia trusts that the teacher is doing what she can to support student's learning, but when she observes her child having difficulty with math, Jia also requested a meeting with the teacher. As part of the discussion, Jia asks the teacher how she can support her child at home. Jia wants to provide more homework, but the teacher disagrees, which leaves Jia feeling unsure what to do other than continuing to monitor her child's academic progress.

Lynn feels comfortable speaking with the teacher, both share similar educational experiences, and these experiences are drawn upon during their conversations. Lynn wants to get to know the teacher more and wants to help the teacher any way she can. She offers her support, volunteers often, and makes her presence in the classroom and school known during the first

year. Jia is less comfortable speaking with the teacher because they do not share the same level of English-speaking skills. Jia feels her words may not be fully understood so she is more reluctant to approach the teacher at the beginning of the school year. Instead, Jia learns more about the teacher indirectly by asking her child to share school experiences, looking over her child's completed homework, and monitoring classroom activities and progress through the teacher's blogs and emails.

Jia and the teacher also have different educational experiences and beliefs. Jia believes the roles for parents and teachers are distinct, separate, and require individual spaces for responsibilities to be carried out. Jia defers to the teacher for education decisions at school, while supplementing the in-school curriculum with an out-of-school curriculum that includes enrolling her child in language and literacy classes, providing additional homework that reflects the classroom curriculum, and making sure her child is culturally connected to their heritage. Jia has a high level of trust in the teacher before they had met because she perceives educators as experts. Jia feels that her relationship with the teacher matters less if her child's relationship with the teacher is positive. Jia is reluctant to volunteer in the classroom because she does not feel she can teach other children from a place of authority. Similar to her feelings talking with the teacher, Jia often avoids volunteering in the classroom because she feels less comfortable speaking English.

Adapting and opening up. Like many First Year Parents, Lynn and Jia come to understand the teacher's communication preferences, personality, and pedagogical approach to teaching. Some parents may adapt the way they approach the teacher (e.g. monitoring tone, being careful what to say) and to support their child to adjust to the teacher's instructional approach (e.g., adjust to pace and level of independence). First Year Parents who share similar ethnic and

linguistic backgrounds with the teacher are not immune to having difficulties in the relationship. If pedagogical and communication differences persist, a First Year Parent is more likely to request a classroom change at the end of the first year.

Lynn and Jia may not have the same personality as the teacher, but they both agree with the teacher regarding the goals set for their children and how their children should be taught in order to exceed academically. Lynn feels like she understands what is expected from her as a parent and she is eager to support the in-school curriculum at home by monitoring homework and following the teacher's expectations of parents signing their children's homework sheets indicating the assignment has been reviewed and completed. Jia also understands more of what was expected of her as a parent of a Grade 4 student but still believes it would be beneficial for her child to get extra tutoring and homework.

As the year progresses, Lynn reduces her physical presence in the school and volunteers a bit less than before. Jia, on the other hand, increases her presence in the school and the amount of interactions with the teacher towards the end of the year. Towards the end of the first year, Lynn finds that the teacher is becoming more open as the year progresses, coming to her with any issues, and telling her about her child's progress either in person after school or through email. Jia and the teacher do not interact much, but she hopes to volunteer and interact with the teacher more next year.

Settling in during the second year. Many Second Year Parents feel as though they and their children can settle in, and Lynn and Jia are no different. Both parents have a greater appreciation of the teacher's instructional approach and they feel more at ease not having to re-learn new expectations and know what their roles are entering the second year. Lynn and Jia feel that their children know what is expected of them and can give their children more space to

complete school tasks on their own. Lynn and Jia feel their responsibility is more about “letting go” and setting the space so their children can complete their work. Lynn wants to make sure her child is not over-scheduled with extra-curricular activities so homework can be completed. Lynn and Jia say that their children are more eager to be involved in more extra-curricular activities that match their interests and passions. Lynn and Jia have conversations with their children to negotiate how school work can be balanced with other out-of-school activities.

Lynn is reducing her contact with the teacher to just “check-ins”, which include brief meetings to see if there are any concerns that the teacher may have about her child. Lynn realizes that her involvement with the school can come in different forms and that it doesn’t always require her to be present in the school (e.g., organizing food drives, going to PAC meetings). When Lynn and the teacher meet, she feels they talk a bit more about non-school-related topics. She learns more about the teacher’s personal life including where the teacher has lived and travelled, the teacher’s interests and hobbies, and about the teacher’s family members. Lynn finds that the teacher has taken more of an interest in her child’s homelife and asks about how her other children are doing in school.

Even though Jia says there is still language difficulties between her and the teacher, she does feel that the teacher understands her more. Jia volunteers and interacts with the teacher a little more than last year. Jia appreciates that the teacher observed her child’s strengths and areas that need improvement and recommends specific activities that she could participate in with her child to improve learning. Jia doesn’t know too much about the teacher personally because conversations often keep to issues related to her child, but she remembers her child telling her a story about the teacher involving her own children. Jia doesn’t feel like she is close with the teacher but so long as her children have a good relationship with the teacher, she is happy.

Comfortable and trusting during the third year. By the third year, Lynn and Jia feel comfortable and relaxed in their relationship with the teacher. There is not much difference in their involvement in the second year. Lynn feels everything has come to fruition and everyone is just relaxed with each other. Both Lynn and Jia feel that the teacher know their children so well that the teacher is better equipped to individualize the education to meet the needs of their children. When Lynn goes to the teacher, she doesn't feel like she's approaching a teacher, but as if the teacher is just another parent. She is on a first-name basis with the teacher and when they talk, they each provide advice to each other because the teacher has a child about the same age as Lynn's. Jia is grateful for her child to have such a great teacher and although they are not close, she feels there is mutual respect in the relationship. By the end of the year, Lynn and Jia appreciate the gift of time that the multi-year classroom has given them, their child, and the teacher to Build the Relationship Over Time.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms, followed by a detailed description of the development of each category and relationships between categories. Most of the chapter covered the results of the analysis of parent, student, and teacher data and concluded with a meta-narrative of the typical experience of parent involvement and relationship development among two fictional parents of children enrolled in a multi-year classroom. The next chapter provides a breakdown of how the Grounded Theory meets criteria for being called a theory. The results of the Grounded Theory developed from this study within the extant literature are also discussed, as well as the implications the Grounded Theory has for parent involvement and multi-year classroom research. Limitations, strengths, and future directions are presented.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Overview

As part of a Straussian-tradition to Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1997), this two-year study generated a theory of the multi-year parent involvement process, built upon eight categories, the first of which, Getting to Know, was central to the motivation of parent involvement, construction of parent roles, and establishing the parent-teacher relationship throughout the multi-year process. Another five categories were identified as motivators for parents to be involved and changed throughout the student's program, including: Being an Advocate, Supporting the In-School Curriculum, Supporting the Out-of-School Curriculum, Supporting Independence, and Responding to Involvement Opportunities. Two additional categories related to parents exercising their role in the student's education included: Limited Involvement and Relationship Development and Building the Relationship Over Time.

This chapter begins with a discussion of how the Grounded Theory developed from this study meets Corbin and Strauss' (1990) criteria for being considered a theory, as outlined in Chapter Three. Following this, I contextualize the categories, as well as the Grounded Theory more broadly, in relation to existing literature. Implications for school policy, teacher practices, and developmental theories on parent involvement will be discussed. Limitations and strengths are highlighted, concluding with my remarks on the directions parent involvement and multi-year classroom research could take.

Meeting the Criteria for Being Considered a Theory

Concepts are the building blocks. The Grounded Theory developed from this study meets the first criterion because the number of concepts generated were sufficient in building up each category and each conceptualization I made was a result of an iterative and systematic

coding process that incorporated various sources of data (e.g., interviews, journaling activities, and illustrations). Additionally, concepts were more technical than simplistic and commonly-used terms were avoided when labelling concepts to ensure that there would be an understanding that these building blocks were grounded in the data I analyzed. For example, the term *instrumental support* could have more succinctly captured the concept of *providing instrumental support with school-related activities* (Category 3: Supporting the School Curriculum). However, the former would leave it indistinguishable from other concepts, including *planning and engaging in home learning activities* (Category 4: Supporting the Out-of-School Curriculum), while the latter reflects the words and actions of participants more accurately.

Concepts are systematically related. The second criterion for this Grounded Theory to be considered a theory has been met as linkages between concepts within each category as well as the evidence of these relationships have been identified and was discussed throughout Chapter Five.

Categories are strongly tied but distinct. The third criterion was met as the categories were not only well-developed from a sufficient number of concepts, each category and associated concepts are tightly related with properties and dimensions described throughout the results section. For example, changes (dimensions) in parent involvement over time are detailed as a part of the discussion of each category and integrated into the diagram of the Grounded Theory (levels of parent involvement).

Variation is built into the theory. This Grounded Theory meets the fourth criterion as the theory expands beyond the initial phenomenon under study (parent involvement) to specify additional phenomena, the contexts in which the phenomena arise, the actions by participants, and how it ties back to the original phenomenon. For example, cultural differences within parent-

teacher relationships (context) shaped the ways in which parents interacted and created space between themselves and the teacher as a form of respect of each others' roles (actions).

Broader conditions are incorporated. Built into the Grounded Theory were broader conditions affecting parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships. Specifically, pedagogical differences were described at length as a more prominent factor causing distance between parents and teachers of different ethnicities. Zan, Heng, Li, and Shin, for example, all described the school systems they were accustomed to and the attitudes and treatment toward teachers that were culturally-based. Additionally, economic changes to the city appears to contribute to barriers in parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships. Teacher 3 described situations where parents of low-income status were less present in the classroom or would send a relative in their place (aunt, older sibling, cousin). Student 23 mentioned the “city is growing more expensive” and can put greater economic pressure on parents and subsequently reduce their physical presence in the school.

Process is accounted for. The question guiding this Grounded Theory study was process-oriented, focusing on the changes of parent involvement over time. That parents and students at different points in the multi-year classroom experience were sampled and constant comparison analysis of these experiences were conducted, the Grounded Theory that resulted naturally accounted for the process of parent involvement over time.

Findings are significant. The Grounded Theory that resulted from this multi-year study has generated several findings that are significant to the parent involvement and multi-year classroom literature and should stimulate further inquiry. The first finding was that parents often had greater involvement in their first year of the multi-year classroom, while trust and comfort led parents to reduce their physical presence over time (e.g., volunteering, meeting with the

teacher). The effects extended parent-teacher relationships have on the ways in which parents involve themselves in their children's education speaks to the unique contributions of this study to the parent involvement and multi-year literature.

Conversely, two additional important findings from this study relate to cultural differences and the number of children in a family influencing how parents get involved. When cultural differences were present in the parent-teacher relationship, parents were less likely to be involved at the beginning of their child's multi-year program. However, for these parents especially, the level of comfort and trust they gained with the teacher either directly (e.g., conferences) and/or indirectly (e.g., through the child) led to increased school presence and interactions over time. Added to this, parents who had an older child go through a multi-year program were better prepared and had less anxiety and motivation in Getting to Know the characteristics of the multi-year classroom. Those parents were more certain of their roles and could spend their energy engaging in parent involvement activities that met the expectations of the teacher.

Additional findings of significance from this study is that parent role construction is often framed, in part, by teacher expectations of their involvement and partially by the child's development of independence. Parents looked to the teacher to help construct their roles as their child transitions between Grade 3 and Grade 4 but needed to balance the teacher's expectations with their child's developmental level. Parents did not see backing away as a removal of involvement, rather, they perceived their intentional reduction of instrumental support and giving space to support their child's independence as another type of involvement.

The Grounded Theory in Relation to Extant Literature

Motivations for parent involvement in multi-year classrooms. In multi-year classrooms, a parent's sense of security comes about from building a rapport with the teacher, which is tied to parents learning about the new classroom and teacher (McIntyre, 2000). Parents in this study reported going through a Getting to Know period during the first year of the program, an important timeframe for parents as it influences how they see their own role for the years to follow. When parents have an additional year with the same teacher, they become more familiar with the teacher's instructional style and classroom expectations (Hanson, 1995). Familiarity with the teacher tends to relax parents (Rasmussen, 1998), which is associated with improved parent-teacher relationships (Herr, 2002), as was the case for parents in this study. Entering the second year of the program, parents reported getting to know more about the teacher's expectations and spending more of their energy on supporting the teacher and the student in their education. Similar findings have also been reported regarding parents being more appreciative for the additional time to familiarize themselves with class activities and homework (Hanson, 1995).

When cultural differences are present in the parent-teacher relationship, time is an asset in allowing parents to become more comfortable. The trajectory of parent involvement in these instances begin with a lower level of school presence, increasing over time. This reflects similar findings when parents and teachers have cultural and linguistic differences, involvement generally increases when given more opportunities to interact (Kuball, 1999).

Parents who advocated for their child were more likely to have a child enrolled in their first year of the multi-year program. Actions that parents took included working with teachers to resolve school issues around student' academic performance and behaviours, as well as

promoting the student's needs and interests. Parent-teacher conferences were often the first interactions that allowed parents to share with the teacher their vision and the goals they want their child to reach, and these aspirations are a significant determinant in a parent's motivation to get involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Entering the second year, parent-teacher conferences were spent reflecting on the growth and development from the previous year and making an academic plan moving forward. Generally, all study groups noted that issues and conflicts were often resolved in the first year. In Sheldon and Epstein's (2002) exploration of family-school-community involvement practices and its impacts on student's problem behaviours, the authors concluded that these supports were a positive factor in supporting positive behaviours, as well as the students becoming more familiar with classroom and school rules. This study reveals the potential of multi-year classrooms allowing for the time necessary for parents to advocate for and support their child in adapting to classroom rules and teacher expectations without explicit parent involvement programs or interventions.

In this study, Supporting the Out-of-School Curriculum included parents engaging the student in learning and development activities that are not part of the class curriculum, including the parent directly or indirectly providing out-of-school academic support with academic activities not assigned by the school or teacher including assigning supplemental learning activities. As suggested elsewhere (Noddings, 1988), this study confirms that parents receive greater individualized support as the student progresses through the multi-year class due to the teacher becoming more familiar with the needs and interests of the student and the student's family. Additionally, teachers were in a better position to support parents with augmenting an out-of-school curriculum as a result of the additional time to understand more about the

experiences, home and community life, and family dynamic of each student and parent, a finding backed by previous research (Gdowski, 2000).

Parent involvement is a developmental process (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Simon, 2004; Spera, 2005) and has shown to follow along with a student's development toward greater autonomy, self-advocacy, and problem-solving as they move up in grades, resulting in less contact between parents and teachers (Lee, 1994). Results from this study find that parental support of student independence was greater in the first year. As students became more familiar with their new classroom and demonstrated they could handle their school workload, and resolve classroom issues independently, parents felt more comfortable reducing their physical presence in the school.

Parents who were able to familiarize themselves with those aspects of their child's new classroom reduced their physical presence in the classroom and the amount of interactions with the teacher (e.g., Being an Advocate). For example, parents responded to teacher-provided and opportunities to volunteer in the classroom for two purposes; the first purpose was to support the teacher and the second purpose was that volunteering served as a method of Getting to Know. Volunteering in activities as one concept of Supporting the In-School Curriculum tended to decline over the course of the first year, a finding similar to previous research (Castro et. al., 2004). This reduction in classroom presence was also related to the parent's comfort and observations they made of their child being comfortable and relaxed with the teacher.

Despite a reduction in the physical presence of parents in the school, overall parent involvement did not reduce, rather, the energy shifted away from Getting to Know and being physically present at school towards supporting the school and teacher agenda at home, including supporting student independence and the in-school and out-of-school curricula. In this sense, we

see an increase in what Schnee and Bose (2010) refer to as *null actions*, which are those actions that parents intentionally do *not* take. Parents in this study often engaged in null actions to support their child's independence. Recall that Fu was expected to let his daughter do her own work, which was new for him. Many parents are inclined to help their child when they struggle, but to support the in-school curriculum, parents like Fu are expected to support the student's independence by expressing null actions. In other words, not directly supporting the child is not an absence of parent involvement, but a shift towards a purposeful inaction.

Parent-teacher relationship impacts on the parent involvement process. The Grounded Theory developed from this research centres around parent motivations for Getting to Know the teacher, expectations, and classroom routine. The energy parents placed in this involvement type influenced their perceptions of the teacher – and by extension, their relationship with the teacher – which affected the parent's perceptions concerning the classroom being the right fit for their child. This study found that parents felt more comfortable and able to communicate effectively with the classroom teacher as the student moved into the second year of the multi-year program. Parents developed a better understanding of the teacher's expectations and got to know each other on a more personal level, a finding supported by previous research on the effects of multi-year classrooms (Bailey, Werth, Allen, & Sutherland, 2016; Gdowski, 2000). In one study of multi-year classrooms, Gdowski (2000, p. 88) recounts the feelings of a teacher participant reflecting on the amount of time to gain parent trust. "It takes a lot of time and a lot of meetings and a lot of time with parents to explain to them what you're going to do and why and get their trust and cooperation."

The Grounded Theory generated in this study reveals the importance of extended parent-teacher contact on parent role construction and the influences and overlap between parent

involvement types. This study shows that multi-year classrooms brings about a unique parent involvement process and that parent-teacher relationship development influences and is influenced by that parent involvement process. The structure of the school, the expected autonomy of students, and increase in specialized curriculum delivered by teachers can affect relationship development among parents and teachers (Adams & Christensen, 2000; Epstein, & Dauber, 1991; Hornby, 2011). To date, parent involvement research has neglected to investigate the impacts of classroom structure that broaden the timeframe for parents, teachers, and students on parent involvement. This study found that parent presence in the classroom generally declined over the three years as parents became more comfortable with the teacher's ability to meet the needs of students. Similarly, McIntyre (2000) reported a quarter of parents of students in multi-year classrooms had a decline in classroom volunteering between the first year and the second year of the program.

Barriers to parent involvement and family-school relationship development. A range of barriers were faced by parents in getting involved in their child's education in the way they had envisioned. For some parents, their self-efficacy to support the student in their education were tied to language differences that inhibited them providing homework support or volunteering in the classroom. The presence of low-self-efficacy notwithstanding, parents still rated their relationship with the teacher as positive, which showed there was not an overall negative effect on parent-teacher relationships, contrary to research that has found low self-efficacy being tied to less positive parent-teacher relationships (Minke, Sheridan, Moorman Kim, Ryoo, & Koziol, 2014). The extended time parents, students, and teachers have together results in greater comfort and trust, which may have buffered the impacts of negative parent self-perceptions on the parent-teacher relationship.

Among parents and teachers whose pedagogical approaches to teaching the student had differed, parents still held positive views of their relationship with the teacher. With exception of two First Year parents who opted to remove their child from the multi-year classroom, pedagogical differences did not negatively impact parent-teacher relationships beyond the first year as parents showed a willingness to adapt, especially among parents of ethnic and linguistic minority. Some parent pedagogies to student learning provided for distinct boundaries between parents and teachers, that the position, advice, and decisions of the teacher is to be respected and the parent's role is to be a "teacher's helper". Parents with lower self-efficacy may not have more negative perceptions of the parent-teacher relationship given that the pedagogy is aligned with an expert model to education (i.e., Teacher as expert, minimal parent role).

Employment was a barrier at some point for most parents and teachers to connect, especially among fathers, a finding that reflects previous research where job demands reduced parent presence in school (McIntyre, 2000). Regardless of parents having a child in a multi-year or mono-grade classroom, parents are faced with employment barriers. However, what multi-year classrooms provides is greater comfort for parents as they become more trusting of the teacher, especially mothers in this study, who were more likely to take on more employment responsibilities or change the way in which they were involved with the school.

Implications

Accounting for time and relationships. In contrast to how leading scholars have organized parent involvement theories and frameworks (Epstein, 2018; Epstein & Rodriguez-Jansorn, 2013; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997), this Grounded Theory is not static and recognizes the importance of time and that a parent's involvement develops in tandem with their child's development and expectations schools and teachers have of them. Extended parent-

teacher contact beyond the first year influences a parent's role construction and subsequent involvement activities, which is a significant contribution of this study that remains unaccounted for in parent involvement typologies and parent role construction models.

Often when language and cultural differences exist between parents and teachers, there can be challenges when interacting about grades, behaviours, and other school-related issues (Pena, 2000). However, this Grounded Theory found that time was a factor for parents to feel more comfortable communicating with the teacher and to feel that the teacher had a better understanding of their opinions. As opposed to mono-grade classrooms where differences in parent-teacher-student relationships can be persistent issues from one academic year to the next, this study supports previous multi-year classroom research (Espinosa, 2005) revealing conflicts and issues raised are often resolved in the first year, which alters the parent involvement process for subsequent years.

Defining and monitoring parent involvement together. This study provides a greater level of specificity to the types of parent involvement and the conditions that cause parents to shift how much they are involved. This was a result of having a clear articulation of what defined parent involvement from the outset of this study, but also ensuring the definition was broad in scope so that parents were able to define for themselves what parent involvement activities and motivators were for them in their context. Schools and scholars may abstain from explicitly defining what parent involvement is, but the strategies, activities, and programs that are promoted for enhancing school-family-community partnerships will still implicitly do the defining.

Reaching optimal overlap. Built on the notion that families and schools enter into a relationship with mutual interests and goals, the overlapping spheres of influence provide a

visual representation for schools, families, and communities working together in partnership to reach maximum overlap (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 2018). However, as this study and previous research have shown (Lawson, 2003), families and schools come to the relationship with different interests and goals. The Grounded Theory from this study recognizes the differences that families and schools bring to the relationship that can positively influence parent involvement and parent-teacher relationship development or cause barriers and widen the distance between schools and families. Specifically, the Getting to Know period is when parents come to learn about their child's classroom and teacher and working out any differences in beliefs, goals, and objectives there may be. Rather than achieving maximum overlap, schools should look towards collaborating with families and communities for *optimal overlap*, wherein family and school interests, goals, roles, and responsibilities are mutually acknowledged, agreed upon, respected, supported, and then augmented by the community sphere.

Parent involvement barriers as relationship differences. Unique to this study is that White parents, teachers, and students were not viewed as culture-less, nor was ethnicity treated as a parent or family deficit as other theorists have suggested (Fan et al., 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Deeper analysis found that instances of parent-teacher differences occurred between parents and teachers of similar and different ethnic backgrounds and that aspects of culture leading to differences of beliefs, values, and perceptions of parent and teacher roles were tied to their respective pedagogies. These barriers were not framed as an individual deficit but as relationship differences.

Limitations

Though this Grounded Theory study provides significant contributions, a discussion of the limitations is warranted. Participants were recruited from Grade 4/5/6 multi-year classrooms

and did not include lower elementary multi-year classrooms where the parent's school-based involvement is likely to be greater. Though previous research in multi-year classrooms beginning in Grade 1 and ending in Grade 2 found similar results of trust formation and enhanced communication between parents and teachers (Bailey, Werth, Allen, & Sutherland, 2016), a framework is needed that accounts for the development of parent-teacher relationships and parent involvement that includes families who are of ethnic and linguistic minority background.

There were intermittent references of extended family involvement by parents, students and teacher, and other than Zan who had a prominent role in her cousin's education, the additional family members who were identified in this study as being involved in the student's education were given less attention. Limited focus on extended family involvement was partially the result of students identifying adults who are traditionally part of the student's education, such as a mother and a father.

Socio-economic status was also not part of the analysis and Teacher 3 noted that income level appeared to have an effect on the involvement of some parents and extended family in the classroom. "I would say that the low-income parents, probably, I would say they petered off faster. One family in particular, I don't have a lot of interaction with the parents, which is also based on their English level as well."

The parent sample was largely comprised of mothers, especially among Second Year Parents and Third Year Parents, and the categories of the Grounded Theory were more likely to bias mother roles and lack some of the distinct motivations and types of involvement activities engaged in among fathers. For example, mothers are more likely to show encouragement and be involved across an array of school- and home-based education activities, including support with homework and seeking out information and volunteer opportunities from teachers. Fathers, on

the other hand, are more likely to engage their child in physical play and apply academic pressure, set rules and boundaries, provide support with specific autonomy-building skills by presenting opportunities to take risks, and to involve themselves at school when called upon to resolve issues and concerns (Paquette, 2004; Rogers et al., 2009; Kim & Hill, 2015).

Strengths

The parent involvement literature often favours White, middle-class mother perspectives. This Grounded Theory study was made stronger by the diverse backgrounds of participants. Enriching this Grounded Theory study was the inclusion of parents of ethnic minority background, parents who identify as first-generation Canadian immigrants, and parents who speak English as a second language. By elevating diverse voices, a richer understanding of how cultural differences and similarities affect parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships.

This Grounded Theory study had a greater focus placed on the experiences of parents and validated further through interviews with teachers and students. By sampling parents and students across three years of the multi-age program, parents in their second and third year of the program allowed for an internal validation of the experiences of parents the preceding year(s) with regards to the parent involvement process.

Additional strengths of this study include the multiple data sources and coders used for validating the concepts and categories that built the Grounded Theory. Collecting data through interviews, journaling activities, illustrations and observations, as well as having an additional coder to review the data provided more confidence and trustworthiness in the analysis process and the results that emerged. The length of time between analyses also allowed me to re-emerge in the data with a fresh perspective, to compare analysis from two different time periods, and provide me more opportunities with participants to verify data.

There was a high degree of dimensionalization during the analysis process. For instance, parent involvement was fractured into locations where parent involvement took place (e.g., school, home, and community) and by the individuals who were involved or elicited parent involvement (e.g., mother, father, teacher, sibling, and other parents). This helped me to develop a clearer articulation of where parents are more likely to support their children's education and in what environment it occurs at different stages of the multi-year program.

Moreover, this study appears to be the first in generating a Grounded Theory that includes parent and student participants sampled across three years of a multi-year classroom, which addresses a significant gap in parent involvement/multi-year classroom research. Several additional findings indicate a need for future studies.

Future Directions

Parent involvement research and theorizing often fails to distinguish parent role development and motivations for involvement between mothers and fathers. Because mothers and fathers have unique ways of interacting with their children and express different rationales for getting involved at school (Kim & Hill, 2015), future research should better distinguish mother and father roles as the student progresses through their multi-year classroom. This study sampled participants within multi-grade classrooms and future research should look to other forms of multi-year systems including looping cohorts, split-grade classrooms, and multi-year team-teaching classrooms.

The Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms has similar limitations as Epstein's (1992, 2010) overlapping spheres and parent involvement typology as the student role is minimized and both would benefit from a more clearly defined role of the student in the parent involvement process as articulated by the students themselves.

The theoretical sampling of this Grounded Theory study comprised mostly of parents who did not have experience with having a child progressing through a Grade 4/5/6 multi-year program. Only Ruth and Shin had prior experience of having an older child who completed an upper elementary multi-year program and when taking part in this study, they had the opportunity to parent another one of their children through their multi-year classroom. However, some parents were aware of potential changes in their parenting approach in the future when one of their younger children enters their own multi-year program. Sofieke, for example, discussed how her experiences of having already learned the expectations and how that affects her understanding of expectations as her youngest daughter goes through the education system,

For [my younger daughter], she has the benefit – or the misfortune of being the second child and so part of my experience has already been developed by the time I get to certain stages whereas for [my oldest daughter], it's all brand new. I've never had a 10-year-old before. This is all new... You want to get to know how [the class] works. And part of it was knowing that there was going to be some new expectations and how is she going to navigate that, right? I don't think I feel the same way for [my younger daughter]. I feel certainly a level of – there's going to be a new teacher and new classroom expectations, there's that, but I have a better sense – I feel I have a better sense of what to expect.

Future research should look to sample parents who have prior experiences with multi-year classrooms with one of their children and compare the differences and impacts of the development of parent role construction, parent involvement, and parent-teacher relationships when another child enters the multi-year classroom.

Concluding A Multi-Year Journey

This multi-year study culminated in a Grounded Theory that filled a critical gap in multi-year and parent involvement literature. In this study it is shown that parent involvement influences and is influenced by multi-year relationships. The parents, teachers, and students who

participated in this study had time on their side to develop trusting and mutually respectful relationships. They settled in and became more comfortable with each other. However, not all multi-year classroom relationships were successful, despite attempts to reconcile differences. And so, students were moved to another classroom and the cycle of parent-student-teacher relationships began anew. These rare cases should not be a reason why multi-year classrooms should be avoided, rather, they represent a truth for most, that not all relationships work out. Despite this, many families and schools are reluctant to embrace multi-year partnerships out of fear that there will be compatibility issues and instead, feel more comfortable with disrupting successful parent-student-teacher relationships each year and losing out on the benefits that come with additional time spent together.

Schools are constantly looking for ways to get parents involved and improve family-school relations. Merely introducing new ways to get parents more active in the education of their children is not enough, the nature of relations between parents and teachers must change as well. While some strategies and programs can lead to positive outcomes, what is often being delivered are a little more than seeds and soil without the time needed for relationships to grow. What the Grounded Theory generated from this multi-year journey emphasizes is that family-school relationships matter a great deal in the development of parental roles and their motivations for becoming involved. And so, if we are to support stronger family-school-community bonds, we must not commit pedagogical fraud in the process, and instead work towards fashioning classrooms and schools to provide the time necessary to lay the foundation for relationships to flourish.

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Appendix A: Principal Information Letter

Principal Information Letter

A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

Principal investigator: Laurie Ford, Ph.D.

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxxxxx.xxxx@xxx.xx

Co-Investigator: Matthew Waugh

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxxxxxx@xxx.xx

Dear Principal(s):

This letter will provide you background information for a study being conducted by Matthew Waugh, a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

We are looking to learn about the parent's role in their child's education as part of a multi-year classroom, the partnership parents have with their child's teacher, the barriers that may exist to for parents being more involved in their child's education, and the opportunities teachers and schools provide for parental involvement.

The results of this study will be a part of the dissertation for the co-investigator titled: "A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms".

I. What is involved?

Schools like yours have been selected because you offer multi-year programs and have a diverse student body. We are looking to sample parents, students, and teachers from multiple multi-year classrooms at different school sites.

Teachers will be asked to complete a 30 to 45-minute one-on-one interview with the researchers concerning parent involvement and to journal their interactions with parents. The teachers may be asked to take part in a follow up interview.

Parents will be asked to complete a 30 to 45-minute one-on-one interview with the researcher about their experiences providing support to their child as part of a multi-year classroom, their relationship with their child's teacher, and possible barriers to providing support for their child. The parents may be asked to take part in a follow up interview.

Students who are given consent by their parents and provide assent will participate in a classroom writing and drawing activity where they are asked to complete a sentence detailing a school-related activity they were engaged in after school the previous day and who may have helped them complete it. A sub-sample of students from several classrooms will be asked to take part in a 30 to 45-minute one-on-one interview to discuss their perceptions of their parent's involvement, how it impacts their school success and other parent involvement topics.

II. How will the privacy of your students, teachers and school be respected?

Students, teachers, and parents who take part in the discussions will be asked to keep all information discussed in private and not talk about it to other people.

The information about students, parents, teachers and school child will be kept private, only seen by me and my supervisor, and will kept in locked cabinets and password protected/encrypted computer files at the University British Columbia.

III. What are the benefits and risks?

The information we learn from the study will help support parents and teachers in their partnership as part of multi-year programs. We believe that the risks in this study are minimal. Students, parents, teachers and schools can stop taking part at any time, and we will be available if anyone has any questions. Our experience is that students, parents, and teachers find these types of discussions rewarding, educational, and enjoyable. Student's names will also be entered into a draw for a \$25 gift card.

IV. Who do you contact if you have any questions?

If participants have questions, concerns, or complaints regarding their (or their child's) rights or treatment as a person who takes part in our project and/or your experiences while taking part in this study, you may contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at the University of British Columbia at xxx-xxx-xxxx or if long distance email XXXX@xxx.xxx.xx or call toll free at x-xxx-xxx-xxxx.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix B: Teacher Consent Form

Teacher Consent Letter

A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

Principal investigator: Laurie Ford, Ph.D.

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxxxxx.xxx@xxx.xx

Co-Investigator: Matthew Waugh

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxxxxxx@xxx.xx

Dear Teacher(s):

We are writing to ask your permission for you to take part in a University of British Columbia (UBC) research study.

I. What is the study about?

We want to learn more about the role parents have in their child's education as part of a multi-year classroom, the partnership you have with your student's parents, the barriers that may exist that affects your ability to involve parents in their child's education, the opportunities you provide to parents and how their involvement impacts their child's educational success. We also are asking that your students share their thoughts about their parent's involvement in their education and their perceptions of their parent's relationship with their teacher.

The results of this study will be a part of the dissertation for the co-investigator titled: "A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms."

II. Who Can Participate and What is Involved if I Participate?

If you were not forced to teach in a multi-year classroom, rather, this is a teaching situation you are not opposed to, we hope you will participate. If you agree to participate, you will be part of a group of teachers who will take part in an individual 30-minute discussion about your experiences of parental involvement as part of a multi-year classroom, your relationship with your student's parents, and possible barriers to providing opportunities for parents to be involved.

You will also be asked to provide background information about yourself including your ethnicity, the grade levels you teach, how many times you have made contact with parents of students in your classroom, and the reason for those contacts.

If you agree to participate, I am also asking that teachers journal each time they interact with a parent, the reason for the interaction, and other background information. If you consent, our discussion would take place at your school and would take 30 to 45 minutes.

These discussions can take place at any time that is convenient for you so that this does not disrupt instructional time.

III. How will your privacy be respected?

Those who take part in the discussions will be asked to keep all information discussed in private and not talk about it to other people. The information about you and your consent form will be private, only seen by the researchers, and will be kept in locked cabinets at the University of British Columbia.

IV. What are the benefits and risks if you take part?

We hope that the information we learn from the study will help support parents and teachers in their partnership as part of multi-year programs. We believe that the risks in this study are minimal. You can stop taking part at any time, and one of the researchers will be available if they have any questions. Our experience is that students find these types of discussions rewarding, educational, and enjoyable. Your name will also be entered into a draw with other teachers for a \$25 gift card.

V. Who do you contact if you have any questions?

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Matthew Waugh, as listed at the top of this letter. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints regarding you or your child's rights or treatment as a person who takes part in our project and/or your experiences while taking part in this study, you may contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at the University of British Columbia at xxx-xxx-xxxx or if long distance email XXXX@xxx.xxx.xx or call toll free at x-xxx-xxx-xxxx.

VI. How do I give my consent?

We hope that you will take part in this study. If you consent to take part, please:

- Complete the consent form on the next page. Keep this letter for your records.
- Have your consent form picked up by the researcher, Matthew Waugh.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

****PLEASE RETURN THIS PAGE TO THE RESEARCHER****

A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

Investigators: Matthew Waugh, Laurie Ford

University of British Columbia

1. **Consent:** I have read and understand the information about this project, “A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms”.

I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary. I may stop at any time.

2. **Please check:**

☐ **Yes,** I consent to taking part in this study.

3. **Please fill out the following and sign below:**

Teacher Name – PRINT

Teacher Signature

Date

Best time of the day and day to contact you: _____

Appendix C: Parent Consent Form

Information for Parents and Consent Letter

A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

Principal investigator: Laurie Ford, Ph.D.

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxxxxx.xxxx@xxx.xx

Co-Investigator: Matthew Waugh

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email: xxxxxxxxx@xxx.xx

Dear Parent(s),

We are writing to ask your permission for you and/or child to take part in a University of British Columbia (UBC) research study.

I. What is the study about?

We want to learn more about your role in your child's education as part of a multi-year classroom, the partnership you have with your child's teacher, the barriers that may affect your level of involvement in your child's education, the opportunities your child's teacher and school have provided as well as how your involvement impacts your child's educational success. We also are asking that your child share their thoughts about their parent's involvement in their education and their perceptions of their parent's relationship with their teacher. We will also be talking with teachers about their perceptions of the experience.

The results of this study will be a part of the dissertation for the co-investigator titled: "A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms".

II. Who can participate and what is involved if you take part in this study?

For this study, we want parents to share with us about their experiences as a parent of a child in a multi-year classroom. We view parents as any adult who has established some contact with their child's school such as meeting with a teacher or other school staff, picks up their child or attends school-related events like parent-teacher conferences.

To be included in this study, you should have some type of caregiver role for your child and may include an aunt, uncle, or a grandparent. A parent does not have to be biological. We want to include parents who were not forced to enroll their child into a multi-year classroom. If you agree to take part in the study, you will be part of a group of parents who will be asked to talk with me for a 30 to 45-minute discussion about your experiences providing support to your child as part of a multi-year classroom, your relationship with your child's teacher, and possible barriers to providing support for your child.

You will also be asked to provide background information about you and your child including your ethnic and language background, the grade of your child, and questions about the ways and for what purpose you have had contact with your child's teacher or school. You may be asked to take part in a 2nd interview, if needed, for follow up.

If you agree to allow your child to take part they will do participate in a 10-15 minute classroom activity once a week where they are asked to describe an education-related activity they worked on the previous day after school and who may have supported them in completing this work. A random group of students who do the journal activity will be asked to sit down with me at the school to discuss this further.

If your child is interested and you consent, your child may be selected to take part in one of these discussions for about 30 to 45 minutes at their school. If this results in missing instructional time in the classroom, a plan to make up any missed time will be developed with your child's teacher so that your child is not in any way penalized.

III. How will you and your child's privacy be respected?

Those who take part in the discussions will be asked to keep all information discussed in private and not talk about it to other people. The information about you and your child will be private, only seen by the research team, and will kept in locked cabinets at the University British Columbia and password protected on computers.

IV. What are the benefits and risks if you and your child takes part?

We hope that the information we learn from the study will help support parents and teachers in their partnership as part of multi-year programs. We believe that the risks in this study are minimal. You or your child can stop taking part at any time, and one of the researchers will be available if they have any questions. Our experience is that students find these types of discussions rewarding, educational, and enjoyable. Your child's name will also be entered into a draw for a \$25 gift card.

V. Who do you contact if you have any questions?

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Matthew Waugh, as listed at the top of this letter. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints regarding you or your child's rights or treatment as a person who takes part in our project and/or your experiences while taking part in this study, you may contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at the University of British Columbia at xxx-xxx-xxxx, or if long distance, email XXXX@xxx.xxx.xx or call toll free at x-xxx-xxx-xxxx.

VI. How do I give my consent?

We hope that you and your child will take part in this study. If you consent for you and your child to take part, please:

- Complete the consent form on the next page. Keep this letter for your records.
- Have your child return the consent form to their teacher.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

******PLEASE RETURN THIS PAGE TO THE RESEARCHER******

A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

Investigators: Matthew Waugh, Laurie Ford

University of British Columbia

- 1. Consent:** I have read and understand the information about this project, “A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms”. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary. Both I and/or my child may stop at any time.

2. Please check:

☐ **Yes,** I consent to my child taking part in this study.

☐ **Yes,** I consent to take part in this study myself.

3. Please fill out the following and sign below:

Your Child's Name – PRINT

Parent/Guardian Name – PRINT

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Please provide your phone and email address so we can arrange a time to meet with you for an interview.

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Best time of the day and day to contact you: _____

Appendix D: Parent Follow-Up Email

Parent Information Letter

A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

Dear Parent(s):

Recently, your child was sent home with a consent form asking for permission for you and your child to take part in a UBC study conducted by Matthew Waugh. We believe this study is important and would be of interest to you and your child as it concerns your role as a parent in your child's multi-year education, our parent-teacher partnership, the barriers that may exist in your involvement in your child's education, and the opportunities teachers and schools provide for your involvement.

I am contacting you as a reminder that if you wish to participate or allow your child to be included, please read and sign the consent form that has been sent home with your child or the forms that have been attached to this message and return the consent form to the front office at our school site.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Matthew Waugh, by phone (xxx.xxx.xxxx) or by email (xxxxxxxx@xxxx.xx).

Sincerely,

Classroom Teacher

Appendix E: Student Assent Form

Information and Student Assent Letter¹¹

A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

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Co-Investigator: Matthew Waugh

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Dear Student(s):

We are doing a study to try to find out what you think about your parents supporting you in school, at home, and in the community. We also want to know what you think about the relationship your parents have with your teacher.

I. Who are we asking for help and do you have to take part in the study?

We are asking students like you in grades 3 through 6 to take part in our study. Taking part in the study, is up to you. We are first asking your parents if they are ok with you taking part. If your parents decide that it is ok for you to take part, they will sign a study consent form. You have to give the signed form back to your teacher. We are asking you if you want to take part. We hope that you will want to take part in the study, but if you do not want to, it is ok.

II. What happens if you take part in the study?

There are two things that we will ask you to do. The first thing is that we will ask a few of you to sit down with me and talk about your thoughts about your teacher and parent talking and working together, whether you think your parents should be more involved, less involved and why?

Our discussions will be one-on-one, should take about 30 minutes and will be audio recorded, and the recordings will be kept locked up in a cabinet at the University of British Columbia and on my computer which no one can get to except for us.

The second thing you will be asked to do is draw a picture of how you think your parent's relationship is with your teacher. Also, we will work with your teacher to develop a plan for any missed classwork so that you are not penalized for taking part in the study.

¹¹ Note that the information in this assent was reviewed orally with each student.

III. Why might you want to take part in this study?

It would be great if you would like to take part and help us understand more about how your parents are involved in your education, your thoughts about how your parents and teacher work together. Most students enjoy taking part in studies like this where they get to talk about their experiences. Everyone who returns the parent permission form will be entered into a draw for a \$25 gift card to say thank you for your help.

IV. Are your answers private?

Everything you tell us will be kept private, and we will never tell others your name or if you took part in the study. We will encourage everyone who takes part in our study to not to discuss what was said in our discussions or in your journal activities.

V. Who can you talk to about the study?

If you have any questions, you can talk to me, Matthew Waugh, or to your parents, who have my phone number and email.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ASSENT FORM

PLEASE RETURN THIS PAGE TO SCHOOL

A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms

Principal Investigator: Laurie Ford Co-Investigator: Matthew Waugh

University of British Columbia

1. **CONSENT:** The researchers have explained and I understand the information about this project, “A Grounded Theory of the Parent Involvement Process in Multi-Year Classrooms”. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary, and that I may stop at any time.

2. Please check:

☐ **Yes,** I want to take part in this study.

3. Please fill out the following and sign below:

Your Name and Grade – PRINT

Your Signature

Date

Appendix F: Round 1 Parent Interview Guide

PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Parent Name	
Parent-Teacher Relationship Year	

OPENING

To start, thank you for participating in this study and sitting down with me to discuss parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships. I will be asking questions you may find interesting, including:

- The level of involvement in your child's education,
- How your child's teacher supports you in being involved in your child's education,
- How you see your relationship with your child's teacher, and
- How this relationship might have changed since your child started their multi-year program.

If you do not know one of the questions I ask or do not want to answer, please let me know and we can move on to the next question. I want to also let you know that no other parent or your child's teacher will know what you share with me so feel free to be open and answer however you like. This discussion should take between 45 and 60 minutes. After the discussion, I have a short set of questions that ask you some background questions. Can we begin?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Describe your involvement as a parent in your child's education?
2. Describe how, if at all, your involvement in your child's education has developed since the start of your child being enrolled in a multi-year program?
3. What opportunities, if any, have you had to support your child's education at school, at home or in the community?
4. In your opinion, how involved are you in your child's education at school?
 - a. Follow-up if not covered in the parent's response: Why do you think that?

TEACHER INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

5. Thinking about how you described your involvement as a parent in your child's education, how do you think your child's teacher supports you in this role?
6. How does your child's teacher involve you or encourage you to be involved in your child's education either at home, in the community or at school?

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

7. Describe your relationship with your child's teacher?
8. Thinking back on your relationship with your child's teacher, how has it changed?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please select which best describes you or your child.

9. How would you describe your child's ethnic background?
10. How would you describe your ethnic background
11. How many times have you or another parent/guardian of your child visited this school this year?
 - a. Never
 - b. 1-2 Times
 - c. 3-5 Times
 - d. 5-10 Times
 - e. More than 10 Times
12. Who initiated most of the contacts, you or another parent/guardian of your child had with the school this year?
 - a. Classroom teacher
 - b. Counselor
 - c. Office secretary
 - d. Me or another Parent/Guardian
 - e. Principal
 - f. Other (Please specific) _____

13. When you or another parent/guardian of your child had contacts with school, which of the following best describes the reason for the contacts (select all that apply)

- a. Praise or good news about my child
- b. Academic/grade concerns about my child
- c. Behaviour concerns about my child
- d. Attendance concerns about my child
- e. Other (please explain) _____

14. When your child's teacher has contacted you or another parent/guardian of you child, how was contact made (select all that apply)

- a. E-mail
- b. Personal note or letter
- c. Phone call
- d. Other (Please explain) _____

Please answer Yes or No to the following questions.

15. English is the primary language spoken in our home

- a. Yes
- b. No

16. Either myself or another parent/guardian of my child have volunteered in my child's classroom or their school this year

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. Either myself or another parent/guardian of my child have volunteered for outside of the classroom or school activities with my child's school/classroom this year

- a. Yes
- b. No

18. Either myself or another parent/guardian of my child have met face-to-face with my child's teacher (other than parent/teacher conferences)

- a. Yes
- b. No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix G: Round 2 Parent Interview Guide

PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Parent Name	
Parent-Teacher Relationship Year	

OPENING

Thank you again for sitting down with me to answer a few more questions. As a reminder, I'm doing this study on parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships and I wanted to get the opinions and experiences of parents like you. There are several areas I would like for us to focus on, including:

- Where you have been involved during your child's multi-year program and whether any changes have taken place;
- How you support your child's independence and whether your child's teacher supports you in supporting your child's independence;
- The communication approach between you and your child's teacher, your personalities, and your philosophy about how your child should learn; and,
- The relationship between you and your child's teacher and its impacts on your child's relationship with their teacher.

If you do not know one of the questions I ask or do not want to answer, please let me know and we can move on to the next question. I want to also let you know that no other parent or your child's teacher will know what you share with me so feel free to be open and answer however you like. This discussion should take between 45 and 60 minutes.

LOCATION OF AND CHANGES IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. **(All Parents)** How did you first come to know about your child's teacher: Directly from parent-teacher emails, phone calls, conferences, or some other direct way, or indirectly from other parents, teachers, students, child/older child previously enrolled in classroom or other indirect ways?
2. **(All Parents)** Where would you say you are more involved with your child right now?
 - a. At home
 - b. In the community
 - c. At school
3. How, if at all, has this changed since the beginning of your child's multi-year program?

4. Since the start of your child's multi-year program, how would you describe your involvement or interactions with your child's school and teacher? Please describe any changes you may have observed.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND CHILD INDEPENDENCE

5. From the responses you provided, why do you think there has been a change/no change with where you have been involved most with your child?
6. How, if at all, do you support your child in becoming independent (or to do things for herself or himself)?
7. How, if at all, has the way you supported your child in becoming independent (or to do things for her or himself) changed since the beginning of their multi-year program?

COMMUNICATION, PERSONALITY, AND TEACHING STYLE

8. Parents and teachers may have similar or different ways they wish to communicate. Some want to talk over the phone, or by email, while others prefer to speak face-to-face. Would you say you and your child's teacher(s) have similar or different ways of **communicating**? Please explain.
9. How, if at all, has the **communication** between you and your child's teacher(s) developed since you first met?
 - a. Prompt: Have there been any differences or changes in the way you and the teacher communicate since you first met?
10. Parents and teachers may have similar or different personalities. Has **personality** ever affected or impacted your relationship with your child's teacher(s)?
11. Parents and teachers can have similar or different opinions about what children should learn in the classroom and how children should learn. Would you say you and your child's teacher(s) have similar or different opinions about what your child should learn and how?
12. Which of the following has the greatest impact on parent/teacher relationships and why?
 - a. The communication between parents and the teacher(s)
 - b. The personalities of parents and the teacher(s)
 - c. The philosophy of the parents and the teacher(s) (by philosophy, I mean how parents and teachers believe the child should learn)

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACTS

13. How would you describe your relationship with your child's teacher(s)?
14. Do you think students affect/impact your **level of involvement** in their education? Why or why not?
15. Do you think students can affect/impact **the relationship** between parents and teachers? Why or why not?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix H: Round 1 Student Interview Guide

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Student Name	
Grade Level	
Parent-Teacher Relationship Year	

OPENING

To start, thank you for sitting down with me to answer a few questions. As you know, I am doing this study on parent involvement and I wanted to get the opinions of students like you. There are several areas I will be asking questions about that you may find interesting:

- Ways that your parent(s) support you in your education;
- Any barriers that may affect your parent(s) from being involved in your education;
- How your teacher may support your parent(s) in being involved in your education;
- How you see your parent's relationship with your teacher; and
- How their relationship may have changed since you started your time in the multi-year classroom.

If you do not know one of the questions I ask or do not want to answer, please let me know and we can move on to the next question. I want to also let you know that none of your classmates, your teachers or parents will know what you share with me so feel free to answer however you like. Can we begin?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. How is/are your parent(s) involved in your education?
 - a. Prompt: How about at home? How about at school? How about in the community?
2. Do you think your parent(s) is/are involved in your education too much, too little, or about right?
 - a. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: Why do you think this?
3. How involved would you like your parents to be in your education at school?
 - a. Prompt: What would this look like?

4. What, if at all, do you think gets in the way of your parent(s) being involved in your education?

TEACHER INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

5. Tell me how, if at all, your teacher gets your parent(s) involved in your education?
6. What ways, if at all, could your teacher get your parent(s) more involved in your education?

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACTS

7. How would you describe the relationship between your parent(s) and your teacher?
 - a. Prompt: Do you think the relationship between your parent(s) is positive or negative?
 - b. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: Why do you think this?
8. Thinking back on the relationship between your parent(s) and your teacher, how, if at all, has their relationship changed since you first started in this class?
9. How important is it to you that the relationship between your parent(s) and your teacher is positive?
 - a. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: Why do you think this?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix I: Round 2 Student Interview Guide

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Student Name	
Grade Level	
Parent-Teacher Relationship Year	

OPENING

Thank you again for sitting down with me to answer a few more questions. As a reminder, I am doing this study on parent involvement and I wanted to get the opinions of students like you. There are several areas I will be asking questions about that you may find interesting:

- Ways that your parent(s) support you in being independent;
- How you and your parent(s) learned the routine and the expectations in your classroom;
- How you see your parent's relationship with your teacher;
- How their relationship may have changed since we last talked; and,
- How you might affect the relationship between your parent(s) and your teacher

If you do not know one of the questions I ask or do not want to answer, please let me know and we can move on to the next question. I want to also let you know that none of your classmates, your teachers or parents will know what you share with me so feel free to answer however you like. Can we begin?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND CHILD INDEPENDENCE

1. Tell me what it looks like when you do your school work at home?
2. How, if at all, have you changed the way you do your school work since you started in your multi-year class until now?
3. How, if at all, do you think your parents support you to do things by yourself?
 - a. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: Why do you think this?
4. How, if at all, has/have your parent(s) changed in the way they help you with your school work since you started in your multi-year class until now?

5. When did you start thinking you could do your school work by yourself without your parent(s) helping you?
6. How did you learn the classroom routine and what was expected when you first started in your multi-year class?
7. Do your parents learn the routine and expectations of your class as well?
 - a. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: What do they learn about the classroom routine?
 - b. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: How do they learn the classroom routine?

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACTS

8. How would you describe the relationship between your parent(s) and your teacher?
 - a. Prompt: Do you think the relationship between your parent(s) is positive or negative?
 - b. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: Why do you think this?
9. Thinking back on the relationship between your parent(s) and your teacher, how, if at all, has their relationship changed since you first started in this class?
10. What do you think is needed, if at all, for your parents and teacher to improve their relationship?
11. What do you think is needed, if at all, for you and your teacher to improve your relationship?
12. Tell me about a time, if there was a time, when things may not have been working well between your parent(s) and your teacher.
 - a. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: How, if at all, did it affect their relationship?
 - b. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: How, if at all, did it affect your parent's involvement?
13. Tell me about a time, if there was a time, when you think you affected the relationship between your parent(s) and your parent's relationship (whether good or bad).

14. Tell me about a time, if there was a time, when things were not working well between you and your teacher.

- a. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: How, if at all, did it affect your relationship with your teacher?
- b. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: How, if at all, did it affect the relationship between your parent(s) and your teacher?
- c. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: How, if at all, did it affect your parent(s) involvement?

15. How important is it to you that your parents and teacher have a positive relationship?

- a. Follow-up if not covered in the student's response: Why do you think this?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix J: Round 1 Teacher Interview Guide

TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Teacher Name	
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OPENING

To start, thank you for taking part in this study and for sitting down with to have a discussion. As on parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships. There are several areas I will be asking questions about that you may find interesting:

- The role you think parents have in their child's education,
- The role you play in providing opportunities for parents to be involved,
- How you see your relationship with parents, and
- How relationships change with parents over time as part of a multi-year program.

If you do not know one of the questions I ask or do not want to answer, please let me know and we can move on to the next question. I want to also let you know that no teacher, parent or any of your students will know what you share with me so feel free to be open and answer however you like. This discussion should take between 45 and 60 minutes. After the discussion, I have a short set of questions that ask you some background questions. Can we begin?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. How would you describe the multi-year process among parents in your class and their involvement in their child's education?
2. In your opinion, how involved would you say parents are in their child's education?
 - a. Follow-up if not covered in the teacher's response: Why do you think that?

TEACHER INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

3. What opportunities do you provide parents to be involved in their child's education at school, at home or in the community?
4. What barriers, if any, have you faced in providing these opportunities?
5. Of the parents you know, what barriers are you aware of that may affect their involvement in their child's education?

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

6. How would you describe your relationship with parents?
7. How, if at all, has your teaching in a multi-year program affected your relationship with parents?
8. How, if at all, has teaching in a multi-year program affected your ability to involve parents in their child's education?
9. Thinking back on your relationship with parents, how do you think those relationships have changed from one year to the next as part of a multi-year program?
 - a. Follow-up if not covered in the teacher's response: What differences, if any, are there in your relationships with first year parents and parents you have known more than a year?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

10. Describe your educational background?
11. How many years have you been teaching?
12. How many years have you been teaching in multi-year classrooms?
13. How would you describe your ethnic background
14. How many times has a parent/guardian of one of your students visited the school or your classroom this year (not including parent/teacher conferences)?
 - a. Never
 - b. 1-2 Times
 - c. 3-5 Times
 - d. 5-10 Times
 - e. More than 10 Times

15. Who initiated most of the contact?

- a. Me, the classroom teacher
- b. The Parent/Guardian
- c. Counselor
- d. Office secretary
- e. Principal
- f. Other (Please specify) _____

16. When you made contact with a parent/guardian, which of the following best describes the reason for the contacts (select all that apply)

- a. Praise or good news about their child
- b. Academic/grade concerns about their child
- c. Behaviour concerns about their child
- d. Attendance concerns about their child
- e. Other (please explain) _____

17. When a parent/guardian made contact with you, what were the reasons for the contact?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix K: Round 2 Teacher Interview Guide

TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Teacher Name	
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OPENING

Thank you again for sitting down with me to answer a few more questions. As a reminder, I am doing this study on parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships and I wanted to get the opinions of teachers like you. There are several areas I will be asking questions about that you may find interesting:

- The communication approach taken between you and parents;
- Your personality and parent's personalities; and,
- The philosophy or pedagogy you and parents hold

If you do not know one of the questions I ask or do not want to answer, please let me know and we can move on to the next question. I want to also let you know that no teacher, parent or any of your students will know what you share with me so feel free to be open and answer however you like. This discussion should take between 45 and 60 minutes. After the discussion, I have a short set of questions that ask you some background questions. Can we begin?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRENDS

1. Some parents and students have indicated that there are low levels of parent involvement or physical presence and parent-teacher contact early in Grade 4 and then it changes over time. Why do you think that is?
 - a. Follow-Up: Can you tell me about whether you have observed this in your classroom?
2. Some parents and students have indicated that there are high levels of parent involvement or physical presence and parent-teacher contact early in Grade 4 and then it changes over time. Why do you think that is?
 - a. Follow-Up: Can you tell me about whether you have observed this in your classroom?

PARENT AND TEACHER PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

3. How, if at all, do you think parents in your class support their child in becoming independent (or to do things for herself or himself)?

4. How, if at all, has the way you supported your students in becoming independent (or to do things for her or himself) changed or differ by grade level?
5. How, if at all, does parent and teacher's beliefs about how students should learn (pedagogy) affect parent involvement (relationships)?
6. Tell me about some of the times, if there are any times, when there were philosophical or pedagogical differences between you and a parent?
 - a. How did this get addressed?

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

7. How, if at all, does parent and teacher's communication style affect parent involvement or your relationship with parents?
8. What differences in your approach, if at all, would you take to get parents involved compared to others?

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

9. How, if at all, does parent and teacher personality affect parent involvement or your relationship with parents?
 - a. Follow-Up: What has been your experience?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix L: Teacher Journal Activity

TEACHER JOURNAL ACTIVITY

Teacher Name	
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PURPOSE

Teacher participants are asked to maintain a journal in which they will provide brief entries describing their ongoing interactions with parents. For this study, a parent will be defined as an adult primary caretaker or guardian of a student and will be considered one of the following types of parents: (a) Mother; (b) Father; (c) Grandmother; (d) Grandfather; (e) Aunt; (f) Uncle; or (g) Other Primary Caregiver.

Interactions include any formal and informal meetings you may have with a student's parent including face-to-face meetings, conferences, before and after school discussions, email exchanges, messages sent to and from school and the student's home, notes written on student's work that are meant for parent's review and any other possible exchanges.

DIRECTIONS

Record the date of each interaction and provide the initials of the parent's first and last name to keep track of multiple entries for the same parent. Please answer the following questions for each entry of every interaction with parents:

1. What was the reason for this interaction?
2. How long did this interaction take?
3. Who initiated the interaction?
4. How was this interaction initiated (e.g., email, face-to-face, notes sent or received, phone call, or other modes)?
5. How long have you known this parent?
6. What grade is their child enrolled?
7. General comments?

Appendix M: Parent References of Categories and Concepts

Table M1

Parent References of Category 1 Concepts: Getting to Know

Concepts		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1. Getting to Know the Routine	References	30	42	11	83
	Interviews	6	3	2	11
2. Getting to Know the Expectations	References	12	23	1	36
	Interviews	2	2	1	5
3. Getting to Know the Teacher	References	8	20	10	38
	Interviews	3	3	3	9
Total references		50	85	22	157
Total unique interviews		6	3	4	13

Table M2

Parent References of Category 2 Concepts: Being an Advocate

Concepts		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1. Resolving School-Related Issues If and When Presented	References	18	34	14	66
	Interviews	5	4	3	12
2. Discussing Needs and Interests	References	23	16	34	73
	Interviews	3	3	3	9
3. Taking a Leadership Role	References	0	19	2	21
	Interviews	0	4	2	6
Total references		41	69	50	160
Total unique interviews		7	5	5	17

Table M3

Parent References of Category 3 Concepts: Supporting the In-School Curriculum

Concepts		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1. Knowing the Level of Educational Development	References	85	24	13	122
	Interviews	6	3	4	13
2. Asking About and Monitoring School Progress	References	62	47	30	139
	Interviews	6	4	6	16
3. Providing Instrumental Support With School-Related Activities	References	68	33	39	140
	Interviews	8	5	6	19
4. Being Present and Supporting School Attendance and Participation	References	26	12	39	77
	Interviews	3	2	4	9
Total references		241	116	121	478
Total unique interviews		8	6	8	22

Table M4

Parent References of Category 4 Concepts: Supporting the Out-of-School Curriculum

Concepts		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1. Planning and Engaging in Home Learning Activities	References	41	95	15	151
	Interviews	4	4	3	11
2. Planning and Being Present for Extracurricular Activities	References	41	83	39	163
	Interviews	6	3	6	15
3. Planning and Taking Family Outings	References	2	17	11	30
	Interviews	2	2	2	6
Total references		84	195	65	344
Total unique interviews		8	4	6	18

Table M5

Parent References of Category 5 Concepts: Supporting Independence

Concepts		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1. Knowing the Level of Independence	References	56	86	49	191
	Interviews	7	4	7	18
2. Supporting Autonomy and Problem-Solving Skills	References	172	112	14	298
	Interviews	7	3	3	13
3. Supporting Time and Workload Management Skills	References	29	52	8	89
	Interviews	4	6	3	13
4. Being a Source of Support When Asked	References	18	3	26	47
	Interviews	4	2	6	12
Total references		279	249	97	625
Total unique interviews		8	6	8	22

Table M6

Parent References of Category 6 Concepts: Responding to Involvement Opportunities

Concepts		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Volunteering For or Attending School Activities	References	43	42	47	132
	Interviews	6	5	8	19
Being Aware and Reading of School-Provided Content	References	41	57	55	153
	Interviews	5	5	6	16
Being Aware and Responding to Teacher-Provided Opportunities to Meet	References	33	26	37	96
	Interviews	6	5	7	18
Exchanging Information and Advice When Asked and Offered	References	27	32	10	69
	Interviews	6	4	6	16
Total references		144	157	149	450
Total unique interviews		7	6	8	21

Table M7

Parent References of Category 7 Concepts: Limited Involvement and Relationship Development

Concepts		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Being Unsure, Passing Up, or Having Limited Opportunities	References	76	8	6	90
	Interviews	7	2	3	12
Having Family Commitments	References	22	17	25	64
	Interviews	4	3	3	10
Having Communication and Language Differences	References	213	21	8	242
	Interviews	8	1	1	10
Having Pedagogical Differences	References	50	69	21	140
	Interviews	3	2	1	6
Total references		188	113	60	536
Total unique interviews		8	4	6	18

Table M8

Parent References of Category 8 Concepts: Building the Relationship Over Time

Concepts		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Communication Adapts, Opens Up, and is Comfortable	References	73	78	47	198
	Interviews	4	5	6	15
Communicating on a Personal Level	References	20	34	50	104
	Interviews	1	3	6	10
Teacher Pedagogy and Instruction is Trusted and Appreciated	References	83	137	141	361
	Interviews	4	4	8	16
The Out-of-School Curriculum is Individualized	References	5	37	64	106
	Interviews	1	3	6	10
Total references		181	286	302	769
Total unique interviews		4	5	8	17

Appendix N: Parent Questionnaire Data

Table N1

Questionnaire Responses by Parent-Teacher Relationship Year

Participant Group	Choices	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Volunteered for Class Activities This School Year	Yes	1	4	5	10
	No	5	0	1	6
Volunteered for School Activities This School Year	Yes	1	4	3	8
	No	5	0	3	8
Met with Teacher Outside of Conferences	Yes	5	1	3	9
	No	1	3	3	7
Who Initiates Most of the Contact	Parent	4	2	2	8
	Teacher or School	2	2	4	8
Reason for Contact	Concerns	4	1	4	9
	Updates and Opportunities	2	2	2	6
	Praise or Good News	3	1	2	6
How Contact is Usually Made	Email	4	3	6	13
	Face to Face	2	1	0	8
All Modes of Contact Used	Email	5	4	6	15
	Face to Face	6	4	5	15
	Blog	4	3	4	11
	Phone Call and Notes	2	3	5	10
	Other	2	2	3	7

Appendix O: Inter-coder Agreement of Parent Interview Transcripts

Table O1

Inter-coder Agreement of Round 1 Interview Transcripts by Parent-Teacher Relationship Year

Relationship Year	Round 1 Transcript Number	Initial Agreement	Final Agreement	Change
Year One Parents	#1	59% (65/111)	100% (88/88)	69%
	#2	57% (20/35)	92% (24/26)	61%
	#3	63% (25/40)	82% (27/33)	30%
Year Two Parents	#4	100% (11/11)	100% (11/11)	0%
	#5	50% (8/16)	75% (12/16)	50%
	#6	85% (28/33)	97% (32/33)	14%
	#7	66% (25/38)	97% (38/39)	47%
Year Three Parents	#8	100% (18/18)	100% (18/18)	0%
	#9	59% (23/39)	100% (39/39)	64%
	#10	100% (8/8)	100% (8/8)	0%
	#11	100% (8/8)	100% (8/8)	0%
Total		67% (239/357)	96% (305/319)	43%

Table O2

Inter-coder Agreement of Round 2 Interview Transcripts by Parent-Teacher Relationship Year

Relationship Year	Round 2 Transcript Number	Initial Agreement	Final Agreement	Change
Year One Parents	#1	67% (19/27)	100% (27/27)	49%
	#2	69% (46/67)	89% (56/63)	29%
	#3	73% (27/37)	92% (35/38)	26%
Year Two Parents	#4	97% (33/34)	100% (33/33)	3%
	#5	95% (53/56)	98% (55/56)	3%
Year Three Parents	#8	43% 6/14	86% (12/14)	100%
	#9	67% (14/21)	95% (20/21)	42%
	#10	41% (16/39)	90% (35/39)	120%
Total		73% (214/295)	94% (273/291)	29%