

**AN EXPLORATION OF FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS
AT A UNIVERSITY-MODEL SCHOOL**

A Dissertation by

Pamela L. Martin

Master of Arts in Education, University of Phoenix, 2009

Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Mid-America Nazarene University, 1993

Submitted to the Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership,
Educational and School Psychology
and the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

May 2017

© Copyright 2017 by Pamela L. Martin

All Rights Reserved.

**AN EXPLORATION OF FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS
AT A UNIVERSITY-MODEL SCHOOL**

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Leadership.

Eric Freeman, Committee Chair

Jody Fiorini, Committee Member

Jean Patterson, Committee Member

Kristen Sherwood, Committee Member

Twyla Hill, Committee Member

Accepted for the College of Education

Shirley Lefever, Dean

Accepted for the Graduate School

Dennis Livesay, Dean

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my three children, Lauren, Sarah, and Benjamin. Parenting each of them taught me the value of the family-school partnership. I am so grateful for who they have become. The parent-teacher partnership has been an important part of their academic and character development; however, it is their humility, compassion, and commitment to hard work that has allowed them to realize the benefits of education. They strengthen my hope for the future.

My grandparents, Wilson and Liz Murphy, were constant encouragers of my academic pursuits. During the journey to complete this dissertation, they both passed away. I am eternally grateful for their belief in me, and I wish they could be here to see the completion of this work. Throughout my life, they modeled what it meant to work with excellence.

This dedication also includes of my nephew, Maverick. He never had an opportunity to attend school, but his curiosity and enthusiasm to explore new things continues to inspire me. The joyfulness of children feeds my passion for education. In his four years, he exemplified the promise and joy of a child. Supporting and developing that promise is the gift of being an educator.

Finally, words cannot adequately express my gratitude for my husband, Bill. He believes in me when I doubt myself. Although a strong school-family partnership afforded our children many opportunities, it is his dedication and commitment to being a husband and father that provided the foundation for a healthy family. I am forever grateful for his love, endless patience, and encouragement to finish strong.

Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.

--Pele

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation was the collective effort of many people who encouraged, supported, and challenged me throughout this journey. I would like to acknowledge and thank them for their contribution to me personally and this research.

First, I would like to thank the teachers in my life. From my earliest years in school, teachers have challenged and inspired me. I also appreciate the administration and teachers of Central Christian Academy. Their sacrifices allowed me the time to complete this program. Without them, I would not have been able to accomplish this goal.

Second, I am grateful for the administration, parents, and teachers of Heritage Academy. They were gracious hosts and willing participants. I appreciate the interest they took in this study.

Third, Dr. Freeman, my dissertation committee, and members of the Wichita State Educational Leadership department have been excellent guides. I am amazed how much I have learned on this journey. My professors helped expand my thinking.

Fourth, I am grateful to the members of Cohorts 22, 23, and 24. I greatly appreciate their hard work ethic and encouragement. The field study experiences and class discussions were invaluable for the independent work I have done this year. I have tremendous respect for each cohort member and wish him or her the best in their completion of the program.

Finally, my faith and family helped me through the toughest days, the days I wanted to quit. During this process, I leaned heavily on Philippians 4:13 and the love, encouragement, and support of Bill, Carson, Lauren, Sarah, and Ben. I will always be grateful for their belief in me.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of teachers and parents concerning a high-involvement model of parental engagement known as the University-Model School (UMS). The Dual-Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships was the theoretical lens that shaped the study. Within the framework, a microstructure of four categories exists that explains more in-depth the supports desirable for the development and sustainability of family-school partnerships. Participants were parents and teachers, representative of grades K-12, from a member school belonging to the National Association of University-Model Schools. Data collected from study participants indicated that UMS parents and teachers face similar challenges for developing and sustaining family-school partnerships as other private and public school models. The family structure and socioeconomic status of the stakeholders of the case study school limit the transferability of the study findings to other settings. However, participants' perspectives and experiences indicated that the model holds important implications for educators seeking to enhance the development of family-school partnerships. Study participants perceived that mentoring programs, school leadership, high levels of parental engagement, and faculty availability were strengths of the school that contributed to a strong sense of community and collaboration. Overall, participants believed the model afforded positive student outcomes in academics and character development. Additionally, participants believed the model strengthened the family unit. In this study, UMS stakeholders' common philosophy, shared faith, similar family structure and socioeconomic background, and flexible schedule added to their capacity to build and sustain a collaborative partnership.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
CHAPTER 1	1
University-Model Schooling and How It Informs Educational Practice	1
Research Problem	3
Theoretical Framework	5
Cognition	7
Capabilities	7
Connections	8
Confidence	9
Purpose of the Study	10
Research Questions	11
CHAPTER 2	12
The Value of Parental Engagement	14
The Turbulent History of Parent-School Relations	15
Parent Involvement or Parent Partnership?	19
Parental Involvement in Primary and Secondary Education	22
Preparing Teachers for Parent-School Partnerships	23
Can Private and Public Schools Learn from One Another?	23
Conclusion	24
CHAPTER 3	26
Exploratory Case Study	26
Research Context	27
Participant Selection, Data Collection, and Document Review	29
Data Analysis	32
Research Quality	33
Credibility	33
Dependability	34
Transferability	35
Ethics	35
Positionality	36
Reflexivity	37
CHAPTER 4	38
Reasons for Choosing a UMS	39
Flexibility and Family Time	41
Parental Influence	42
Academic Rigor	43

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

Chapter	Page
Character Development	44
Heritage Academy Beliefs and Values	45
Academic Benefits and Challenges	46
Classroom Learning	46
Students with Learning Differences	50
Character Development and Preparation for College	51
Time Management and Students' Personal Accountability	51
Confidence and Self-Advocacy	52
Character Emphasis and Service	53
Training, Professional Development, and Meeting Students' Needs	54
Parent Training and Mentorship	54
Teacher Training and Professional Development	57
Meeting the Needs of Struggling Learners	59
Roles, Partnership, and Communication	62
Participants' Beliefs about Roles in a UMS	62
Participants' Perspectives of Partnerships in a UMS	69
Participants' Perspectives of Communication in a UMS	74
Community	79
Parents Supporting Parents	79
Parents Supporting Teachers	80
Administration Supporting Teachers	81
Teachers Supporting Teachers	81
 CHAPTER 5	 83
Transferability and Limitations	83
Review of the Research Framework	85
Capacity for Cognition in a UMS	85
UMS Parents and Teachers Agree Role Definition is Important	86
Administrators were Influential in Defining and Supporting Parent-Teacher Roles	87
Shared Values Influence Role Definition	88
Capacity for Capability in a UMS	90
UMS Design not Accessible for Diverse Family Structures and Socioeconomic Populations	90
Flexible Scheduling Affords Opportunities that Differ from Traditional Models	92
The UMS Design Can Support or Hinder Students with Learning Challenges	94
Capacity for Communication in a UMS	96
Shared Values Contribute to Establishing and Sustaining Collaboration	96
Shared Instructional Responsibilities in a UMS Requires Communication	97
Connecting with Outside Educational Supports is Challenging for a UMS	98
Capacity for Confidence in a UMS	99
Parental Views of Self-Efficacy Influence Expectations for Student Outcomes	99
Training and Community Supports Build Teachers' and Parents' Confidence	100

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

Chapter	Page
Social Media Influences Parents' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy	101
Closing Remarks	101
REFERENCES	103
APPENDICES	114
A Protocol Questions: Parent Focus Groups or Interviews	115
B Protocol Questions: Teacher Focus Groups	116
C Parent Participant Consent Form.....	117
D Teacher Participant Consent Form.....	120

CHAPTER 1

Parental involvement has a significant influence on children’s educational success and emotional health at all ages; therefore, educational leaders have a responsibility to seek ways to develop and support collaboration between home and school (Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2013; Kraft & Rogers, 2015; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Whitehurst (2016) emphasized the need for educational leaders to adopt policies that help students develop social and emotional skills that support success in school. While the focus of this report is about what school personnel can do to strengthen students’ social and emotional skills, Whitehurst confirms that family influence is a strong determiner of students’ social and emotional development. For this reason, a commitment to effective family communication is essential for teachers (Coleman & Wallinga, 1999).

Eight mothers who participated in a qualitative study about parent voice shared their desire for teachers and school administrators to *know* their children on a personal level. The parent participants described a need for students to grow in both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Additionally, these parents expressed a strong desire to collaborate with their children’s schools to develop both skill sets (McKenna & Millen, 2013). Understanding the need to continually strengthen family-school partnerships, I am interested in learning more about a school model that requires a high level of parental engagement. The model examined in this study is University-Model schooling.

University-Model Schooling and How It Informs Educational Practice

In 1992, a group of private organizers piloted a new school model as part of the Grace Preparatory Academy (GPA) Project. The purpose of the GPA was to “test educational theories about the significance of parental involvement and character development in the educational

success of students in grades 1-12 and in their preparation for success in college” (National Association of University-Model Schools, 2015, p. 1). The GPA Project was a private effort to stretch the limits of the traditional structure of public and private K-12 schools. Project developers believed a more flexible approach to scheduling of classes would allow for greater parental ownership in a child’s education and subsequent improvement in educational outcomes. “Its significance lies in its ability to effectively utilize parents in partnership with highly qualified professional instructors to gain better academic results, especially among average students” (Turner, 2001, p. 24). The pilot school opened in the fall of 1993 in Arlington, Texas, and organizers called it University-Model schooling. In 2016, Grace Preparatory Academy educated slightly over 500 students in grades K-12.

In a University-Model School (UMS), students attend classes two to four days each week and complete assignments at home the remaining days under the supervision and guidance of a parent or caregiver. Currently, university model schools are somewhat of a hybrid between Christian schooling (i.e., a school founded and operated by a Christian organization or one that adheres to Christian principles) and homeschooling, which may not have a religious base. However, in contrast to many homeschool settings, UMS parents do not set curriculum or direct instruction; rather, parents support teacher-directed lessons on the home days.

Since the inception of the original UMS in 1993, interest in the model has grown. In 2005, promoters formed the National Association of University-Model Schools (NAUMS) to facilitate the development of schools that replicate the pilot model. Supporters of NAUMS cite four reasons for choosing the model: increased opportunity for family time, strong parent partnerships, less expense than traditional private schooling, and improved academic achievement and character development (Dill, 2015). According to the *NAUMS Annual*

Statistical Report (2014), the organization services 50 privately accredited or certified schools that provide instruction for approximately 8,000 K-12 students. Additionally, NAUMS supports another 25 schools that are pursuing accreditation status. The 75 schools listed in the organization's member directory span 20 states in the western, midwestern, southern, eastern, and northeastern regions (Freeman, 2016).

While advocates of the UMS emphasize its potential for building a strong school-parent partnership, UMS stakeholders point out that instructional support can vary depending on the commitment of the home educator (Dill, 2015). Therefore, a study that investigates the perceptions of UMS teachers and parents about the family-school partnership would provide meaningful data to better understand the educational philosophy underlying the model, its distinctive structural features, and what the model looks like in practice.

Research Problem

Parents have a significant role in a child's education regardless of the involvement level they choose or have chosen for them by the school. Wittingly and unwittingly, parents influence their child's educational development by modeling priorities and lifestyle choices. NAUMS leader and family ministry specialist, Turner (2001), stated, "Parents go on the education journey whether accepting or denying, willing or unwilling, active or passive" (p. 16). A child's educational experience is broader than what formal schooling alone can provide. Therefore, a cohesive partnership between school personnel and parents is helpful for successful development of character and a positive school culture, whether public or private (Algera & Sink, 2002; Sojourner, 2014; Turner, 2001; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). The influence parents have in shaping a child's education has important implications for children, parents, teachers, administrators, and policy makers. Turner (2001) believes, "Without parental support, schools

are like buildings without a foundation. More time must be dedicated to preventing collapse than to purposeful use” (p. 20). In Chapter 2, I provide a more thorough review of literature that examines the effects of parental influence.

Today, most parents and educators agree parental involvement is a key component of students’ academic and socio-emotional development; however, family-school partnerships are often reported to be absent or ineffective (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Weiss et al., 2010). State legislation changes in more than 39 states are mandating increased focus on family-school partnerships, but some parents feel their efforts to become involved remain unwanted in schools (Belway, Durán, & Spielberg, n.d.; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Stacer & Perrucci, 2013). These perceptions may contribute to a sense of alienation. There are many reasons why parents may feel disconnected or alienated. Developmental, demographic, and scheduling factors are frequently cited reasons for parental disengagement (Bracke & Corts, 2012). Additionally, parents report feelings of being unwelcomed, unappreciated, or unheard by school personnel (Barge & Loges, 2003; Hill, 2009; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Narrowly defined parental roles may be partly to blame. The usual measures of parental engagement often utilize a level of activity approach rather than evaluating less tangible but still meaningful contributions. Parents who are unable to participate in traditionally accepted involvement activities perceive that their efforts to engage in other ways go unnoticed. The literature review offers a deeper analysis of the definitions assigned to parental involvement and engagement.

Feelings of devaluation are not limited to parents. Teachers do not always feel appreciated and supported by parents. Distrust between parents and teachers weaken cooperative efforts to support the education of the child (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Cordry & Wilson, 2004; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The UMS is one attempt to bring parents and teachers together as

equal partners in the education enterprise. The UMS represents an effort to resolve the age-old dilemma of cultural incompatibility between the two environments (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013), the strength of an institution's family-school partnership is determined by development in four categories : appreciation for beliefs about roles, knowledge and skills, communication and trust, and self-efficacy.

In this study, I used the theory of dual capacity building as a lens to investigate and analyze UMS parent and teacher perspectives related to each of Mapp and Kuttner's (2013) four categories. In 2013, the United States Department of Education released a guide titled, *Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships*. The guide was intended to be a blueprint for school districts in developing and expanding family-school partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Although the framework design is a compass for schools, it provides a useful theoretical lens for exploring the implementation of parental involvement in University-Model Schools. In the following section, I explain the dual capacity-building framework and how it supports this study.

Theoretical Framework

Despite strong agreement from families and schools on the need for healthy partnerships, most schools, districts, and states still struggle to develop comprehensive programs that support such partnerships (Epstein, 2011). The idea that parents, schools, and communities all play a role in the development of the child is the child-centered premise behind the theory of overlapping influence. Epstein (2010) believes an overlap (or collaboration) of influencers in a child's life results in better educational and socio-emotional outcomes. The synergy needed to strengthen the overlapping spheres and develop the various types of involvement does not exist, however, without the capacity for building family-school partnerships. Mapp and Kuttner (2013)

use the dual capacity-building framework to explain the substructure needed for the development of Epstein's school and family spheres and the types of involvement between them. This theory is appropriate for exploring parent-teacher partnerships in a UMS because the responsibility for educating the child is dependent upon strong collaboration between the parent and teacher. The effectiveness of this type of flexible schooling depends on the capacity of parents and teachers to work together and communicate about how to best help a child flourish academically, socially, and emotionally.

The dual capacity-building framework developed by Mapp and Kuttner (2013) is a response to research indicating school personnel believe that engaging families in meaningful ways continues to be a challenge. Although recently released, the work of Mapp and Kuttner is actually based on decades of research. Several underlying theories are foundational to dual capacity-building theory. The purpose of the framework is not to help schools design a specific program; rather, the framework describes conditions that are instrumental for developing and growing healthy family-school partnerships. An understanding of conditions that promote engagement better equips school personnel to set goals and develop programs for establishing and improving family engagement.

Within the dual capacity-building framework, a microstructure of four categories exists that explains more in-depth the supports desirable for the development and sustainability of family-school partnerships. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) contend, "policies and programs directed at improving family engagement must focus on building the capacities of both staff and families to engage in partnerships" (p. 10). These capacities make up the four Cs of the framework and provide a lens for exploring the parental-teacher partnership in a University-Model School setting. The four Cs are cognition, capabilities, connections, and confidence.

Cognition

The first C, cognition, is an extension of role construction theory. Role theory is based on the idea that roles are socially constructed; groups of people believe that individuals are responsible for certain behaviors (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997). Examples of role expectations in education may be that teachers are responsible for the academic education of the child and parents are responsible for the behavioral education of the child. According to role theory, people develop values, set goals, and behave in ways that are congruent with the expectations of others. Parents and teachers fulfill role expectations based on what they perceive others expect of them. In settings where strong family-school partnerships are expected or considered the norm, teachers and parents tend to behave in ways that continue to support the expectations of the school community.

Cognition refers to parents' and teachers' beliefs about roles. Thriving family-school partnerships broaden to include multiple roles, define core beliefs, and link home-school partnerships to learning and school improvement through instruction and school activities (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Mapp (2015) noted that educators need a mindset that "sees family engagement as an essential and fundamental component of proficient and effective teaching and learning practice" (p. 18). An investigation of UMS parents and teachers beliefs about their roles has the potential to provide insights about whether the University-Model design provides a structure that supports and is likely to sustain a thriving partnership.

Capabilities

The skill and knowledge capabilities of parents and educators are human capital assets. Capacity building for strong partnerships requires both parents and educators to be willing to share what they know and learn from one another. Similar to funds of knowledge and social

exchange theories, the idea posits that everyone has something valuable to contribute to and gain from the relationship or community (Cook & Emerson, 1987; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2013; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Unfortunately, parents and teachers often lack the knowledge and skills to implement effective family engagement; thus, there is a need for ongoing research and subsequent practice to further build capacity (Baum & Swick, 2007; Weiss et al., 2010).

The premise of the funds of knowledge theory is that every household is an educational setting (González et al., 2013). Meaningful connections are more likely to achieve educational and social development goals when educators understand and appreciate the culture and diverse knowledge bases of families in their schools (Hartlep & Porfilio, 2015; King & Goodwin, 2002). The funds of knowledge theory applies a strengths-based view of families' contributions to a child's education rather than a deficit view (Genzok, 1999). While funds of knowledge theory suggests that everyone has something to offer, social exchange theory asserts that interdependence between involved parties can be mutually beneficial (Cook & Emerson, 1987).

For this study, I will explore the perceptions of parents and teachers about the capabilities or skills and knowledge that each partner contributes to a child's education. I hope to learn what capabilities parents and teachers deem important for the model to succeed and gain understanding about the knowledge and skills they believe are critical to enhancing the educational experience of children.

Connections

Coleman (1988) contended that social capital and its attendant norms of reciprocity flourish in settings where trust abounds. Mapp and Kuttner share this view. In the dual capacity-building framework, relational bridging between stakeholders contributes to the wellbeing of the parent-school partnership: parent to parent, educator to educator, and parent to

educator. Networking is an important part of communication and is most likely to occur in settings where all people feel included, valued, and respected (Curry & Adams, 2014; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Barriers to effective communication can include unequal relationships, miscommunication, differing conflict management styles, opposing agendas, and social, cultural, and economic influences (Baum & Swick, 2007; Minnesota Parent Center, 2000). Parents and teachers who are successful at overcoming communication barriers increase human capital resources available to support student development.

Social capital increases where trust exists, and human capital can grow where social capital is unimpaired. For example, strong relationships between families and schools foster a learning environment that is more conducive to the development of student human capital. Communication strongly influences bonds of trust in a social group. When information is disseminated effectively, community members tend to feel more connected. Feelings of belonging and connectedness result in greater social capital (J. S. Coleman, 1988). I plan to explore how the communication and networking patterns of parents and teachers in a UMS increase their capacity to collaborate to provide meaningful educational opportunities for students.

Confidence

The fourth C, confidence, closely resembles Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which is a component of his social cognitive theory (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The term self-efficacy refers to what a person believes he is capable or incapable of accomplishing (Yancey, 2014). Bandura (1997) asserted that people with a higher sense of self-efficacy were more likely to have positive thoughts, greater motivation, stronger coping skills, and better achievement outcomes. In relation to parental involvement, parents who believe in their own capacities are more likely to

engage with their children's educational processes. However, it is also important for schools to demonstrate that parental engagement is valued and needed in many forms (King & Goodwin, 2002). Families that are given opportunities to become involved in meaningful activities are less likely to lose motivation to partner with school personnel (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009)

Mapp and Kuttner (2013) describe two outcomes of school-family partnerships where high levels of trust and self-confidence exist. These outcomes are an increase in engagement and diversity in leadership. School cultures permeated with a sense of emotional safety allow the confidence of parents and teachers to grow. A culture of confidence supports a cycle of open communication and willingness to become involved. Since the UMS requires high levels of teacher and parent engagement in tandem with effective instructional leadership, it is important to gain an understanding of how stakeholders foster safety and confidence in the UMS model.

Purpose of the Study

Applied educational research is useful in helping educational leaders develop action plans to improve practice (Bogdan, 2007; Haller & Kleine, 2001; Maxwell, 2009). According to Patton (2002), "the purpose of applied research is to contribute to knowledge that will help people understand the nature of the problem in order to intervene, thereby allowing human beings to more effectively control their environment" (p. 217). Because qualitative research studies usually focus on a small number of participants or situations, researchers are often able to gain understanding of how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur. When considering how research might inform particular educational problems, leaders must analyze the context of the study participants and consider how this context influences the participants' actions. Exploring the UMS design can add to the research and understanding of parental involvement in the broader scope of educational practice. In

addition to providing information for PreK-12 educators, seeking UMS teacher and parent perspectives about how parental involvement influences student development may provide helpful insights and implications for targeting instructional experiences intended better prepare teacher candidates for issues related to family-school partnership.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of teachers and parents concerning a high-involvement model of parental engagement using the lens of dual capacity-building framework. In this study, I examined the parent-school partnership as implemented in a member school belonging to NAUMS. I also explored whether teachers and parents see the UMS model as a valuable influence on student learning and engagement.

Research Questions

Questions guiding this study link to the theoretical framework. Each of the four overarching questions is a probe to solicit information about the capacity of UMS parents and teachers to establish and sustain family-school partnerships that positively influence student learning and engagement. The questions below set direction for the study but I used subsets of interview questions to gain insight into each broader interview questions.

1. What are the beliefs and values held by UMS parents and teachers about their roles in family-school partnerships?
2. What skills and knowledge do UMS parents and teachers think are important for cultivating and sustaining family-school partnerships?
3. How do UMS parents and teachers describe communication patterns and networking between home and school?
4. How do UMS parents and teachers describe the support and leadership roles assumed by families within the school?

CHAPTER 2

According to Jacobs (2011), a literature review should include information about “what research questions have already been asked, which of those questions have been resolved and which remain open to further research, and what other research questions might still need to be asked as new insights are gained” (p. 129). Although there is limited research available specific to the UMS, there is extensive information about issues involving partnerships between families and schools. As noted by Marshall and Rossman (2011), “When research questions explore new territory, a single line of previous literature may be inadequate for constructing frameworks that usefully guide the study” (p. 83). Therefore, I will cover six areas of literature relevant to this study.

First, it is important to investigate the research about the *value* of parental engagement. This literature provides validation for the ongoing need to explore ways to improve the collaboration between families and schools. Educational leaders and researchers agree that a healthy partnership between parents and schools is a key determinant of student success (El Nokali et al., 2010; Froiland & Davison, 2014; Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2013; Smith, 2013; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Second, an overview of the *history* of parent-school relations provides some context for the present state of family-school partnerships. Parents and teachers often have different expectations of the family-school relationship (Barge & Loges, 2003; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Throughout history, these expectations and subsequent definitions of parental involvement or parent-teacher partnerships have shifted to reflect society, culture, and the economic climate. An understanding of the history of parent-teacher roles in education provides context for the current state of family-school partnerships.

Third, defining what is *meant* by parent involvement or parent-school partnerships is challenging and varies widely (Bracke & Corts, 2012). There are many types of activities considered synonymous with the term, family involvement. Family involvement can be as basic as an exchange of information and as complex as policy-making. Fundraising and volunteering are sometimes thought to be the extent of what it means to have a family-school partnership (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009, p. 495). Developing a better understanding of the terms used to describe family involvement helps in the conceptualization of the problem and analysis of the findings. This section of the literature review is an investigation of how stakeholders understand these terms.

Fourth, family involvement changes as children gain independence. This section of the literature review examines the differences and similarities of family involvement in elementary settings versus secondary settings. An understanding of how involvement differs by setting helps inform the research design (Chapter 3) chosen for this study.

Fifth, since part of a teacher's responsibility is to foster reciprocal relationships with families, "teacher educators must... determine if preservice students are gaining the necessary skills to promote and establish these important teacher-family relationships" (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009, p. 498). A review of the literature about the *training* or lack of training teachers receive in preservice programs provides insight about how new teacher candidates are prepared to work with families as well as students. Insights from this body of research provides a basis for establishing how implications of this study might inform teacher preparation programs that are seeking to train teachers in developing relationships with families.

Finally, a review of the literature that examines assumptions and generalizations about the differences of private and public schools is important for establishing whether findings of a

study about a UMS may be transferable to a public school setting. Findings from a collection of case studies compiled by Rothstein, Carnoy, and Benviste (1999) indicate that social, cultural, and economic differences of communities create the most significant variations in schools rather than public versus private governance. However, Jeynes and Beuttler (2012) assert that private and public schools have *specific strengths* and that they can learn from one another to strengthen the overall American education system.

The Value of Parental Engagement

According to Turner (2001), one of the strengths of the UMS is the development of character and socio-emotional skills. The idea is that the flexible schedule of a UMS affords parents additional time to influence their children and personalize character and socio-emotional training. Exploring literature about the importance of developing school-parent partnerships that strengthen character development provides a foundation for establishing the value of parental engagement.

Research links parental engagement to improved student outcomes. Parents are key influencers of the moral development of their children, and schools can benefit from collaborating with parents in efforts to improve student behavior (Mapp, 2015). According to Hiatt-Michael (2006), “The strength of families, the local community, and ultimately the nation are measured by the character attributes of its citizens.” Therefore, “character education is a shared responsibility between schools and families” (pp. 20, 22). A cohesive partnership between school personnel and parents is paramount for successful development of character and a positive school culture, whether public or private (Algera & Sink, 2002; Sojourner, 2014; Turner, 2001). “Schools that commit to partnering with parents while focusing on a determined pursuit of positive culture and climate exhibit the kinds of caring and respectful environments

that promote academic excellence, healthy relationships, reduced antisocial behaviors, and improved school safety” (Sojourner, 2014, p. 71).

Parental engagement is also a strong influencer of socio-emotional learning. As students develop important skills like self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship-management, and responsible decision-making, it is necessary for parents and teachers to share their knowledge and insights. Teachers need to have an awareness of what is going on outside of school, and conversely, parents need to have an understanding of socio-emotional dynamics at school. Research confirms that students need a strong set of socio-emotional skills to succeed in school (El Nokali et al., 2010; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009; Smith, 2013). Students whose families are engaged are more likely to benefit academically (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). According to Mapp (2015), these students “exhibit faster rates of literacy acquisition, earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher level programs, are promoted more and earn more credits, adapt better to school and attend more regularly, and are more likely to pursue higher education” (p. 4).

The Turbulent History of Parent-School Relations

Since research strongly suggests that parental engagement is valuable, an examination of the history of parental involvement in the United States provides a better understanding of current relationships among parents and teachers. During colonial times, expectations of parents included the support of religious teachings and curriculum, involvement in school governance, and aiding in the selection of teachers. Parents were an integral part of the decision-making in schools (Barge & Loges, 2003; Hiatt-Michael, 2006). However, the expectations for parents changed in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Parents’ responsibility was more limited to helping their child at home and providing assistance to the school through giving of time and finances.

Many researchers attribute the transference of responsibilities to the bureaucratization of schools, where teachers were experts. As the United States rose to prominence as the leading industrial nation and large corporate employers became commonplace, citizens began to seek education as a means to advance in the workplace. Additionally, the enforcement of child labor laws meant that children needed a place to go during the workday, and urban school attendance grew. The socialization needs of the corporate world influenced the hierarchical model of schooling that still remains prevalent today (Barge & Loges, 2003). During this time, an approach known as scientific management or Taylorism became the model for curriculum theory. F. W. Taylor's belief in the importance of greater managerial control in the workplace influenced the idea that it was important to have a detailed understanding of what people needed to know in order to live and work and that lists of competencies needed to be established (Smith, 2000).

Parents revered school professionals as experts. School leaders were the primary decision-makers in the areas of curriculum and daily school operations (Barge & Loges, 2003; Curry & Adams, 2014). The role of educators was directive and knowledgeable and parents assumed more passive and listening type roles (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). The growing bureaucratic structure of schools led to a "walling out" and limiting of parental influence (Gardiner, 1996). Administrators and teachers assumed the role of educational experts and collaboration with parents was less common. Despite research supporting the importance of parental involvement, parental disengagement became widespread and remains prevalent in American schools. McDowell and Hostetler (1994) described the lasting effects of parents pulling back in the following way:

Parents have changed in their thinking; these days, parents expect professionals to educate their children. If I were to ask a group of 100 parents, "Who is in charge of your

child's education?" I would expect the majority of them to answer "Mrs. Johnson," "Mr. Phillips," or "St. Ursula School." Few of them would answer, "Me." The most important change in education in the last fifty years has not occurred in schools; it has occurred in the minds of parents, who no longer take responsibility for their children's educations.

(p. 41)

Although parents may have questioned school practices or felt dissatisfaction with their child's school, they felt their input was out of place. Parents reported feeling ignored, demeaned, or discounted by school personnel (Bracke & Corts, 2012; Wherry, 2009). Inadvertently, the professionalization of teaching and administration sometimes squeezed out parental voice and decision-making (Curry & Adams, 2014). It is beneficial for teachers to be professionals; however, part of the profession of teaching is collaborating with parents (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Being professional is not synonymous with having all of the answers. Furthermore, the growth of neoliberalism in the United States has overshadowed parent input (McDonald, 2013). Today, large businesses or foundations exert an undue influence on many educational reform decisions that drown out parent voice (Sturges, 2015; Weiss et al., 2010).

The change in parents' view of the role of schools is not the only reason parental engagement shifted, however. Changes in family structure and function also influence parents' expectations of school personnel. The architecture of contemporary families is different from a century ago. Family composition, leadership roles, employment types, career expectations, and patterns of communication have changed (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Hiatt-Michael, 2006). Shifts in culture lead to modifications in the roles educators and parents play in schools (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Families face different challenges now than in earlier decades, and these challenges influence the development of parent-school partnerships.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was a catalyst for researchers to begin exploring the importance of family involvement in academic achievement. In 1966, the United States Department of Education released what is popularly referred to as the *Coleman Report* (Coleman et al., 1966). Conclusions were drawn from the findings of this report that student outcomes were more dependent on factors outside of school than factors inside of school and precipitated increased discussion about the importance of family engagement (Hiatt-Michael, 2006).

In the 1980's and 1990's, another shift in parent-school partnerships occurred as attempts to increase accountability for school performance came into vogue. Government initiatives and legislation included an emphasis on the importance of parent-school collaboration. Examples include the Individuals with Disability Education Act of 1990, Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and No Child Left Behind. Responding to the legislation, school personnel began to explore methods for increasing collaboration with parents and the body of research about parent engagement expanded rapidly (Barge & Loges, 2003; Tekin, 2011). Although initially developed in 1968, the Comer School Development Program is an example of growing interest in school-family partnerships since the late 1980's (Comer, Brown, Cooper, & Savo, 2015; Lunenburg, 2011). A criticism of these efforts, however, is that educators primarily sought to have parents ratify current policies and educational philosophies (Curry & Adams, 2014). School personnel were more interested in obtaining parental compliance than listening to dissent and parents felt they were expected to merely rubber stamp what the principal had already decided.

Although policy changes have led many parents to take a more active role in their child's education, some parents and school personnel feel a lingering strain resulting from the "walling

out” period (Gardiner, 1996). The 1998 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, an annual survey conducted from 1984-2012 to share educator perspectives with policy makers and the public, revealed that teachers’ desire for parents to be involved in disciplinary issues was growing. However, the teachers also viewed communication with parents as one-way regarding curriculum and homework, meaning parents should accede to teacher requests. Although this is clearly a limited view of parental involvement, the 1998 survey results portray a more positive view of parent-teacher relationships than the 1984 Metropolitan Life Survey that revealed a more superficial expectation for parental involvement (Binns, Steinberg, & Amorosi, 1998; Harris, Libresco, & Parker, 1984; Hiatt-Michael, 2006).

Teacher attitudes toward parent involvement are never static, but continue to evolve. According to the 2012 Metropolitan Life Survey, teachers’ desire for a more extensive partnership with parents is growing. Teachers are concerned about the character development of students and how it influences student academic and behavioral outcomes. School personnel are also aware that parents are the primary influencers in character development and that parent-school partnerships are extremely important (Markow & Pieters, 2012). Despite this understanding, reports of a “mutual reluctance” of parents and teachers to collaborate remain widespread (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Defining the difference between involvement and partnership is an important first step toward removing barriers preventing successful collaboration between parents and teachers.

Parent Involvement or Parent Partnership?

Parent involvement and parent partnerships have different meanings. The term parent involvement places the majority of responsibility on the parent. Conversely, parent partnership has a more collaborative meaning. One of the struggles parents and teachers have that

contributes to a reluctance to partner is a breakdown in communication. Often, different role expectations and philosophical differences are the underlying causes of communication challenges. Christenson and Sheridan (2001) defined family-school partnerships as an attitude. They noted, “Attitudes about home-school relations are often manifested in the way parents and teachers act toward, speak to, and think about one another” (p. 70). A culture of cooperation and open communication fosters stronger relationships than simply engaging in involvement-type activities. The best family-school relationships are interdependent; teachers recognize the significance of parents and parents recognize the contributions of schools (Barge & Loges, 2003).

In some schools, however, teachers and parents define parent involvement narrowly. Some educators operate with a mindset that family involvement is a burden, and that supporting the engagement of families has little to do with the role of educational practitioners (Mapp, 2015). When role definitions are incompatible or limited in scope, parent-teacher partnerships do not operate in a way that optimally supports the child’s development. Examples of narrowly defining the parent-teacher partnership include viewing the parental role primarily as overseer of homework or volunteering for school activities (Barge & Loges, 2003; Henderson et al., 2007; Tezel-Sahin, Inal, & Ozbey, 2011). While these explanations of involvement are roles parents need to play in their child’s education, they do not account for the broader influence and resources parents have to offer. Leveraging family assets can help schools personalize learning for students.

According to Weiss, Lopez, and Rosenberg (2010), schools need parents to support, monitor, and advocate for their child’s success in school. Parents need to be viewed not only as helpful or desirable participants but also as essential partners in the educational process

(Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). In the literature, parental involvement activities such as talking with the child about school-related issues, modeling good educational habits, reading together, setting high expectations, participating in parent-teacher conferences, becoming involved in or leading school events, communicating regularly with teachers, and networking with other families in the school are frequently described (Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Epstein, 2010; Michigan Department of Education, 2002). However, if a parent does not demonstrate involvement in a traditionally accepted form, it does not mean they do not care or wish to be engaged in their child's education. Parents may be involved in their child's education in unconventional ways that are not readily apparent to the school. Schools have the task of finding alternative ways to engage parents with diverse beliefs, needs, and backgrounds (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Blaming parents when they do not meet involvement expectations is counterproductive and creates an adversarial environment. Schools that define parental involvement more broadly and inclusively create a culture of acceptance where parents are more willing to participate (King & Goodwin, 2002).

Building trust requires intentional effort and is the shared responsibility of both families and schools (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; King & Goodwin, 2002; Weiss et al., 2010). However, the way a teacher communicates significantly influences parental response (Minnesota Parent Center, 2000). When parent-teacher communications are collaborative and child-centered, parents and teachers are more likely to work together to provide extra support or enrichments that benefits the student through venues extending beyond the classroom. The Minnesota Parent Center (2000) described three communication styles of teachers: inclusive, instructional, and directive. Instructional and directive communication styles are more one-sided. Teachers with an inclusive style of communicating provide information, encourage

dialogue, and allow for compromise.

Parental Involvement in Primary and Secondary Education

Nationally, parents are most actively involved in elementary schools (Noel, Stark, Redford, & Zuckerberg, 2013; Patel & Stevens, 2010). As adolescents become more cognitively and socially autonomous, parental roles change. Parents of middle and high school students roles may be more likely to include “communicating expectations regarding grades, fostering educational and vocational aspirations, discussing learning strategies, and helping formulate plans for the future” (Park & Holloway, 2013, p. 106).

In addition to the growing independence of the child, other factors may influence the type and amount of parental involvement at the secondary level. Secondary schools are often more complex, have a larger faculty, and are less welcoming toward parental input (Meier, 1996; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Parents’ concerns about their ability to communicate with faculty or assist their child with subjects that are more difficult may also contribute to a decline in parental involvement at the middle and high school levels (Patel & Stevens, 2010).

Although parental involvement activities, such as attending meetings and volunteering, decline after elementary school, student motivation and academic gains also result from parental engagement extending beyond the primary years (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Through school involvement, families gain increased knowledge of child development, support for strengthening parenting skills, and increased self-confidence and creativity in advocating for their child. Teachers develop a better understanding of the child outside of school, experience growth of professional self-efficacy, gain family trust and support for learning objectives, and improve student-teacher relationships (Coleman, 2013). The benefits teachers and families experience because of parental involvement exists at all levels of

education.

Preparing Teachers for Parent-School Partnerships

Teachers trained to embrace parent partnerships are more likely to be more proactive in developing collaborative relationships with parents (Curry & Adams, 2014). These partnerships benefit teachers as well as the parents. Healthy family-school partnerships and open communication lead to greater job satisfaction (Binns et al., 1998). However, teacher preparation programs that do address family partnerships are generally limited to early childhood and special education courses (Murray & Mereoiu, 2016; Weiss et al., 2010; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) noted, “Approaches to family involvement must be varied, comprehensive, and integrated throughout the teacher preparation program; no one method of instruction will prepare preservice teachers to work effectively with families” (p. 504).

Teachers frequently cite lack of teacher preparation as a barrier to promoting teacher-family involvement (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Teachers are aware that family involvement matters, but they do not receive adequate training in their preservice programs or continuing professional development for engaging families in a meaningful way (Hiatt-Michael, 2006; Weiss et al., 2010). However, teachers need more than knowledge and skills to successfully build partnerships with families. According to Ratcliff and Hunt (2009), teacher candidates must also have an open disposition. Preservice instructors can help foster a willingness among future teachers to develop strong family partnerships by including opportunities within the program for interactive experiences between teacher candidates and families.

Can Private and Public Schools Learn from One Another?

A partnership of 13 charter, public, and private schools in the Boston area support the Boston Compact. The faculties of these schools intentionally collaborate about how they can

best serve students and families. Teachers and school leaders are crossing communication boundaries that often exist between private and public schools. The Boston Compact centers around the idea that “there is nothing fundamentally different about the students or teachers at a public school, private school, or charter school” (Lam, 2014, p. 39). Rothstein et al. (1999) concluded that schools are more highly influenced by socio-economic factors than governance and that public and private school personnel have much to learn from one another. According to Lam (2014), both public school and private school governances have unique advantages and particular challenges. When dealing with similar student populations, sharing these advantages and challenges can expose school leaders and teachers to new ways of thinking about problems and solutions.

Although the philosophy, mission, curriculum, and governance structure may vary between private and public schools, school size may be the most compelling factor influencing effective school practices (Meier, 1996). Many private schools, including UMS schools, are small. This commonality with many public schools may further support the value of sharing insights for improving schools.

Conclusion

The concluding statement of a literature review has two key purposes. First, it provides a summary of the major themes covered in the review. Second, it reinforces the importance of the research problem (Creswell, 2007). For the purposes of this study, I focused on six key areas of literature related to family-school partnerships. In the first section, I established that parental engagement has positive implications for a child’s academic and socio-emotional development. Given that it is widely accepted that parental involvement is desired and valuable, this section supports the need for ongoing research that informs the development and support of family-

school partnerships. Next, I offered a summary of the history of parent-school relations in the United States. This review of this body of literature provides some context for current attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and policies related to family-school partnerships. In qualitative research, truth is context specific (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). The discussion of the terms parent involvement and parent partnership is important for defining the stakeholders involved. The following section addressed the different yet important role parents play in elementary and secondary schools. I included this literature to provide a rationale for choosing a K-12 school model for this study. As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of teachers and parents concerning a high-involvement model of parental engagement using the lens of dual capacity-building framework. However, I also explained in the opening chapter my desire for this research to be useful for improving practice. Therefore, in the final two sections, I explored the literature concerning preparation of teachers for family-school partnerships and what private and public schools can learn from one another. The examination of the literature in these sections may be useful when discussing implications of the findings for this study.

CHAPTER 3

The UMS approach to the parent-teacher relationship focuses on opening pathways that allow for greater collaboration between parents and schools (Turner, 2001). A qualitative case study is an appropriate design for exploring the University-Model's emphasis on shared responsibility between and home and school, and may provide important information about strategies for building greater capacity for family-school partnerships to take root and flourish. When seeking insight, discovery, or interpretation rather than testing a hypothesis, a case study design is appropriate (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, a case study allows the researcher to explore in detail a bounded system. Using this design, I can explore in-depth UMS parent and teacher perspectives about family-school partnerships. According to Creswell (2007), bounded means that "an activity, event, process, or individuals are separated out for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries" (p. 465). Additionally, this investigative approach allows for a rich description of the UMS and the interactions of the school's stakeholders (Lapan et al., 2012).

There are many options for researchers to consider when choosing an appropriate case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Flyberg (2010) noted, "Good social science is problem driven and not methodology driven in the sense that it employs those methods that for a given problematic, best help answer the research questions at hand" (p. 242). In the following section, I provide a rationale for choosing an exploratory case study design to address the research questions for this study.

Exploratory Case Study

A case study is defined by what it does (Yin, 2003). The purpose of an exploratory case study is to establish a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. This type of study is useful when

there is minimal preliminary research to guide the study (Tetnowski, 2015). Since little research is available concerning the University-Model structure, an exploration of a UMS would be helpful to gain insight concerning how fostering of parental engagement occurs.

Research Context

When planning a case study, it was also important to consider the number of sites that are appropriate to obtain adequate data (Merriam, 2009). When using a case study design, it was only necessary to study a few cases to develop an in-depth understanding. When determining an appropriate number of cases to study, it was important to consider that for each case included there is less time to investigate thoroughly any single case (Creswell, 2007). Choosing one school allowed me to investigate more deeply how a particular school deploys the University-Model. I believed an in-depth study of one school provides information about what factors besides flexible scheduling influence parent-family involvement at the school. For this study, I conducted parent and teacher focus groups and reviewed supporting documents of a UMS located in the southeastern region of the United States.

To protect participants' anonymity, I used a pseudonym, Heritage Academy, for the school name. Heritage Academy is a K-12 UMS. Since the school's inception 12 years ago, its enrollment had grown to over 500 students. It was a Christian school, but not affiliated with a particular church. The student body was representative of four cities and more than 60 churches. The school was divided into 2 campuses, K-6 and 7-12. According to the school's website, expansion plans would provide a third building for students attending grades 10-12.

Students at Heritage Academy attend classes two to four days each week depending on grade level and choice of courses. The mission statement of Heritage Academy explicitly states its desire to partner with parents. School personnel expect parents to serve as the child's *co-*

teacher or *private tutor*. The on-campus days were similar to a school that follows a traditional five-day schedule; however, on satellite campus (home) days, parents of K-6 students serve as co-teachers. During on-campus school days, parental involvement was similar to traditional school models and included assisting with activities, field trips, or recesses. On satellite days, students had the options of working independently, with a classmate, or with a study group at home or another off-site location. Heritage Academy teachers assigned homework for students to complete on the satellite days. Beginning in the 7th grade, students attended campus classes three days each week. Additionally, the parent role changed in the 7th grade. Parents became more of a *private tutor* rather than a co-teacher. Teachers expected students to become more independent, and parents shifted from teaching to reviewing the assignment sheet, assisting with time management, offering support, and verifying the completion of assignments (Heritage Academy website).

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, NAUMS, and Christian Schools International (CSI) accredit Heritage Academy. The school had three full-time administrators and a highly qualified teaching staff. All faculty hold bachelor's degrees and 50% of the faculty have advanced degrees. The governance of the school is under the leadership of the school's board. Heritage Academy's board members were responsible for approving and overseeing that the school's mission statement aligns with school policies and curriculum, overseeing the school's strategic plan, hiring the headmaster, approving the annual budget. However, the board has delegated oversight of the day-to-day activities of the school to the headmaster. Currently, there are nine board members. Six of these members are founding members of the school.

The school had a strong emphasis on providing a college-preparatory education for students. Heritage Academy had a department dedicated to college advisement. The department

personnel provided academic counseling for high school students, college entrance test prep, a job shadowing program, college nights, and a senior seminar class. Academic counseling included helping students build a resume that students continually developed throughout high school. The job shadow program included hosting guests to share insights about their careers and arranging half and full-day shadowing opportunities for students in their areas of interest. Guest speakers and college representatives attended informational nights for parents and students. Finally, the purpose of the senior seminar class was to help students with topics such as selecting and applying to colleges, preparing an attractive high school resume, writing an attention-grabbing college essay, searching for and applying for scholarships, deciding on a college major or field of study, and being successful in college.

Participant Selection, Data Collection, and Document Review

An emic qualitative inquiry focuses on “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). For the purpose of learning about the perspectives of teachers and parents at Heritage Academy, semi-structured focus group discussions were used to collect data for this study. Parents could also choose to participate in individual interviews, but all chose to join a focus group. Based on observation, I believe participants who chose to participate in focus groups felt a sense of security from the school community. Sometimes participants choose the individual interview option because they fear perception that they have something to hide and want to say privately. However, I conducted the parent focus-group discussions close to the holiday break, and based on comments made by Heritage Academy faculty, participants’ busy schedules were more likely the reason parents chose the focus-group option. The focus-group discussions were semi-structured because data collection and analysis occur simultaneously (Merriam, 2009). I

used a list of questions to direct the discussions; however, information collected during the conversation process led to additional questions. Focus groups allowed the participants to respond to each other's responses and triggered insights from participants that were unlikely to have surfaced in individual interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009). However, there are also drawbacks to collecting data through focus-group discussions. In Chapter 5, I included an analysis of how the focus-group format potentially influenced participant responses. I conducted four focus-group discussions, at two locations, on two separate visits. Time between the focus-group discussions afforded me the opportunity to reflect on responses from the first group of participants and directed the protocol questions and discussion for the second visit.

Focus-group participants were parents and teachers from Heritage Academy. I used purposeful sampling to choose the participants for the study that could best answer the interview questions. Since the faculty was relatively small and sampling should be appropriate for the setting of the study, I interviewed all consenting kindergarten-12th grade teachers (Maxwell, 2009). Although small sample sizes are consistent with most qualitative inquiry, collecting data from participants in all grade levels provided a wider range of perspectives and the data offered a more holistic understanding of the school (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). On my first school visit, I met with teachers at the upper and lower schools. The second visit was also at the upper and lower campuses, but the focus-group participants were parents. I intended for participants in each focus group to represent a specific demographic: upper-school teachers, lower-school teachers, upper-school parents, and lower-school parents. However, 46% of the upper-school teachers and 61% of the lower-school teachers are parents of current or former Heritage Academy students (C. Hankins, personal communication, January 23, 2017); therefore, some teacher participants' perceptions extended beyond the targeted demographic for the focus

group. Additionally, some parent and teacher participants had children who attended both the upper and lower school campuses. In all, 29 individuals participated in one of the 4 focus-group discussions, 22 females and 7 males. Two of the male participants had children at the school, and the remaining five male participants had teaching responsibilities only. Parent participants were representative of the school's overall family and socio-economic demographics, majority white, middle to upper middle-class, and two parents living in the home. One parent participant shared that she was divorced, and there were a few unmarried teachers. I did not specifically ask participants about their marital status, but some parents and teachers shared this information during the discussions. Participants' ages ranged from early 20's to 50's.

Initially, I intended that four to six parents or teachers would make up each focus group. According to Merriam (2009), a researcher has an adequate number of participants when information becomes redundant. In this study, additional participants came to the focus-group discussions, and were eager to participate. I modified my original expectations for the groups and allowed the additional parents and teachers to join the focus groups in order to gain as many perspectives as possible. I did reach a point of saturation when collecting data. I noticed that themes began to reoccur. Before transcribing the data, I wrote key words in my reflexive journal that I heard during conversations with focus-group participants and other school personnel. Additionally, I made notes from observations. Several of the key words that I wrote in the reflexive journal were consistent with themes that emerged from the focus-group data I recorded, transcribed, and coded for analysis. Chapter 5 includes an analysis of the study findings.

In addition to conducting focus group discussions, I gathered information from school publications. Documents I used for learning about the school included information from the school website, school handbook, a school promotional magazine, a sample blue assignment

sheet, parent workshop agenda and training resources, parent mentorship program handouts, and parent survey. The promotional magazine was a recent publication school personnel were using to communicate school advancement with current and prospective families. Teachers at both campuses used the blue assignment sheets to communicate student work responsibilities for the home-learning days. The blue sheets were largely uniform, but some information varied to reflect the subjects of the grade level. Teachers highlighted the work that students were required to complete, but the sheets included additional information about school day activities and extra enrichment for home-learning days. Document review was also a way to add to a rich description of the context so readers can evaluate how the research might be applicable or useful for other settings (Merriam, 2009). Much like analysis of the interviews, document analysis included assessing the materials for authenticity, categorizing, and coding.

Data Analysis

Coding is the process of labeling passages of content according to analysis of the content (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009). From the coded data, I looked for themes that emerged from the findings to explain the perceptions of parents and teachers about the capacity for parent-teacher partnerships in a UMS. Themes are “similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database” (Creswell, 2007, p. 248). As I identified themes, I assigned data to one or more of these themes. In Chapters 4 and 5, I present a discussion and analysis of the findings that includes a summary of the data, are my personal reflections, comparisons to past literature, discussion of limitations, and suggestions for further research (Creswell, 2007). For this study, I filtered analysis of the findings through Mapp and Kuttner’s dual capacity-building framework. The theoretical framework is especially important in interpreting the data of a qualitative study because it adds to the validity of the study (Kilbourn, 2006). I examined

parents and teachers perceptions using the lens of the dual capacity-building framework. The data is useful for researchers and practitioners to gain insight into ways UMS teachers and parents develop and sustain effective partnerships.

Research Quality

Qualitative research is used to influence practice and policy; therefore, careful attention to trustworthiness of the data is important (Merriam, 2009). Ensuring quality in qualitative research requires time and energy (Lub, 2015). According to Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001), it is essential for qualitative researchers to follow procedures that prevent them from drawing conclusions that do not authentically represent the data or phenomena being described. In this section of the proposal, I address six areas related to establishing quality of the research: credibility, dependability, transferability, ethics, positionality, and reflexivity.

Credibility

Credibility of a study refers to whether the findings of a study represent what was actually there (Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004). To establish credibility in this study, I describe the setting, participants, and themes of the study in rich detail. Extensive description, derived from adequate time in the research field, allows the reader to identify with the content of the study and determine if the findings are congruent with reality (Merriam, 2009). In other words, credibility is established through the reader's perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2011)

I expected focus group interviews to last 45-60 minutes to ensure adequate time for gathering data. According to Merriam (2009), data should be collected until no new information emerges in the findings, a process known as saturation. The range of time actually spent in the field was greater than I expected. One of the focus group interviews extended to 75 minutes, and I was able to spend several hours observing.

Since I was the only researcher collecting and interpreting the data, I relied on triangulation and member checks to increase the credibility of the data. Triangulating data strengthens a study by integrating several kinds of methods or data. I also used the constant comparison method to establish the validity of the findings. As noted by Lub (2015), a method used by qualitative researchers to establish credibility of the study is to compare and confirm conclusions drawn from interviews with findings from document analysis. The more the categories and conclusions are confirmed by different data sources, the more valid the results. Additionally, member checks and my reflective journal help eliminate misinterpretation of the data (Harper & Cole, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004). I sought input from participants to validate that my interpretation of what they said was accurate, and I continually reflected on personal positionality.

Dependability

Dependability of qualitative research is about whether the “results are consistent with data collected” (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). In addition to using triangulation and reflexive journaling (discussed further in the reflexivity section), the development of an audit trail is useful for establishing dependability. An audit trail is a log of how decisions are made throughout a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A log is also useful for identifying how data fit together. Through reflective practice, researchers can identify what questions may be important for the next set of interviews based on previous work recorded in the log (Hays, 2004). For this study, I kept notes that outlined the decisions I made about data collection and analysis. I used information from the notations to guide ongoing decisions in the study.

Transferability

To improve the likelihood of making study findings transferable to other settings, I included thick rich description of the participants, context, and evidence found to support the findings (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). “Establishing transferability is accomplished by the provision of sufficient details...so that the readers of the research can make a determination as to whether or how the findings might transfer to their own context” (Lapan et al., 2012, p. 29). In addition to establishing the importance of research about family-school partnerships, the fifth and sixth sections of the literature review address issues of teacher training and the collaboration of private and public schools. These sections are valuable considering how findings from this study may or may not be useful to other settings.

Ethics

Ethical considerations are about having respect for and protecting participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Tracy (2010) discusses four categories of ethics that are important for a qualitative researcher to consider: procedural, situational, relational, and exiting. I will summarize the last three ethical categories before outlining the procedural ethics required by the Wichita State University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

In situational, relational, and exiting ethics, the researcher determines the standard. Situational ethics require reflection and adjustment as dynamics change in the field. Relational ethics refer to the care, respect, and dignity that the researcher employs when working with participants. Finally, exiting ethics are about ensuring that findings are reported in a way that does not cause harm to participants (Tracy, 2010). The integrity of the researcher greatly influences the quality of the research (Merriam, 2009). Thus, I strived to remain mindful of the appropriate situational, relational, and exiting ethics as I conduct the study.

A governing body such as the IRB dictates procedural ethics. The IRB designs and enforces guidelines to protect participant privacy and confidentiality. For this study, I informed participants about the nature and purpose of the research and ask them to sign a voluntary consent form before participating in the study. I explained to participants that they might cease participating in the study at any time. I used pseudonyms in place of the school name to protect the identity of the participants. Additionally, participant information were securely stored electronically and protected by a password. Furthermore, to ensure participant anonymity, I destroyed audio recordings of focus-group discussions upon completion of the study.

Positionality

Hays (2004) noted that case study research is highly personal because it is an in-depth methodology choice. This case study is particularly personal for me because of my connection to this model of schooling. Since I am the sole researcher for this study, it is important that I provide information about experiences and biases I have that may influence the study (Lapan et al., 2012).

Before my preparation for this study began, I had no knowledge of the NAUMS organization; however, my children attended a type school in Arizona for three years. The school my children attended was similar to the school site chosen for this study, but it was not an accredited school. To qualify for accreditation, I had to enroll my children as homeschool students with the state. Other than the three years in Arizona, my children have attended a full-week private Christian school. My personal and professional experiences in Christian faith-based schools are largely positive, but I wrestle with the lack of socio-economic and ethnic diversity prevalent in some faith-based private schools. Additionally, I have concerns about the provision of services for children with learning differences in private schools.

Initially, my husband and I chose the Arizona hybrid school because there was not a feasible private school option close to our home with a traditional school schedule. I was skeptical that the alternative school option would be a good fit for our family; however, the positive claims Turner (2001), Dill (2015), and Brobst (2013) make aligned with my personal experiences. Likewise, I observed the drawbacks these authors describe. I do not believe that University-Model schooling is the answer for all educational challenges faced by parents and teachers, nor do I contend that flexible schedule schooling is a good fit for all circumstances. I am interested in the perspectives of parents and teachers about the perceived benefits and drawbacks of the model and want to learn if teachers and parents perceptions of the model have implications for other school settings.

Reflexivity

Reflexive thinking is an important component of interpretation in a qualitative research study. According to Peshkin (2000), a reason for self-reflection is “to show the way a researcher’s self , or identity in a situation, intertwines with his or her understanding of the object of the investigation” (p. 5). Understanding that my positionality influences my interpretation of the data, I realize that data analysis is an interpretive rather than a deterministic process and there is room for other analytical perspectives (Creswell, 2007). For this study, I kept a reflexive journal. By documenting my feelings and viewpoints, I was able to reflect on how my personal perceptions influenced data interpretation and improve the quality of data reporting and analysis (Kleinsasser, 2000; Lub, 2015).

CHAPTER 4

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of parents and teachers concerning a high-involvement model of parental engagement, the UMS. The K-12 population of Heritage Academy allowed me to explore perceptions and experiences of teachers and parents at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The upper and lower-school campuses were located in two separate local church facilities a little over a mile apart. However, the school was not specifically affiliated or under the governance of either of the church institutions. The lower-school faculty and families had access to 50,000 square feet of facilities, 15 classrooms, a gymnasium, automated checkout library, and playgrounds. Additionally the property had space designated for expanding additional sports fields. The upper-school faculty and families had access to 30,000 square feet of space, 11 classrooms, an Apple mobile computer lab, basketball gym, and 400-seat musical theater auditorium. Because the church and school members shared space, students did not leave supplies at either school location and transported supplies in rolling backpacks each day school was in session. The school owns land and the current board and administration have plans to build. None of the participants expressed any challenges with the sharing of space; however, it appeared that the upper-school faculty and students had outgrown their facility.

As explained the methodology, Chapter 3, I collected the findings presented in this chapter primarily from focus-group discussions with UMS parents and teachers. Parent participants had an option for an individual interview, but all parents chose to participate in a focus-group discussion. The focus groups included parents and teachers representing both the upper (grades 7-12) and lower (grades K-6) schools. After transcribing the audio recordings of the focus-group discussions, I looked for themes that emerged from the data to prepare an

organized presentation of the findings. Although I originally grouped participants according to their roles and campuses, several recurring themes emerged from the collective data. I triangulated the data from the focus-group discussions with data I collected from document reviews, observations, and interviews with administrative staff.

In this presentation of the findings, I begin by outlining reasons participants gave for choosing Heritage Academy and University-Model schooling. I chose to begin with participants' reasons for choosing this school because I believe their choices provide important context for understanding the other categories of findings. The remaining findings are organized into six additional themes: academic benefits and challenges; character development and preparation for college; training, support, and meeting student needs; roles, partnership, and communication; and community. In Chapter 5, I further examine the findings by filtering the data through the lens of the theoretical framework and exploring the capacity of Heritage Academy parents and teachers to build and sustain a partnership.

Reasons for Choosing a UMS

Participants spoke about the growth of the school, and they were excited to talk about why they chose the model. Enrollment at Heritage Academy has steadily increased over the last 12 years. According to a growth chart located in the school's promotional magazine, there has been an average increase of 35 students each year. Administrative staff said the primary recruitment strategy for the school was parental promotion. Other than the school's website, few resources were allocated to advertising. The school's growth indicated that community members' interest in the model was piqued, and they were open to try a different approach to education. However, since the primary method for recruitment was word of mouth, new families

were often friends or acquaintances of current families. This created a largely homogeneous school community.

At the start of focus-group discussions, participants introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds. Participants also explained why they chose the University-Model. Some participants cited reasons specific to the school model. Other participants chose Heritage Academy for its Christian philosophy, school community, or reputation, but were uncertain about the flexible schedule and home participation of the University-Model. In time, parents came to realize that the University-Model was part of what created the culture that attracted them to Heritage Academy. A few participants said they enrolled one or more of their children in the model and chose other educational models for their other children. A parent participant also spoke about her children attending Heritage Academy, leaving for a time, and then returning. I had the sense that the parent had left the school for financial reasons because she talked about how glad she was that they were able to be back. Most parents had experiences with other private and public school models. One upper-school parent participant said, “I chose this model blindly. I thought I would just try it. We have fallen in love. I was very fortunate to stumble on it, and wouldn’t change it.” Other parents talked about dissatisfaction with other schools and school models, and some were intrigued by the alternative philosophy and schedule of the model. Some parents mentioned that other Heritage Academy families invited them to consider the school. All lower-school parent participants valued the flexibility afforded by the UMS schedule.

The majority of teacher participants viewed the flexible teaching schedule as having more benefits than drawbacks. Although instructional time constraints were sometimes challenging, the majority of participants mentioned that the flexible work schedule was a key reason for

choosing to teach at Heritage Academy. Teachers also said limited time helped them to prioritize instructional methods and content. Teacher participants also explained that the flexible scheduling of the UMS generally contributed to students' development of personal responsibility, ownership in self-learning, preparedness for post high school education, decreased stress, and allowed more time for family engagement. However, lower-school teachers expressed more concern than upper-school teachers about challenges parents faced when co-teaching and balancing instruction at home.

Overall, I was able to group participants' responses for why they chose Heritage Academy and the University-Model into several sub-categories. Some of the sub-categories include only reasons shared by parents or teachers. Other sub-categories represent perspectives and experiences of all focus-group participants. The sub-categories of reasons for choosing a UMS are flexibility and family time, parental influence, academic rigor, character development and service, and Heritage Academy beliefs and values.

Flexibility and Family Time

Flexibility was the most frequently mentioned benefit for teaching in a UMS given by upper-school teachers. Six of the nine upper-school participants talked about the personal value of having a flexible schedule. Although some teacher participants enjoyed the opportunity to coach or offer targeted-tutoring sessions at Heritage Academy on the home-based learning days, others appreciated the part-time hours because it allowed more time to be home with their own children. Both male and female participants talked about the benefits of a flexible teaching schedule to accommodate a working spouse and childcare needs. Other teachers used the extra time to pursue further education or work a second job. Upper-level teachers mentioned working as adjunct professors at nearby universities or having jobs in fields that complimented their

subject areas. The focus group participants and administrators believed that outside teaching and work experiences enriched teaching at Heritage Academy. One teacher spoke about the value of networking outside the local school: “Outside of here, I have a job. I have a job where I work with teachers and principals all over the region.” The teacher also talked about how an outside network of educational professionals could help resource professional development opportunities for Heritage Academy faculty.

Parents also said flexibility was a reason for choosing the UMS approach to education. Lower-school parents spoke about the importance of being present for their children. A participant said, “The model afforded us family time. Instead of having extracurricular activities in the evening, we do activities during the day after school is finished. Then, we have family time in the evening.” Another participant shared that the UMS schedule allowed greater flexibility for family travel. According to the goals of the school found on the website and listed in the handbook, a focus of the school is to operate as a servant to the family. Participants indicated that the flexible schedule was a support to this goal because it allowed more time for family priorities.

Parental Influence

Parents reported how much they appreciated the influence they had in a UMS. Some parents wanted more influence and time with their children at home. A lower-school parent noted, “I chose the University-Model because I like having my children home with me part of the week.” Parents also talked about a strong desire to be heavily involved in their child’s education. An upper-school parent shared, “We liked that we could partner, not separate. We like to be involved.” Two goals of Heritage Academy according to school documents posted on the website were that parents “fully accept their responsibility for the spiritual, moral, and social

education of their children” and that school personnel “demonstrate respect for the God-given authority of the parents.” These goals seemed to resonate with parent participants who wanted high-levels of involvement in their child’s education.

Some parent participants wanted more time with their children, but did not feel comfortable homeschooling. A participant noted, “I didn’t feel equipped to homeschool. I thought this school would be the best of both worlds, school and home.” In my review of the school documents, I found statements about the school’s responsibility to “minister to the family.” My sense, based on discussion, observation, and documentation, was that school personnel and leadership viewed their partnership with families as a ministry and spiritual mandate. Therefore, school leaders worked to establish support systems for parents who might struggle with concerns about the requirements of the home learning days. Several parent participants were open to the idea of homeschooling, but also wanted their children to have instruction from certified teachers. A parent explained, “I homeschooled for a year, and this is a good balance between homeschool and traditional school.” A parent said, “We chose this school because we could have them at home, and have them in school, too.”

Academic Rigor

Upper and lower-school parents spoke repeatedly about Heritage Academy’s strong academic program as a reason for choosing the model. Some parents were dissatisfied with other public and private school experiences. A participant’s children previously attended two different five-day a week Christian schools in another state. The parent participant believed that the academic program of Heritage Academy was stronger than those schools, and chose Heritage in part for its academic programming. The participant said, “I feel like the curriculum at this school is far superior. It seems like there is more strength, depth, and substance. The way children are

taught here is far superior to those other schools.” An upper-school parent spoke about dissatisfaction with a public middle school experience, “We went that route with my older child, and it did not work out as well as we had hoped. We chose Heritage Academy primarily for the rigor of the curriculum.” The parent believed the UMS benefited accelerated learners because it allowed students to “learn at their own pace.” The participant said, “Public schools teach to test scores and slow you down to let everybody else catch up.” An example the participant gave was that accelerated learners were “pulled from the class for 45 minutes of enrichment to allow other students to catch up.” She continued, “The students just did online gaming. I was shocked because we don’t even allow gaming at home.” The parent participant concluded, “Because of the UMS, both of my kids have come out with more of a thirst for learning.” Another parent who had transferred to Heritage Academy from another private school shared a similar experience, “Even at another Christian academy, another private school, my son was not getting challenged at all.”

Character Development

The model’s emphasis on character development was another reason parents chose Heritage Academy. A participant compared Heritage Academy to an experience at another 5-day a week Christian school. The parent said, “In comparison, this is a more rigorous curriculum, but what I love is that the model teaches students to take responsibility for their school work.” Another parent participant shared, “It is the model that has enabled us to allow our children to take on a little bit more responsibility for themselves each year.” The parent continued to explain, “In addition to strong academics, Heritage is a safe place to learn. There are consequences for good and bad decisions. Academics are incredibly important, but shaping and monitoring social responsibility from home and from school is just as important.”

Several teacher participants said they chose to teach at the model because good behavior, positive attitudes, high levels of motivation, and integrity characterized Heritage Academy students. One teacher said, “Student behavior is huge! Students are not perfect, but there is so much accountability at home that it directly affects behavior in the classroom. We get more school work done because students are more willing to work and accept correction.” When asked about factors that contributed to the high quality of student character, a teacher attributed it to the role of the parents on the home days. A teacher participant who is also a parent with children at Heritage said, “We felt like the model of two or three days a week allowed our children to see the importance of responsibility at home, but they are still getting the idea of responsibility at school.” The teacher’s children had been a part of three other school models: homeschool, five day a week private Christian school, and public school.

Heritage Academy Beliefs and Values

Some parents said they chose Heritage Academy for its emphasis on Christian worldview. A participant noted, “We liked the Christian foundation and the philosophy of the school.” Another focus group parent said, “We chose Heritage because I wanted to be part of my children’s education, and I also use the home days to teach them truths from the Bible.” Another parent noted, “The spiritual aspect of the school is the primary reason that most of us are here. It is a Christian worldview, biblical focus. It is not just about academics. Many of us chose the model because of that relationship.”

Parents believed the orientation was an example of the school leadership’s commitment to Christian values. A parent participant said, “Hearing the board and staff speak was the fullest confirmation. A passion oozed out. Not just for the students and their education, but a faith-centered education.” The parent continued to speak passionately:

We knew it was very, very different. It was palpably different than the other private Christian school our kids were attending. From that moment to the present it has not waned. It has not decreased. If anything, it has increased.

Parents also believed shared values created “positive peer pressure” that “you don’t find in other places.”

Academic Benefits and Challenges

Participants’ perceptions and experiences related to the academic program of Heritage Academy and the school’s model were largely positive. A participant, who was a former teacher, said, “The kids have gotten a really good education. Our youngest started in kindergarten, and we have been very pleased with her education, especially starting from the very beginning like that.” Another parent whose children had attended public school, another private school, and homeschool said, “This is the best academically. We love it.” Although parents and teachers were eager to share academic benefits of the school and model, participants also noted that there were challenges. Challenges participants spoke about related to flexible scheduling, shared instruction, and students with learning differences.

Classroom Learning

Lower-school teacher focus-group participants talked about the classroom “pros and cons” of the UMS schedule. A participant compared the UMS experience to her experience teaching at a 5-day school program: “The relentlessness of the 5-day a week is a little bit harder on the teacher and the kids, but it is nice to have the classroom time to stretch out projects and instruction.” Other teachers in the group agreed that the extra class time would be nice but also said, “It forces us to pick and choose what is valuable, what is necessary, and what we don’t need to waste our time on.” A participant noted, “We have them 2 days, and we focus on the

meaty stuff.” Another teacher participant agreed: “I think that as a teacher every single minute has to be precious. Every single word, every single lesson, every single minute of my day has to be efficient, and well used because we have such a limitation on time.” Teachers referred to the class days as “precious academic time” and referred to parties and videos as “fluffy time.” A participant gave an example of how instructional methods are different at a UMS: “When the music kids left, I couldn’t just let it be an hour. We changed the class format, but the activities were all about history. I think our teaching is focused on getting things down when we have the students.”

The upper-school teachers also shared challenges associated with the model’s flexible schedule. One teacher talked about time constraints of the 3-day class schedule. The participant said, “I get 50 minutes, and five of that is set up and break down. The other five is me saying, ‘Shhh.’ I get 40 minutes of actual instructional time. It’s hard to drill down to a deeper level.” Upper-school teachers reported that they relied on home instruction and support. According to a teacher participant, “The time at home is much more valuable. There’s more of it.”

Home Learning

It was the perception of the lower-school teachers’ that the UMS flexible schedule benefited families and students. A teacher participant who had more than a decade of teaching experience in public education and several years in a 5-day a week private Christian school said, “Probably the nicest thing about the University Model is that sometimes students go home with too much in the evening that is school related, and it takes away from family time or time for them to develop the gifts and talents God has given them to pursue. I think one of the lovely things of this model is that when they are home on the home learning days they can pursue those other loves and interests that God has put on their heart. Then, the

next morning they can get up and do school work. In our imperfections, we [school families] can overstep those bounds and abuse the flexibility, but I don't see the stress that's associated with too much school after school.

Another teacher who also had children attending the upper-school said students benefited from the individualized help parents could offer because of the additional time at home.

I love the fact that my sons and I are finishing homework a little earlier than I expect. Of the students who come to classes I teach, 99% of them have their assignment done. If they do not get it done, parents hold them accountable. We get that support from home. The student gets to learn in a comfortable environment, and they get the extra help from parents. It is helpful that parents and teachers all know what students are working on and that there is time to do it with one-on-one help.

Upper-school teachers said students benefited from being able to spend additional time on difficult subject material. According to one teacher, "A student might be perfectly fine working on a subject for 30 minutes, but another might need 3 hours." Teachers believed the flexible time permitted students to determine how much time they needed for each subject rather than being bound by a traditional full-time school schedule.

When describing the relationship between a parent and child a teacher participant said, "Parents will say, 'I will work alongside you [the teacher] to make sure my child is getting what he needs.' The teacher went on to communicate that in traditional K-12 school models, parents have less time to work individually with their child because of extracurricular activities. The consensus of the focus-group participants was that when parents used the home days to engage with their children in schoolwork, the flexible schedule provided opportunity for

individualized instruction and support that participants believed led to greater student accountability and higher academic achievement.

Other participants elaborated about challenges parents faced when managing the flexible schedule. According to one lower-school teacher, “I think sometimes the parents forget that we only see their kids 2 days per week. We can only do so much. Sometimes, parents forget they need to come along with us. It’s the way the model is designed.” The participant continued to explain that when parents struggle to find a balance between free time at home and school time at home it “creates pressure” for teachers.” Another teacher said, “Some parents expect that 2 days a week they are going to get the same amount of education for their kids as a 5 day a week school. It is an unfair expectation if you don’t have parent involvement.”

Focus-group participants hypothesized that the reason parents struggled with the UMS flexible schedule was that they had difficulty balancing schoolwork and extracurricular activities. A teacher said, “Sometimes my parents are over-involved with activities like soccer and dance. Instead of treating off days as school days, they are treating off days as if they don’t have to do any work because they are at home.” Another teacher added, “There’s a big temptation for parents to see a little bit of breathing room, and think they can fill it up with something. Then, there’s something else, and something else, and something else, and school gets squished out.” Teachers also talked about parents’ challenge to balance instruction at home with children of varying ages. A teacher said, “Some parents have three or four kids, and they are having to take turns between kids.” After the discussion ended about challenges of the University Model schedule, all participants agreed when a teacher participant said, “When parents are highly involved, the partnership is amazing! The flexible schedule is very effective.”

Students with Learning Differences

As part of the admissions requirements, students applying to the Academy took an admissions test and the family participated in a family interview. During the admissions interview, administrative staff, in part, explained the expectations for high academic rigor. Heritage Academy did not officially accept a public school Individual Education Plan (IEP) or provide special education services; however, most teacher participants reported trying to work with students who struggled academically. A teacher shared an example of what was said to a parent, “We need to discuss what your child can do, what he is willing to do, what you’re willing to do.” In addition to partnering with the parent and assigning extra practice, the teacher worked with the student one-on-one, and the student’s test scores improved.

Although some students adjusted, some students with learning differences chose to find an alternative school with resources that better met their educational needs. A focus group participant said, “Without extra services, I know some students did have to leave and choose a different place to go. I don’t think it happens a lot, but I know of two cases where it happened.” Parents learned during the admission process that the school did not have services for special needs. Another participant stated, “I have a student who came from the public school system knowing that his IEP will not transfer. It was made very clear in the admissions process.”

Teachers believed that the absence of an IEP was beneficial for some students. A teacher said, “What I see is that students with learning disabilities have to compensate if they attend here. They have to overcome.” Another teacher stated that the absence of an IEP “forces the student to reflect more on the way they learn. It kind of puts the onus on them to express to my teacher what I need.” The teacher participant further explained, “I don’t think I saw students reflect on their learning very often in public school where an IEP is written out for the student.

The students don't create their IEP's." Another teacher believed that high levels of parent involvement compensated for a lack of services. The participant said, "I think with the level of parent involvement we have here being so high it kind of all works itself out because you have parents who give extra support."

Character Development and Preparation for College

Focus-group participants believed the UMS model and Heritage Academy fostered students' character development and aided in preparation for college. In all focus-group discussions, parents and teachers talked about how the flexible schedule of a UMS helps students develop time management skills, personal accountability, confidence, and self-advocacy. In addition to college preparedness, participants believed that Heritage Academy's emphasis on character service learning strengthened students' empathy and care for their community.

Time Management and Students' Personal Accountability

Upper-school parents explained that the flexible University-Model schedule helped prepare students to govern their time independently. A parent said, "Children learn to value having your assignments in or before it is due. They learn that if they wait until the last minute the work is not quality. They learn to have to margin extra time for unexpected issues." A parent of a 10th grade student commented, "I feel like my 10th grader is ready for college as far as time management." Another participant shared a personal example:

With my oldest, now in college, I was frustrated because he didn't always want to work.

The work was hard and required discipline. What I loved about the UMS was that he had opportunities to learn those lessons here before he took off. I think this model gave him a stronger footing. Now, his grades are like WOW! He's an athlete, and he's a scholar.

Another upper-school parent shared a conversation with a former Heritage Academy student who was in college. The participant said, “The student told me, ‘I’m used to working from home twice a week. I go over everything I learned in class the day before, study, and review.’ Students have learned to do that in this model.” Another parent participant who had children at both campuses said,

My children get up and do their work. When I went to college, it was a big shocker for me to learn how to study, prepare, and manage time. I believe my kids are going to be prepared for that.

Parents also explained that students learn to work ahead to have time for social activities or family time. A parent participant emphasized, “When kids go off to college, they don’t have classes 5 days a week. Students learn that just because they don’t have class doesn’t mean they don’t have work to do.”

Like parents, upper-school teachers agreed that the split schedule between home and school fostered students’ ability to learn independently and increased personal accountability. One teacher explained to college-bound students, “You will have to do this all on your own when you get to college.” The participant continued to explicate that the UMS schedule mimics a college schedule, and students must learn to manage their workload because they do not see the teacher every day. The consensus of the focus-group participants was that the majority of students completed assignments ahead of schedule to allow more choice in structuring their home learning days.

Confidence and Self-Advocacy

Teachers and parents spoke about student confidence and self-advocacy. Parent focus-group participants believed Heritage Academy teachers encouraged students to self-advocate.

Teacher participants said that compared to students they taught in other settings, managing a flexible schedule helped UMS students gain confidence and assume greater ownership of their learning. A parent talked about how upper-elementary students communicated with their teachers; “The school wants students to go to the teacher. Teachers say, ‘Don’t go to your friend, email me, and I will help you.’ My children will be ready to approach professors. I didn’t have that confidence.” Another participant agreed, “This is my daughter’s first year in college...She has confidence in her abilities. She manages her time. She will approach her professors and discuss concerns. This school really set her up.”

Character Emphasis and Service

As adolescents seek to gain independence, communication with parents is sometimes strained. Upper-school teachers at Heritage Academy believed the flexible schedule of the UMS provided parents and students a unique opportunity to build relationships by working together on character development and schoolwork. Parents agreed time afforded by home learning days opened pathways for communication with their children that might not otherwise happen.

In addition to academic rigor and a focus on student responsibility, the character development component of the school’s philosophy was a draw for lower-school parent participants. A parent participant shared an example of how the teachers emphasize character. She said, “Teachers see things in your children and reinforce those qualities. I know the educational part is important, but I want to raise children who are kind, generous, and caring. That is a really important part of the partnership for me.”

Parents also talked about how service opportunities at Heritage Academy shaped students’ character. According to the school’s website and handbook, students were required to earn a set number of service hours as a requirement for graduation. School documents also

stated that community service was a cornerstone to the school's goals, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through 12th grade. Examples of service opportunities mentioned by parents included working at local camps for physically and mentally challenged students, outreach projects through National Honor Society, and mission trips. Participants believed the school's service emphasis encouraged students to focus on others. A parent remarked, "It's not just about the academics, it is about the whole person. The school challenges students to care about the community and serving other people. I think the service aspect of the school is awesome." Another parent talked about the school's service program, "It creates leaders. By definition, leadership is being responsible for those in your care. Students make a difference in the places they go."

Training, Professional Development, and Meeting Students' Needs

In this section of the findings, I present parent and teacher perspectives and experiences concerning training and professional development. Generally, participants described the internal school community as a strong support system for training specific to the University-Model. However, participants also spoke about challenges they faced connecting to outside resources for professional development. This section concludes with a discussion about teachers' concerns about meeting the needs of struggling learners as it relates to school philosophy and teacher training.

Parent Training and Mentorship

Heritage Academy parents are required to attend training in order to have their children enrolled in school. When I asked whether training for parents was offered, a teacher participant replied, "A lot, and it is almost *too much* at once." The teacher was referring to the beginning of the year training for new parents. The school's family life department organized a 6-hour new

parent workshop. To assist parents, the school provided childcare for a small fee. School personnel provided the workshop to help parents understand the school's mission and philosophy, operations and communications, organization of home learning days, blue assignment sheet, and available networks for assistance. Parents were also required to attend a preview night before enrolling at the school.

Since its inception a little more than a decade ago, Heritage Academy's enrollment has grown from 39 students to over 500 students (D. Smith, personal communication, January 23, 2017). The enrollment in many classes was at greater than 90% capacity, and parents were encouraged to enroll early. However, participants or administrators did not report that there was a waiting list. Administrators tried to open additional classes as the need arose. According to school administrators, parents' promotion of the school is the primary reason for the growth. One of the problems that a participant identified was that existing parent ambassadors for the school sometimes failed to fully communicate the demands of the UMS. The focus group participants believed additional training was important to remind parents of the expectations for co-teaching. A participant said, "We need another parent training or the mentor mom...somewhere in the middle to clarify for prospective families. I think parents tell others it's easy, but they are really doing everything, and their kids are smart." Teachers expressed that parents forget the learning curve. A teacher participant suggested, "I think it would be nice for the parents to have some kind of checkpoints to reaffirm their commitment, and what they need to be doing on a regular basis." Teacher participants also believed additional training opportunities after the school year started would help support parents. Participants felt like parents were overwhelmed with the beginning of the year training and that it took a few weeks for parents to formulate questions. A teacher explained,

In the beginning training, parents get 98 papers. We should continue that training, but we should also have a grade level meeting about 6 weeks after school starts. Then, we know them, and they know us. They know what questions to ask.

Lower-school teacher participants believed it was important to ensure that parents had mentors. A participant believed that parent mentors could help to dispel myths that developed when parents became overwhelmed or misunderstandings happened. The teacher said, “I feel like through the years it can get more and more negative. Misunderstanding starts with just a small thing, and if you got that addressed, it would go away.” The participant also noted that the administration provided excellent support for parents and teachers by helping to navigate and clarify communication.

The purpose of the Heritage Academy mentorship program was to provide support for a new parent by pairing them with an existing parent. Although participants referred to the mentoring program as the Mothers of Heritage Academy, mothers and fathers served as support partners. A teacher participant and parent explained the role of parent mentors:

Someone to help you survive. They’ve already been through it. They can say, “Oh yeah don’t worry about this, or focus on that.” Just having someone who has already been there and done this, and they know how it works.

Another teacher who is also a parent agreed saying, “It’s wonderful!”

Teacher participants, who no longer had children at the lower school, believed they had lost connection with the mom’s group. A teacher said, “We have a big gap here for teachers and for parents, too. There’s a separate mom’s group, but there’s not a lot of teachers. We are relying on other moms to mentor. We need a bridge.” Teachers reported there was no organized opportunity for them to meet with parent mentors. Participants believed it would improve

communication if teachers met with parent mentors and shared information and expectations they believed would benefit new UMS families.

Parent participants believed that one of the biggest advantages and challenges for UMS families was increased student responsibility. A parent recalled, “When we first started, our kids thought school happened only at school, and home was a play day. There was a transition period where we had to learn that this is our school time.” The participant continued to explain that setting up a schedule that mimicked the school day helped create an environment for learning at home. For many of the families, it is the school “community” that helps them through this transition. “All new families get a mentor. Someone who has already been through that grade or is going through it at the same time but has been at Heritage Academy longer,” explained a participant. According to a focus group participant who had been at the school for more than a decade, the mentoring program began because the school lacked a counselor, but parents needed assistance with a variety of concerns. She stated, “We had a lot of parents who needed direction. They needed training for the home days. The mentoring program evolved to meet the needs of those who were invested and believed in the model.” For example, a participant said her mentor mom offered suggestions for keeping her toddler occupied while she taught her older child. She said, “Not every day is perfect. I have littles at home. There are days we struggle to get it all done. I know other parents agree that it helps just being there for each other. We have a great support system.”

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teachers at Heritage Academy receive training during new teacher orientation to help provide and develop strategies for working with parents who are partnering as co-teachers. One focus group participant talked about helping new parents with adjusting: “We explain the

expectation that parents are the teacher 2 days a week at home. Sometimes, they have questions about how to deal with frustration. We have to help them deal with that as part of the model.” Another teacher described what she learned in training about mentoring parents, “One of our roles is helping alleviate stress. Recently, a mom became emotional, and I had to think back to training. It is a lot of learning and listening, and sometimes the teacher needs to take charge in certain areas.” Overall, teachers believed parents at Heritage Academy are open to dialoguing and problem solving because they chose to enroll their children at a UMS.

In some cases, teachers had a mentor. A new teacher talked about how her mentor teacher helped her learn new curriculum. The participant believed additional time during new-teacher orientation would allow teachers to ask questions and gain exposure to new curriculum before the year started. The teacher participant said, “If we had 30 minutes to review new curriculum and write down questions, it would have helped me feel more confident as a new teacher, in a new school, with a new curriculum.” A teacher hired just before the start of school reported not having a mentor teacher. Veteran teachers stated they would “love to work with a new teacher, but didn’t want to step on anyone’s toes.” A participant remarked, “I think as a new teacher, you don’t want to ask, but if I wouldn’t have asked for it, I wouldn’t have gotten it.”

Although teacher participants appreciated the strong support system within the school, they described feeling isolated from educational organizations and professional development venues outside of Heritage Academy. One focus group participant stated, “I feel like I want to know more about what is happening with newer methods, but I feel sort of isolated.” Another participant surmised, “I think it is because we are cutoff. We are unique, so it is hard to find training. I would like more training. What I mean by cutoff is that I am not aware of what is

available to me.” The participant continued, “In public school, there was awareness of what was offered. You had to sit there and get your professional development. Now, I am having to try to find things to help myself grow.”

Teacher participants’ experiences varied when they sought opportunities for professional growth with local school districts or professional development organizations. A participant stated in a frustrated tone, “Public districts won’t accept us. If there is a workshop, we can’t go. We do not belong to the state. We are excluded.” Teachers who held state certification also said they were unable to attend public school district professional development offerings. However, some teachers described more welcoming experiences. A teacher participant said, “There are some local organizations we crossover with. When I go to workshops, I get hours that I submit to our administrator. Those hours can also be submitted to the state.” The teacher also stated that Heritage Academy students participate in the science fair at the school where she earned professional development hours. Additionally, some of the teachers reported watching online professional development offerings, and several participants said the administrative staff was willing to provide direction for teachers seeking professional development opportunities.

Finally, early grade teachers in the lower school focus group expressed appreciation for parent help but also said an aide would be helpful. The teachers explained that it was sometimes challenging to communicate needs to parent volunteers because of time restrictions. Teachers said that sometimes it was more efficient to do the work themselves rather than delegate to volunteers.

Meeting the Needs of Struggling Learners

Some focus-group participants expressed concern about available training and support for meeting needs of different learners. For some teachers, it was an adjustment transitioning from a

public school teaching setting where there was a designated special needs program. One teacher shared,

I definitely have learning-different students. That's been what I've had to get used to the most because in the public schools we had services. I have a student right now whom I suspect has dysgraphia, but there's no service. There is also no testing.

The teacher elaborated about feeling under qualified, saying "It is just me saying these are the indicators for dysgraphia. I try to partner with the parent, but it is tough because I'm not a trained special education teacher." A lower-school teacher shared about a student who struggled to read, "Well, I'm not a specialist in learning differences. The mom is going to a resource person we refer a lot of people to."

Although Heritage Academy did not have a program that specifically addressed the needs of students with learning differences, teachers spoke about how they worked with families and referred them for outside testing and services. Teachers also noted there were students with learning differences currently enrolled. According to participants, students with learning differences were often successful with additional teacher and parent support; however, teachers' perspectives about supporting students with learning differences varied.

During the focus-group discussion, teachers shared how they do or do not allow accommodations for students with learning differences. A participant explained, "If students are told from an outside person that they need extra time on tests, we're not going to implement an IEP. It is every teacher's decision." Another teacher said, "I would say a lot of what we do is on a very individual basis." A teacher explained that accommodating students was part of partnering with parents. The participant said, "Any alterations that I make are a partnership with my parents. For example, I have a student that has pretty advanced dyslexia, and I actually send

my tests home with that mom because we have that partnership.” It surprised some of the participants to learn that colleagues allowed learning accommodations such as extra time on tests. A participant responded, “We have to say, ‘Next year you won’t have extra time. You won’t have the tests sent home.’ It is really important for us to be honest and set the parents and students up for success.” Early grade teachers reported that accommodations are more frequently provided in lower elementary school. As students progressed, expectations for independent learning increased. A teacher said, “We have to be very upfront with parents, at least with the older ones. With the little ones I am not sure.” Another participant in the upper grade levels of the lower school said,

We don’t have an IEP that tells us what we should do. I appreciate that we don’t have to make a lot of accommodations. We are able to maintain a standard. Every child is different, but this is my standard.

Some participants explained how learning differences were often diagnosed after a student was already enrolled at Heritage Academy. A teacher referenced a student diagnosed with a learning difference after enrollment, saying, “If it was a new student, we would not have admitted them.” However, new students took an admissions test that would potentially alert school personnel to the possibility that a student might have an academic delay. My sense was that the test was used to inform parents that their student may struggle with the academic rigor of the school, but if parents agreed to partner with the school they were given the opportunity to enroll. Another teacher added that teachers did collaborate with local school districts and private providers to get services for students when possible. The teacher participant also noted, “I was able to refer a student to a couple of different specialists. In a UMS, we have that possibility for all of that dialogue, but formally, as an institution, we don't have services.”

Roles, Partnership, and Communication

Parents and teachers spoke passionately about their perceptions and experiences concerning participants' roles, partnership, and communication. Participants believed that the unique scheduling and co-teaching aspects of the university-model required a high level of parental involvement and collaboration on the part of teachers for the school to be successful. Participants said it was important for parents and teachers to understand that participation in the school required a commitment to communicate and work together to meet the academic and character development needs of students. Both teachers and parents stressed the importance of parental involvement at all grade levels. For example, a parent participant said, "The model doesn't work without parent involvement in the upper-school, not just the lower-school." In this section, I group participant responses into three categories: roles, partnership, and communication. However, participants' perceptions of role definition influenced partnership and communication. Because the data was sometimes difficult to separate, it is intermixed among the three categories.

Participants' Beliefs about Roles in a UMS

In this section, I present the findings about parent and teacher perspectives and experiences about roles within a UMS. I begin with a discussion of how teachers perceived the influence of socioeconomic status on the parental role. Next, I share perspectives and experiences concerning parents as teachers. In the last section, I present the findings about participants' views of the administrator and student roles.

Socioeconomic status. Teachers believed that a family's socioeconomic status contributed to parents' ability to participate successfully in the university-model of education. A teacher compared working at Heritage Academy to other schools in various socioeconomic areas. The participant said,

At Heritage, the biggest difference to me is the parents. I taught at-risk kids in a public school, on Saturdays, because they were failing. I never met a parent in all of the time teaching there. At another school, the parents were so sweet, but they were just trying to survive. The last year I taught there, I had 28 kids, and 26 had single moms. Few spoke English. They did amazing just feeding their kids and getting them to school. I also taught in a public school that everyone wanted to attend. At that school, I had very motivated parents and students.

Another teacher participant said, "At Heritage you have to have a parent at home. You almost can't get accepted if both parents work full-time because somebody has to be home. It skews our demographic from middle to upper class."

Teachers expressed concern about parental expectations. Some teachers believed that high parental expectations contributed to children's struggle with perfectionism. Teachers reported that students' drive for overachieving was sometimes counterproductive because it created a competitive high-pressure environment in the classroom. A participant expressed, "Students all want to be the best at everything. It creates some attitude in the class. It's really competitive." A teacher participant who attributed competition and perfectionism to parents' socioeconomic status stated, "The background and profession of parents lends to them being competitive and perfectionistic. It seeps right through to their kids."

Teachers also believed that Heritage Academy's socioeconomic composition contributed to teachers' ability to focus more on academic needs of students because parents were able to meet basic physical and social needs as well as help students with academics. According to a participant who previously taught in a low-income area for several years, "When I got to school, I hit the ground running trying to meet every need the parent couldn't meet at home. I was a cafeteria worker, mandated reporter, and counselor. I was everything except a teacher." The teacher participant continued, "When I walk into this door, I walk in ready to teach. I know I have parent support. I know the kids' hierarchy needs have been met. We run full force until the end of the day."

Parents as teachers. According to the goals of Heritage Academy outlined on the school's website, school personnel sought to encourage parents to "effectively and systematically integrate the home and the school in the delivery of an academic education." Data collected from many parent focus group participants indicated that parents valued the opportunity to share in the teaching of academic content. Parent participants believed that sharing the teaching responsibility with teachers helped them better understand their children's learning styles, but participants also valued the expertise and input of certified teachers. According to a focus group participant, "I wouldn't be as aware of my child's strengths and weaknesses without this model. When we do come to parent-teacher conferences, there are no surprises." Parent participants also shared examples of how they believed the model strengthened their relationships with their children. A participant said, "When you are just a mom, and somebody else is in charge of the education, your relationship is different. I had to step my discipline up. It made me a better mom. It's improved my relationship with my kids." The parent also talked about the benefits of the model beyond high school: "I've got a child in college who I'm still very close with, and I

don't think that would have happened if we hadn't been a part of this model." Another participant said, "I was able to learn my children's strengths and weaknesses, how they best learn. For example, my son needed to stand and move while working. We were able to be flexible because we were at home." Overall, participants believed they could collaborate with teachers more effectively to achieve educational goals because they had an opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge about how their children learn and process information.

Parents believed their roles changed as their children advanced through the school. A participant remarked about becoming less teacher and more guide when her child moved to the upper campus: "What I was told when we came here is definitely true. The longer kids are at Heritage, the less they depend on you and the more independent they should become. Now, I am more of a supporter, encourager, and guide." Another parent linked the growing independence of students to the classical education approach used at Heritage Academy. A participant noted:

Being a UMS and classical our school falls under the trivium. In the grammar school, kindergarten-6th grade, the parent is teaching as much as the teacher is. During the logic stage, 7th-8th grade, students become independent, and I see our role as more of a tutor.

We are there if our children need us or have questions. When children reach the rhetoric stage, 9th-12th grade, they are more independent. At this stage, we are more of a supporter or encourager. We provide accountability.

Parent participants described feeling pressure and personal accountability for how well their children performed in school because they were co-teaching; however, parents also indicated the pressure was self-imposed. According to parent participants, the pressure parents felt originated from their own feelings of self-efficacy. A participant explained, "I think some of the parents take it personally if their children don't get an 'A' on everything. It's like a

reflection on them as a person.” Several teacher participants agreed that some parents viewed their child’s progress as a measure of their co-teaching efforts. Participants expressed that it was important to consider how parents felt about their own efforts when communicating with them about their child. Another parent said, “We are personally invested. I take my son’s schoolwork personally. If he is successful, I feel like I am successful. I don’t know if that’s right or wrong, but that is a personal challenge.” Additionally, some parent participants shared doubts about being able to adequately support their children in academics. However, the participants also spoke about how teachers and other parents provided support and assistance.

Lower-school teacher participants believed that the success of a UMS was largely dependent on the parents’ perspective and understanding of the design and school philosophy. The participants most often experienced the student outcomes they desired when parents held the students accountable for high academic and character standards. A teacher explained,

The success of this model comes down to the mentality of the parents. If there is a consumer mentality, where you are looking at this to be an institution that’s going to do the work for you and produce the results, it’s not going to be successful. This model relies on student accountability and parent accountability. Teachers are going to give extra resources, excellent instruction, and milk every minute with students. We are going to partner with our parents to give them everything we can to be successful, but if parents choose not to maximize time, students are not going to be prepared. We are a college prep school, and that’s what is expected. The beautiful thing is when students take ownership for learning; it’s outstanding preparation for college!

The participant continued to share that students with highly involved parents excelled in study skills. According to the teacher, Heritage Academy students demonstrated a high level of

personal responsibility for schoolwork for their age. However, the teacher participant also said that when parents did not oversee home learning days, students were likely to fail. The teacher described co-teaching as risky. The participant explained, "I think ultimately it is how days are spent at home. Are the student and parent co-teacher going to develop character and the discipline to make this successful? It's a high risk, high reward kind of thing." Other teachers applauded the participant's remarks. Another teacher, and a parent participant added, "You are not developing your child's character to just want to get by on home days. You've got to be hands-on. I feel like that is key."

Upper-school teacher participants estimated that approximately 10% of families struggled with the design of the model. According to a teacher of freshmen and sophomore students, "Out of the 30 students I have, maybe 3-5 of them do not have the level of parental involvement that I would expect them to have." Another teacher said it was a challenge for students with two working parents, "The majority of students have a stay-at-home parent. Some students have two parents that have full-time jobs. That's difficult." Upper-school teachers agreed there was an expectation that parents monitor students' work on the home days. A teacher said, "Whether it is science, history, English, or math, the parents' job is to help the student get the repetition of that material. Teachers only have them for an hour, 3 days a week. Parents have them for much more time." Another teacher explained, "Some parents struggle with the model. They are supposed to do the work at home. This is not a vacation day. We have to talk with parents, and let them know that."

Upper-school teachers also shared challenges they experienced with highly engaged parents. Asked whether it was difficult to engage parents in the model, a teacher responded, "Probably the opposite. Sometimes parents are invested too much, too involved." The group

erupted in laughter when a teacher stated, “Some check students’ grades hourly. Parents are *really involved* making sure their children are getting their work done and knowing what their grades are!” Another teacher explained, “Parents are not overinvolved in the way that they care, but sometimes they are overinvolved in the way that they feel like they might have a say in things that might not be their domain.” Teachers believed that “parents are co-teachers,” but they had varying expectations for what that role entails. A participant gave an example of expectations for parents and students to discuss, analyze, and debate issues covered in class:

I think parents serve as a balancing factor. What I try to remember is that I am not the giver of all that is good and true. I give students what knowledge I have, but I encourage them to go and talk to their parents. I tell students, ‘You should go home and discuss this with your parents. See what you all think about it. Have a good conversation.’ That’s a good way to start the school year off, and make a baseline of the way I want students to interact with their families. Students need to go home and discuss what we are learning.

Another teacher participant said the expectation for a parent of upper-school students is to oversee and help the student problem solve. The participant explained, “They [school personnel] don’t want the parents to be completely overbearing and do the work for the student all day long. They want the student to do it by himself, but the parent has to guide the student.”

Administrators. Participants praised the administrative staff at Heritage Academy for the support given to parents, teachers, and students. Parents credited administrators for hiring and developing high quality teachers. Administrators reportedly worked to keep a low student-to-teacher ratio. A larger high school math class had 30 students, but administrators assigned two teachers to teach the course. A participant commented, “I believe our administration empowers teachers. They have high expectations of our teachers. There is an expectation that

teachers follow through, have a heart for our children, know them, and study them.” The participant further explained the reciprocal relationship of parents and school administrators, “I give not only my money but also my blessing. Parents sign a form that says we want to co-labor. It is a big agreement that happens. Not to over-spiritualize it, but it is like a marriage.” The agreement form was part of the admissions packet. Parents also attended a preview night and interview before the Academy accepted the child. The parent finished, saying, “My children are the most important things in my world. I want the very best of everything. I want help to teach them and be involved, but I need guidance and help.”

Students. According to school documents and data collected in focus group discussions, expectations for students’ responsibility and parental oversight evolve as students’ mature. Teachers described the UMS as a “gradual release model.” An upper-school teacher participant said, “I expect my high schoolers to be independent.” Another participant added, “I’ve had parents of seniors tell me that I don’t have to get in touch with them. They say, ‘I am trying to let my child be their own guide.’” Some teachers, particularly 7-9th grade teachers, talked about the challenge of knowing how much parents expect to be involved. One teacher explained, “It’s all a transition. Some parents are letting go, some are holding on...You don’t know who expects their child to be on their own, and who wants to help. Sometimes you have to figure this out on the fly.” The teachers agreed that parents of students with older siblings were likely to have higher expectations for their younger student to be independent.

Participants’ Perspectives of Partnerships in a UMS

The mission statement of Heritage Academy begins with the words “to partner with parents.” According to the school’s list of goals, school personnel strive “to demonstrate respect for the God-given authority of the parents.” The terms partnership and respect surfaced

frequently during focus group discussions. In this section, I have divided parent and teacher responses into three categories. First, I present teacher perspectives about partnership. Next, I discuss parent perspectives. Finally, I include a section about grandparents as partners.

Teacher perspectives. Teacher participants said school personnel were intentional about helping to establish, grow, and maintain relationships with parents. A teacher explained, “You just have to have a relationship with parents” for the model to work. According to teachers, strong parent-teacher partnerships and respect for the parent role fostered student accountability and better academic outcomes.

Teachers also spoke about committing extra time and being intentional about partnering with parents to meet the needs of their students. A participant said, “I actually spent an extra 4 hours with the student. I can’t do it every time, but we [his mother and I] are trying to figure out his learning style. What helps him learn?” Teachers believed it was possible to have high academic rigor at the school because of the one-on-one support students received from their parents. Several teachers, who previously taught in other educational models, said they chose to teach at Heritage Academy because of the “academic rigor and high level of student accountability.” A participant noted, “Parents help us keep students on the path to meet the goals of independence and college education.”

Teacher participants believed that a shared faith influenced the ability to build and sustain parent-teacher partnerships. A teacher described working through challenging issues with parents: “For me, we have a partnership that is so much bigger than an education. If we have a problem, which we rarely do, we can call and say, ‘Can we pray together and meet because your kid is struggling?’” In closing moments of the focus group discussion and after conversation

about challenges with parents who struggle to meet the expectations of the model, a teacher summarized the school's commitment to unity:

We're all promoting excellence in the name of Christ. We all want these children to succeed with the gifts and talents that they have. That's great because we are one body. There's not one part that is not vitally important. As the school grows, I don't see that mission changing. We represent 80-90 different churches. As long as that remains our heart, everything that we said in this room today is solvable.

The teacher participant's statements were reflective of their interpretation of the school's goals and mission to "provide a clear model of Biblical Christian life." Other focus-group participants responded in agreement to the teacher's comments. I observed that although teachers were willing to acknowledge there were struggles living up to the school's goals, they desired to find common ground and sought to support one another. However, I experienced some tense moments in the teacher focus-group discussions related to parents, professional development, and accommodating students with learning differences. Parent participants, in contrast, were less divisive in their support of the teaching staff and did not express any concerns about partnerships with teachers or school administrators. They were overwhelmingly positive in their comments.

Overall, teachers found that parental interest encouraged student accountability; however, some teacher participants said the high level of parent involvement was challenging. Lower-school teacher participants expressed that parental expectations sometimes made it difficult to meet students at their current academic level or accurately reflect student progress. A participant shared an example,

It is important for us to be honest and set the parents and students up for success. We have a student right now that we are having him try to move to a different class, and the

mom is refusing, refusing, refusing. We can't force it because he is not failing, or he doesn't have below a C. What's going to happen in the future? It's not about this year. High school is going to be so painful. It doesn't matter for his transcript right now. We just have to be honest. We have to tell parents about how we want to build the child's confidence. It is one of those things we see as teachers, but parents say, 'No! That's the level I want him on.' It's sensitive.

According to focus-group participants, involvement may or may not result in partnership. One teacher described three types of parents; "There are parents that support you no matter what. The parents that think education is important, but believe they can do a better job. Then, the parent that says to their child, 'Go to school.' Uninvolved and uncooperative." Other group participants were quick to add that an uninvolved or uncooperative parent is "very, very rare." A couple of participants estimated that difficult or disengaged parents made up less than 10% of the parents at Heritage Academy.

Parent perspectives. Upper and lower-school parent participants appreciated the collaboration with teachers at Heritage Academy. A parent participant stated, "There is a great partnership that happens because parents are included. Parents are given freedom to participate. Parents enable teachers, and teachers enable parents. It is a nice partnership." A parent who transferred to Heritage from public school said, "We came here so we would know what was going on." The participant referenced communication at the prior school as "teacherese" and said, "It wasn't in a format I could understand. I couldn't keep up with it."

Upper-school parent participants believed they had a "real" relationship with teachers. Several participants talked about how teachers and parents "communicate and help each other." Parents also shared examples of how teachers supported them in preparing their children

academically. A participant said one of the biggest challenges for parents was being able to help with upper level math and science courses. Heritage teachers offered support labs for students to attend on home days if they needed additional help. Another parent participant said the “care and concern” Heritage Academy teachers demonstrated was “night and day” compared to a charter school the family attended previously. Another parent added, “I feel like our teachers really care, and if our kids are struggling, teachers care about them and sincerely want to help them.” A parent also spoke about a shared goal of students’ spiritual formation; “I think what makes the relationship with the teachers and the staff so special is their heart is for our children to grow in Godliness and righteousness.”

Upper-school parents also stressed the importance of supporting teachers. A participant commented, “There has been no shortage of dialogue. When we sit down with the teachers, we let them know first and foremost that we have their back.” The parent explained further, “That means that we are co-laboring. The teacher is the parent at school. If the teacher needs to challenge a behavior, we have their back. We always support our children, but not at the expense of what is right.” Parent participants also believed that teachers had more freedom in a UMS to hold students accountable for academics and behavior. A participant said, “For teachers, there’s a danger of being too involved, saying too much, or doing too much. I think there is a fear of retribution. In this model, there’s just not.”

Lower school parent participants described the relationship with Heritage Academy school personnel as an equal “partnership” that was built on respect. Parents saw themselves as co-teachers. A participant explained, “They are a teacher, and I am a teacher. Not one is above or below the other. I am teaching and responsible as well as the teacher.” The parent continued, “I feel like all teachers here do a good job building relationships. We are not just turning in our

work the next day. The relationships make education feel more important and stronger.”

Another parent agreed saying, “At the lower campus, I feel like I am a teacher. It is 50/50. On home days, I am teaching and building on what they learned. I cover probably as much as what my child gets in class.” Parents also expressed that they believe teachers respect the work they do because of the benefits for the students. A participant said, “At home it is one-on-one so students get benefits versus one teacher to a whole class. Teachers respect that. Teachers don’t think they are higher than you.” Although parent participants expressed strong support for teachers, teachers seemed to have some frustration with the parental commitment of some parents to follow through.

Grandparents as partners. In some cases, parents did not oversee the home learning days. Several teacher participants talked about an “all in” grandmother who provided the home instruction for her grandchildren. A participant surmised that a grandparent might have more focus than a parent might when providing instruction. The teacher said, “Social media is playing into our moms’ lives a lot. A grandma might do a better job because she doesn’t feel the need to compare herself, be on Facebook all day, and text everyone that the work is so hard.” Another participant agreed and said, “A grandmother I know dissects the blue sheet. The parents don’t do that anymore, including myself. She soaks it in and she will do every single thing on the blue assignment sheet.” Unfortunately, no grandparents chose to participate in this study, and I did not have the opportunity to gain their perspectives concerning the grandparent-as-teacher role.

Participants’ Perspectives of Communication in a UMS

Focus-group participants agreed that teachers worked with parents to resolve concerns or clarify communication. During the upper-school discussion, a parent described communicating with teachers, “You just feel the freedom to talk to teachers and ask for help. You feel welcome.

It is a real partnership. If you have a need, 99% of the time teachers are very quick to respond.”

Lower-school parent participants stated that teachers welcomed communication with parents.

One parent said, “The good thing is the teachers really do care. They want to have contact with the parents. They give parents their personal email, and you can email them any question.”

Another participant agreed that teachers, administration, and other families are approachable and

eager to help. A parent added, “I feel like in this model teachers are very supportive. The

administration enables teachers.” Another parent participant said, “I feel like the door here is

always open. If parents have any questions or trouble, they do not hesitate to contact the teacher,

other parents, principal, or mentor moms.” Participants also believed that teachers “helped and

empowered” parents to effectively educate their children. I did not get the sense from

observations, document review, or data collected from participants or administration that the

school dismissed families or students who were struggling with the structure of the model or

academics. The school’s family life department was established to help parents work through

the challenges of the flexible schedule and to help navigate communication with teachers. It

seemed that parents who left made that decision based on their own recognition that the school

was not a good fit. However, according to some participant responses and findings from school

documents, it was clear that the school’s goal was the pursuit of high academic rigor and there

was an expectation for parents to maintain a high level of involvement.

Upper-school teacher participants said they used a variety tools to communicate with

parents such as phone calls, texts, face-to-face conferences, emails and data-management reports,

written correspondence, and newsletters. Teacher participants referenced email as the primary

form of communication. A teacher said, “What we do as a whole is email. That is the first line.”

If issues are not resolved through email, teachers call the parent or schedule a conference.

However, teachers believed email worked effectively in most instances, and parents and teachers responded quickly to messages. Teachers reported they responded to parent and student emails outside of school hours including evenings and weekends. A teacher who provided extra time for a student described communication as “great” with the child’s parent. The participant believed that “investing in families” improved communication and collaboration. Several teachers agreed that proactively contacting parents through email or phone was important for developing and maintaining a strong partnership.

At the upper-school, participants reported that teachers frequently communicated directly with the student. Email communication procedures differed between the upper grade levels and lower grade levels. A teacher of junior and senior students said, “I communicate with the student. I don’t usually relay information through the parents. Of course, for problems, I do. For daily things, I work with the students. Parents are invited to look at blue sheets, which are our lesson plans.” Whereas, a teacher of 7th and 8th grade students said, “I never email a student or contact a student unless I have carbon copied the parent on the email. This helps keep an open dialogue.” The upper-school teacher participants did not reference social media as a form of communication between teachers and parents or teachers and students.

Lower-school teacher participants also shared perspectives and experiences about partnership and communication at Heritage Academy. Given that students are only in class 2 or 3 days each week, the lower-school teachers reported that they relied heavily on parental involvement. Another participant talked about the value of having a parent volunteer to provide feedback about classroom communication. The participant explained, “I’ve always picked a parent to give me good feedback and help me gauge how well I am communicating. That’s always helped me as a teacher because sometimes I am as clear as mud.” The teacher believed

parent feedback was important to better understand parents' interpretation of instructions and communications sent home for the home learning days.

Teacher participants in the lower-school focus group emphasized the importance of communication with parents. A participant said, "You really have to trust the parent, and that really takes a lot of communication." Other teachers described the need for "communication all the time." Teachers used a variety of methods for communicating but all agreed communication needed to be regular and specific to the needs of the students. A teacher expressed that if communication were not regular, the "message is lost."

Lower-school teachers also shared how faculty and administration supported each other in communicating school standards and expectations with parents. A teacher said, "Our administrators are so great at helping us know how to communicate a loving way, but still being firm." Other participants agreed that they found it helpful to seek advice and suggestions from colleagues and administrators about how to build relationships with families and how to communicate effectively. The teacher participants agreed that the model was difficult for parents at times, and did not believe that it was a "good fit" for all families. According to a teacher participant, the faculty worked to provide tools, suggestions, and support to families but stated, "It is about helping parents realize they signed up for this. It was their choice." The teacher continued to express a desire for all families to stay, but acknowledged that parents had to have buy-in for the model to be successful.

Teachers explained terminology they used to communicate the importance of the home learning days. A teacher in the upper grades of the lower school said, "We explain that we are a one-to-one relationship. If you are in class for an hour and half lecture, you should spend the same amount of time at home." Teachers also referred to work assigned for home learning days

as schoolwork instead of homework. A participant said, “I don’t allow parents and students to call it homework. It’s not that. Homework is what you do after your school day, and you’re done.” The teacher believed that how parents and students referred to work on the home learning days made a difference in what they accomplished. The teacher continued, “It’s schoolwork. You have school homeschool, and you have days here. They need to think about it that way, not as a break.”

In order to help struggling learners, teacher participants spoke about the importance of knowing the students and communicating with parents. One teacher gave an example of a student with autism. The participant was concerned because the student was not reaching his potential. The teacher participant emailed the student’s mother and learned about the student’s diagnosis. Given the new information, the teacher allowed the student to retake the test, and the student improved. Based on this experience, the teacher suggested, “In a situation where you don’t have IEP’s, we need a system where the parents could communicate to us at the beginning of the year.” Another participant responded, “What I do is hand out a sheet of paper at the beginning of the year and ask them to write down three things they want me to know about their kid.” Teachers liked this idea, and another participant concluded, “Get to know your students. Get to know their capabilities. If you ask, you can find out some really good information.”

Finally, teacher participants were concerned about parents’ use of social media. Each class had a Facebook page that enabled parents to contact each other using social media. Teachers believed that the use of social media sometimes undermined mothers’ confidence and sense of self-efficacy. A participant said, “It would have never occurred to me to put things I need help with on Facebook. We would have just figured it out. Now, there is so much of a need for all the sweet moms to compare themselves.” Another teacher talked about how social

media was sometimes a distraction for mothers. The participant noted, “I feel like maybe the parents were focusing on all these things, and maybe they missed...for example, they’re doing a Pinterest party for Valentine’s, but their kid can’t read.” Parents shared a different perspective about using a classroom Facebook page to aide in communication. According to a participant, “The private classroom page is a place to get help with understanding teacher instructions or assignments.”

Community

Participants repeatedly used the term family to describe the community at Heritage Academy. Participants talked about several different support systems during focus-group discussions. I have categorized these support relationships into four categories: parents supporting parents, parents supporting teachers, administration supporting teachers, and teachers supporting teachers.

Parents Supporting Parents

Parents described a close community created by the University-Model. For some, the camaraderie parents shared drew them to enroll at Heritage. A participant noted, “Having come from another private school, I have found a commonality in this type of model and the type of parent that will do this.” The parent went on to describe the model as “a big risk,” and other participants nodded in agreement. According to parent participants, the parent community at Heritage Academy was vitally important. A parent participant noted, “You cannot do this as an island.” Another parent shared what it was like to be paired with a mentor mom. The participant said, “My mentor mom was hugely helpful because the UMS is an entirely different world. At Heritage, parents have *major involvement*.” Descriptors participants used in reference to the UMS community were “humility,” “encouraging,” “transparency,” and “like-mindedness.” A

parent noted, “Maybe I have projected on my kids that they have a safe place to fail, but maybe it is me that has a safe place to fail.”

Parents gave examples of how the school community supports one another in times of crisis. A participant said, “The school community mirrors the church community. We have had several parents diagnosed with cancer. The whole class will gather around and meet for prayer over the parent.” Participants also said that they sometimes school one another’s children when families are experiencing difficult circumstances. A parent concluded, “There’s a lot going on to meet needs.” Participants shared about helping to school each other’s children when a family was going through a difficult time. A parent elaborated, “The community comes together. As mothers, we cry and talk through things.” Parents attributed the sense of community and support to parents’ co-teaching role. A participant referred to the involvement of parents as a “sacrifice of time.”

Parents referred to their peers as a family. A parent gave an example about experiencing freedom from judgment. The participant shared,

There are opportunities for you to get involved as much or as little as you can handle at the moment. If you can’t participate at the moment because you are overwhelmed, it doesn’t matter. You are not loved more or less based on your level of involvement.

Another parent supported the participant’s comment; “It is just a very warm and encouraging place because there is commonality in the goal. We just want the best for all of our kids.”

Parents Supporting Teachers

Support at Heritage Academy is not limited to parents helping parents. Participants reported that parents supported teachers by volunteering. According to one participant, “We see parents here constantly. There’s so much support for our teachers from our parents. If you have

something to offer, you are always welcome to share.” Parents also explained that school policy required parents to volunteer. According to the school handbook, each family must volunteer 25 hours during the school year. A participant clarified that the volunteer hours are for each family, not child.

Administration Supporting Teachers

Teachers shared feeling strong support from Heritage Academy’s administration. “You get training throughout your employment here because our administration and faculty is a family,” explained a teacher participant. Several other focus group participants agreed with the teacher’s comment. The teacher provided additional insight about how the faculty and administration support each other saying,

We really have that connection with our faculty and with our administration. I don’t know how many times I’ve walked in and asked, ‘How does this sound? Could you pre-read this for me?’ We base all our responses on being graceful. Are we showing grace? Are we showing kindness? We are also courageous because we have a principle to uphold. We are firm yet gentle. Slow to anger. We are very clear, about whom we are, but we are cohesive.

Another participant said, “We really are like a family. We are like siblings, and our principal is trying to corral everybody.” The group laughed at the analogy, suggesting their comfort level with each other.

Teachers Supporting Teachers

In addition to helping each other with parent communication, teachers talked about collaborating with one another to improve instructional practices. Teacher participants gave several examples of co-teaching, designing cross-curricular projects, and asking colleagues to

provide help with instructional strategies and techniques. One teacher participant described collaborative efforts as being similar to a “traditional middle school model.” Another teacher emphasized the importance of collaboration saying, “It [collaboration] is really what a good school should be. We cross the aisles.” Other focus group participants reiterated that the upper-school teachers valued collaboration noting, “We cross *all* of those aisles.”

Although teachers talked about how they supported each other, some of my observations indicated areas where communication was lacking. For instance, when some teacher focus-group participants described accommodations provided to struggling students, other teachers bristled or indicated that the accommodations were outside the scope of the school policies. Additionally, teacher participants said that, at times, in an effort not to inconvenience or offend colleagues, they did not ask for or offer assistance. Yet, they expressed a desire to give or receive help. My observations of the focus-group discussions gave me the impression that in most situations, teachers were willing and available to help each other. Among the participants overall, the number of incidences where teachers shied away from requesting or giving assistance was minimal. If asked, teachers were open to helping or mentoring. I share implications for this dynamic in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of teachers and parents concerning a high-involvement school model of parental engagement using the lens of a dual capacity-building framework. In Chapter 5, I present limitations of the study, conclusions, and implications based on analysis of the findings presented in Chapter 4. First, I provide an analysis of transferability and discuss some of the limitations of data collection methods used in the study. Second, I revisit the research questions and theory used to frame this study. Third, I discuss conclusions and implications derived from my analysis of the findings that I filtered through the lens of the dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships.

Transferability and Limitations

Although family structure, socioeconomic status, religious and non-religious school cultural differences, and policies governing private schools constrain the transferability of the study findings, participants' positive perspectives and experiences indicated that the model holds important implications for enhancing the development of family-school partnerships. Before discussing implications and conclusions based on the findings, it is important to provide an analysis of the limitations of the data collection methods used in the study. The focus-group discussion format was a potential limitation in collecting data. During teacher discussions about professional development, parent involvement, and the provision of learning accommodations, there were times when the conversations became tense. I sensed there were peacemakers in the group who sought to refocus the discussion toward topics of the school's strengths. This dynamic may have kept participants from fully sharing their concerns. However, a few times participants laughed, smiled, and made comments that indicated they were happy to learn new

information and tackle challenges so they could continue discussion or so they could clarify misconceptions or identify areas for improvement. Teacher participants noted that the flexible schedule created time constraints for collaboration and expressed a desire for additional dialogue and problem-solving opportunities.

It was also possible that although parents had the opportunity to participate in an individual interview, parents who perceived themselves as outliers of the community may have felt an individual interview gave other parent participants or school personnel an impression that they had something pejorative to say. I was unable to speak with a parent who shared they had a student with an identified learning difference. Perhaps this was because of the seemingly small population of students with learning differences or because parents of learning different students were unwilling to join or share in a group setting. These factors may have precluded the collection of certain data that would have given a more complete picture of stakeholder perceptions and experiences, but overall participants seemed excited to share both perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Largely, I felt welcomed by administrators to explore strengths of the school as well as challenges. As I reviewed notations in my reflexive journal, I believe I was able to gain, through conversation with participants and personal observation, a strong sense of the characteristics of the Heritage Academy community and an understanding of the school culture. Although participants were eager to share their perceptions about the strengths of the school, I had the impression they recognized its practices was not always congruent with the philosophy and goals of the school. Time for faculty and parents to debrief and discuss the findings of this study would be useful.

Review of the Research Framework

Four questions guided the study and linked to the theoretical framework. I used each research question to learn participants' perspectives of the capacity of UMS parents and teachers to establish and sustain family-school partnerships that positively influence student learning and engagement. The guiding questions shaped the protocol questions for the study and allowed me to gain insights about Heritage Academy parent and teacher perspectives and experiences regarding UMS family-school partnerships.

I used the dual capacity-building framework to analyze the findings of this study. The framework has four categories that explain the supports desirable for development and sustainability of family-school partnerships. These capacities make up the four Cs of the framework and provide a multifaceted lens for exploring the parental-teacher partnership in a UMS setting. The four Cs are cognition, capabilities, connections, and confidence. In theory, the capacity parents and teachers have in each category influences the strength of the family-school partnership. In the following section, I group conclusions based on the findings of this study to reflect UMS parent and teacher capacity within each of the four Cs of the dual-capacity building framework.

Capacity for Cognition in a UMS

Cognition, the first C, refers to parent and teacher beliefs about roles. Through the exploration of participants' beliefs about roles, I sought to gain insights about whether the UMS design provides a structure that supports and is likely to sustain a thriving partnership. I drew three conclusions concerning roles and capacity for cognition.

UMS Parents and Teachers Agree Role Definition is Important

According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013), “Staff need to be committed to working as partners with families and must believe in the value of such partnerships for improving student learning. Families need to view themselves as partners in their children’s education” (p. 11). Understanding these roles was key for successful student outcomes in the UMS. The co-teaching and flexible-scheduling design of the UMS requires that parents and teachers agree that educating children is a shared responsibility.

Participant responses indicated their capacity to fulfill the parent and teacher roles, as outlined in the work of Mapp and Kuttner (2013), influenced their ability to build and sustain a healthy partnership. UMS teachers and parents believed teachers’ roles were to appreciate families’ knowledge and skills, create a school culture that welcomed family involvement, and support families in students’ academic and character development. Likewise, UMS teachers and parents held certain expectations for parental roles. Within the dual-capacity building framework, there was an expectation for parents to be supporters, encouragers, monitors, role models, advocates, and decision-makers for their children. In addition to these roles, UMS parents were to be co-teachers in the early grades. As students matured, parents and teachers believed the parental role shifts from co-teacher to overseer. UMS parents and teachers also agreed that, like the dual-capacity framework’s goals for role development, family-school collaboration is important.

According to study participants, positive student outcomes were a reflection of how well parents and teachers understood and fulfilled their roles. Overall, participants believed that high levels of parental involvement and teacher support led to positive student outcomes in academics and character development. Many of the participants contrasted the shared role of UMS parents

and teachers to other school models they had experienced and believed UMS students were better prepared for college. Although higher family socioeconomic statuses often present in private schools influence student outcomes (discussed in a later section), research also supports that parental engagement leads to gains in student motivation and subsequent achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Future research about the role of parents and student outcomes in a UMS could add to existing literature about the influence of parental engagement in children's education.

Administrators were Influential in Defining and Supporting Parent-Teacher Roles

Leadership is an essential support for school improvement and community building (Byrk, Sebring, Allensworth, Easton, & Luppescu, 2009; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Findings from this study indicated leadership at Heritage Academy UMS had a significant role in defining and supporting parent-teacher roles, developing community, and establishing a positive school culture. I noticed in my analysis of the findings that none of the focus-group questions specifically addressed the school's administrative team, but participants were outspoken about how much they valued and appreciated the leadership provided by Heritage Academy administrators. Parent participants talked about giving the administrative staff their blessing and support. Teachers and parents praised the school's administrative team for support and availability. Participants credited Heritage Academy administrators for helping to define and explain the roles of parents and teachers. Additionally, parents and teachers believed that Heritage Academy administrators modeled positive communication strategies for parents and teachers. My site visits included opportunities to interact and observe the administrative staff. Before leaving the second visit, the school's headmaster invited me to attend a faculty in-service and lunch. Based on my observations, I would agree with participants that the administration

was approachable and sought input from faculty. On both visits, interactions among administrators, faculty, students, and parents suggested that school leadership was intentional about building a sense of community and a supportive environment for learning. School leaders were instrumental in communicating, modeling, and inspiring teachers and parents to embrace and participate in the mission and role expectations of Heritage Academy. Further study of the Heritage Academy's leadership team could provide valuable insights for practitioners of other public and private schools.

Shared Values Influence Role Definition

Participant values shaped their views of the roles of various UMS stakeholders. In all focus-group discussions, participants spoke about the importance of shared values at Heritage Academy. For example, participants believed parents had primary responsibility for overseeing children's character development. This was a major tenet of Heritage Academy's goals outlined in school publications. For example, a goal of school personnel was "to encourage parents to see their highest calling and their most fundamental responsibility as that of training their children." According to NAUMS President Turner (2001), "Parents are responsible for preparing their children to show reasonable respect for authority and basic consideration for others so that, once in school, their instruction can be accomplished in an ordered environment conducive to learning" (p. 9). The participants I interviewed strongly articulated having beliefs that were similar to Turner's perspective. According to participants, these beliefs contributed to the role definition parents and teachers adopted and operated within. Parents and teachers may encounter more difficulty building capacity in the area of cognition in schools where role definition is less clear and stakeholders have a variety of perspectives about parent-teacher collaboration.

While parent and teacher participants seemed to consistently share common values concerning character development, focus-group data indicated that participant values and expectations for academic development sometimes differed. To unify the expectations of parents and teachers, school personnel were intentional about helping communicate the values that defined parent and teacher roles. The onboarding process for new families included orientation and training, a signed agreement, and an assigned mentor. School administrators also instituted a family-life department to assist families with the co-teaching role. Additionally, teachers worked to communicate and collaborate with parents to support their roles as co-teachers. However, some teacher participants noted that not all parents fulfilled their responsibilities and believed parents needed ongoing training and encouragement. An important implication for Heritage Academy is the recognition and desire of parent and teacher participants for ongoing training and mentoring to refresh buy-in and sustain the philosophy and goals of the school.

During orientations, teachers received training designed to help them understand the school's philosophy and how to work with parents as co-teachers. However, teachers reported the availability and support of school leaders and colleagues as being most helpful in understanding and navigating the partnership roles of the UMS. The lack of data indicating teachers possessed a deep understanding of the role of the NAUMS organization suggests that NAUMS could potentially assume a greater role in offering professional development opportunities that help teachers better understand and fulfill their roles as UMS employees.

There was some confusion among participants concerning allocation of responsibilities in situations where students struggled academically. Teachers' practices differed in the assistance they provided and the expectations they set. Although student IEPs were not accepted, teachers expressed concern that students with learning differences were not always identified before

enrolling. Although private schools have the option of selecting which students they enroll, the findings in this study indicate that a few students are enrolled who are later identified as students the school would not have accepted if their learning differences had been known at the time they applied. This creates challenges for teachers unprepared or untrained to assist students who struggle to perform at the high level of academic rigor expected in a college-preparatory school. Based on my observation of tensions during focus-group discussions, teachers who had public school backgrounds or held faith values that encouraged inclusion had the greatest philosophical struggle to reconcile how to help students with academic challenges. In my reflexive journal, I wrote about how this is an issue I wrestle with as an educator in a faith-based school. The dilemma can create cognitive dissonance for certain teachers, a situation with implications for an ongoing dialogue about the teacher role in private education.

Capacity for Capability in a UMS

The second category of the theoretical framework is capability. Capability refers to the skills and knowledge of parents and educators. According to the dual-capacity building framework, capacity building for strong partnerships requires both parents and educators to be willing to share what they know and learn from one another. Through this study, I hoped to learn what capabilities parents and teachers believed were important for the model to succeed and enhance the educational experience of children.

UMS Design not Accessible for Diverse Family Structures and Socioeconomic Populations

Participants recognized that the relatively homogeneous socioeconomic status and family structure of Heritage Academy families was a factor in a family's ability to participate. One of the critiques of the model, according to Dill (2015), was its inaccessibility to single parent or dual-income families. The traditional family structure in which there are two parents or

guardians but only one breadwinner seems to be a requisite factor for enrolling a child in a UMS. Given that public school personnel serve a diverse socioeconomic population, the concept of flexible scheduling would not be a feasible option for most public school families. Most low-income or single parent families would not have the option of enrolling in a UMS because of tuition and the requirement for a parent to be home to provide instructional support. Additionally, the UMS schedule would not likely be feasible for families with two working adults regardless of income. NAUMS President, Turner (2001), said,

While it is true that all approaches to education are strengthened when parents are meaningfully involved, the University-Model absolutely depends on it. Without someone who will provide responsible parenting, it is difficult to imagine how the model could ever work. (p. 7)

Since study participants suggested that high levels of parental involvement in the UMS support children's academic and character development, further exploration of how the UMS design, or modifications of the design, could benefit more structurally diverse populations may be worthwhile for educational practice. One variation from the model's design that study participants reported was partnering with grandparents. In some cases, participants said that grandparents provided home instruction, but this was not the norm. Although teacher participants spoke positively about partnering with grandparents, this was not widely practiced in this case study school.

Generally, lower-income families have limited access to private school institutions. This raises a host of social justice issues because it limits diversity. One benefit of a University-Model private school is that tuition is typically more affordable than a traditional 5-day private school model. Although this does not afford all students the opportunity to attend, it does

increase the likelihood that students from families with more modest means might have more choice in the schools they attend. For religious groups that desire to offer a faith-based educational option that is more inclusive of varying socio-economic populations, the UMS might be more feasible. Many private schools have scholarship endowments for students who cannot afford to attend, and lower-tuition costs mean that those funds can go further and increase the school's capacity for a more diverse population of students. However, the wide gap between public and private school diversity appears to be a permanent feature that shows no sign of closing anytime soon.

Flexible Scheduling Affords Opportunities that Differ from Traditional Models

All participants had experiences with other school models, and parents and teachers articulated advantages and disadvantages of full-time school models and homeschooling. Ray (2010), an outspoken champion of homeschooling, conducted a nationwide study of homeschool families. The participants in Ray's study shared similar socioeconomic backgrounds to Heritage Academy families. In the 2010 study, Ray concluded there were certain benefits associated with homeschooling such as relatively high academic achievement and students' healthy social, psychological, and emotional development. Some Heritage Academy study participants desired such potential benefits of homeschooling, but also wanted support and accountability from professional educators. The UMS allowed parents the opportunity to give their children both a homeschool and classroom experience.

According to Turner (2001), "Some families are drawn to the model because, compared to traditional schools, it offers greater access for parents to stay involved in the most important dimension of their children's education — their values and character education" (p. 7). Turner also stated that parents valued the character emphasis built into the UMS academic and activity

programs. Study participants believed the UMS schedule allotted proportional time to instill shared values. Participants also believed the shared responsibility and time gave students a greater sense of accountability for expectations both at home and at school.

Some participants desired more time for family or personal activities. Parent and teacher participants believed the UMS schedule allowed greater flexibility for time management. Dill (2015) noted, “In most University-Model schools, the students complete schoolwork during their home days and do not spend significant additional time in the evenings or on weekends doing homework” (p. 12). According to the findings of this study, parents and teachers believed flexible scheduling afforded students an opportunity to practice time management skills needed for college settings.

Currently, the UMS is primarily a Christian school model. However, the UMS model may appeal to homeschool parents who are non-religious or practice other faiths but also desire to tap into the expertise of teachers or desire a semi-traditional school structure. A 2012 National Household Education Survey found that only 64% of homeschool parent participants chose to homeschool for the purpose of providing religious instruction (Noel et al., 2013). Some non-religious reasons parents cite for choosing to homeschool include a desire to provide moral instruction, concern about school environments and academic instruction, and having a child with special needs (Kaleem, 2016; Noel et al., 2013). The UMS structure might provide an option for parents who like the idea of homeschooling but lack the capability or confidence to do so alone.

Additionally, there may be an opportunity for public and private schools to learn from one another when considering or deploying a compressed school week. Decreased funding has led to some public school districts shortening the school week to stay within budget (Hull, 2011).

Public and private school educators could benefit from research concerning the establishment, ongoing practice, and outcomes related to the flexible schedule of a UMS. However, a potential challenge would be the differences in family structure and socio-economic status. Public schools would still face greater challenges than schools like Heritage Academy. In a UMS, school personnel rely on parents as co-teachers. In schools where family structures are more diverse, teachers would likely not be able to garner the same degree of material home support.

The UMS Design Can Support or Hinder Students with Learning Challenges

The UMS design allows for individualized instruction and flexibility that may help students with learning challenges. However, the model's design also has drawbacks that may not allow for services that meet students' academic needs or exclude students from participating. Focus-group participants provided perspectives and experiences that allowed insight into the model's benefits and challenges for students with learning differences.

First, I provide an analysis of benefits mentioned by participants. In a study conducted by Duvall and Ward (1997), data indicated that homeschool settings provided advantageous learning environments for children with learning differences because parents' had greater opportunity to respond. Several participants shared this view. Focus-group participants believed that the UMS allowed parents greater access and insight into their child's approach to learning and academic strengths and weaknesses. Participants stated the close working relationship parents had with their children and teachers allowed them to address concerns and advocate for their children's needs. Participants also described situations where students were able to receive outside professional therapies for learning differences that did not conflict with the classroom-learning schedule. Heritage Academy did not recognize IEPs from outside institutions or provide a formal accommodation plan for students. However, several teacher participants talked

about supports they offered for struggling students. In some cases, teachers' willingness to accommodate students created tension with other teachers during focus-group discussions. These participants believed the lack of accommodations strengthened the coping skills of students who faced learning challenges and prepared students for the academic rigors of college. It is important to note, however, that a properly diagnosed learning difference is not a choice and students cannot make learning difficulties disappear. Learning differences follow a person across their lifespan, but students can adopt coping strategies that may lessen the impact.

Second, participants described how the model's design excluded or created barriers for students with learning challenges. The resourcing and regulation of publicly funded education is different from private schools; therefore, the institution of programs and acceptance of students depends on protocols stipulated by the particular model of school governance. According to participants, Heritage Academy does not accept students who knowingly have significant learning challenges. However, participants also said that there were students enrolled at Heritage Academy who went undiagnosed with a learning difference until after enrollment, do not have a formal diagnosis but are likely to have a learning difference, or who waive the federal protections afforded to children and families by an IEP. Some teachers desired support and training for helping struggling learners. Other teacher participants did not believe it was the academic mission of the school to accommodate students with learning differences. Despite the school's reputation for being an advanced college preparatory school, several teachers found it necessary to refer families for outside testing and therapy. These teachers applied the recommendations of outside professionals' to better meet student needs. Still, if students were unable to keep up with the rigor of the academic program, families found other educational options. Additional study of other UMS schools would help to discover what barriers or

supports exist for learning different students. Further research of other private education models could also provide insights about how programs are established and sustained to help students with learning differences.

Capacity for Communication in a UMS

Communication, the third C of the dual-capacity building framework, refers to parent and teacher capacity to collaborate to provide meaningful educational opportunities for students. In this study, I explored the communication and networking patterns of UMS parents and teachers. Throughout focus group discussions, participants confirmed that open communication pathways were necessary for the success of the model.

Shared Values Contribute to Establishing and Sustaining Collaboration

In addition to shaping role definitions, participants reported that shared values provided common ground for collaboration. For schools to access the social capital needed to build and sustain connections, school staff and families must develop trust and respect (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Overall, parent participants perceived they enjoyed mutual trust and respect in their partnership with teachers. Lower-school teachers, however, expressed some concerns about parental adherence to the co-teaching agreement. During focus-group discussions, the tone of participant responses indicated that collaboration was, at times, a frustration for teachers. However, as the discussions neared conclusion, several teachers said that, despite communication challenges, shared Christian faith allowed them to work together to overcome differences and attain desired student outcomes. As noted in my reflective journal, it is important for group members to find common ground for consensus. Consensus, however, may stifle open communication across differing viewpoints when it fails to recognize that conflict is an unavoidable dimension of social interaction.

School leadership also set the stage for parents and teachers to understand the values and expectations of the school and University-Model. Parents were required to attend an informational meeting about the school's educational philosophy before applying to Heritage Academy. Additionally, parents sign an agreement that they not only support the ideology of the University-Model but also agree to share the responsibility for their children's academic and character development. A tenet of the agreement is that parents must "be actively involved in monitoring and supporting their child's instruction and performance" (Dill, 2015, p. 7). According to participant responses, this agreement sets the stage for collaborative efforts to educate children. Based on observation and focus-group discussions, my impression of parents and teachers at Heritage Academy was they understood and agreed on the expectations of the UMS model. Nonetheless, parents and teachers reported they sometimes fell short of living up to these expectations. Observational and discussion data indicated, however, how shared faith and buy-in of the school philosophy provided a basis for building consensus or a common ground for working through differences.

Shared Instructional Responsibilities in a UMS Requires Communication

NAUMS President Turner (2001) and study participants agreed that responsibility for children's education was not the sole responsibility of teachers. As noted in the previous section, in a UMS, school personnel need, want, and expect parents to be part of the educational process. Parental engagement, therefore, requires school personnel to communicate with parents in order to build trust and inform parents of ongoing expectations. Upper and lower-school teachers used the blue assignment sheet as the primary form of communication for academic work; however, they also deployed other communication methods. Parent participants appreciated the uniformity of the assignment sheet, especially if they had students at both campuses. Parents knew what to

expect and where to get information. Data collected in this study indicated that parents value a consistent format for communicating academic information. This finding may have implications for other school models and settings.

In a UMS, parents also have a responsibility to establish and sustain pathways for communication. Some data, however, suggested that parents did not always take advantage of teachers' attempts to communicate. Teachers expressed concerns that parents did not always read or respond to communication on the blue assignment sheet. Some teacher participants, who were also parents, admitted their own inconsistencies in reading blue sheets. As parent-teacher communication continues to evolve, research indicates that parents increasingly prefer electronic modes of communication (Thompson, Mazer, & Flood-Grady, 2015). In this study, parent participants spoke energetically about teachers' availability for questions and concerns through email or text messaging. It is unknown if UMS parents would find an electronic form of the blue sheet preferable, but findings from the study in conjunction with current research suggest that a parent-teacher survey may be beneficial for determining preferred methods of communication.

Connecting with Outside Educational Supports is Challenging for a UMS

Heritage Academy UMS fills a unique niche in education. In addition to being a private faith-based school, the flexible schedule and co-teaching philosophy differentiates Heritage Academy from traditional private and public schools. The distinctiveness of the University-Model contributed to teachers' feelings of isolation from outside educational institutions and providers of professional development. Several participants believed that area schools did not view Heritage Academy as "a real school." Some teacher participants reportedly did not feel welcome at the professional training offerings of neighboring schools and educational organizations. Without further investigation, it was difficult to discern if participants'

perceptions were reflective of how local educational organizations viewed the UMS. As stated in the literature review, teachers in private and public settings frequently express concerns about lack of training related to building and sustaining partnerships with families (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009; Weiss, Epstein, Henderson, Hoover-Dempsey, & Jeynes, 2005). Findings from this study indicate that it would be beneficial for Heritage Academy leadership and the NAUMS organization to further explore participants' perspectives concerning professional development and training for UMS teachers

Capacity for Confidence in a UMS

Confidence is the fourth category in the dual-capacity building framework. Parents and teachers who believe in their own capacities are more likely to engage in the school and with each other. In the previous section, I noted that communication is one of the four Cs of the dual capacity-building framework. The final C, confidence, influences parent and teacher capacity for communicating. As noted in Chapter 1, a culture of confidence supports a cycle of open communication between parents and teachers.

Parental Views of Self-Efficacy Influence Expectations for Student Outcomes

Parent participants stated that being highly involved contributed to high expectations for students' academic and character development. Parent perceptions were congruent with Dill (2015): "The strong parent partnership [in a UMS] generally works as an advantage because parents are highly vested in their children's success" (p. 13). Teacher participants viewed high parental expectations as bestowing both advantages and disadvantages on student achievement and attitudes. Some teachers believed that high parental expectations reflected the parents' socioeconomic status, both a private and public school issue. Teachers said parents expected their children to do well academically because they had done well academically, a powerful but

non-meritocratic form of social and cultural advantage (McNamee & Miller, 2014). Participants also briefly mentioned that some parents struggled with feelings of being ill equipped to teach their children. In the next section, I address the importance of providing training and a fostering a sense of community support.

Training and Community Supports Build Teachers' and Parents' Confidence

The unique design of the UMS requires training and community support that addresses the collaborative co-teaching roles of parents and teachers. Training experiences and community support influenced parents' and teachers' confidence levels or feelings of self-efficacy.

Participants spoke about the positive influence of Heritage Academy's parent and teacher mentorship programs and family-like community. However, teachers also expressed an interest in acquiring more professional development opportunities and training focused on helping students with learning difficulties. Teacher participants also noted it would be helpful for them to share the teachers' perspectives with the leadership of the parent-mentoring program. Parents and teachers appreciated the support and leadership of Heritage Academy's administrators. As noted in the previous section, data from this study and previous research indicates additional investigation of training and professional development opportunities for UMS teachers and parents would be useful to build and sustain confidence.

There was some evidence to suggest that teachers struggled with feelings of self-efficacy or perhaps a robust personal identity because they did not feel accepted as a "real school" by some community organizations. Data suggested this stigma related to the home-based learning days that were unique to Heritage Academy and the University-Model. I did not sense that participants perceived that the community delegitimized other private or faith-based schools.

Targeted efforts to educate and the community about the school model and seek opportunities for collaboration may be beneficial.

Social Media Influences Parents' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy

In preparing for this study, I did not anticipate the findings related to parental use of social media. However, three of the four focus groups discussed the use of Facebook. While parents spoke about the communication benefits of social media, specifically Facebook, teachers were concerned that social media negatively influenced parents' feelings of self-efficacy. Teachers believed that parents' use of social media encouraged comparison, lowering self-confidence in their ability to provide instruction. Bartholomew, Schoppe-Sullivan, Glassman, Dush, and Sullivan (2012) found that mothers' use of Facebook was associated with higher levels of parenting stress. Teachers also believed parents who frequently used social media were more distracted and less focused on the instructional needs of their children. Based on current research and the perspectives of teacher participants in this study, further exploration of social media and parents' feelings of self-efficacy would be useful for educational theory and practice.

Closing Remarks

In many ways, University-Model schools face similar challenges for developing and sustaining family-school partnerships as other private and public school models. Findings in this study indicated, however, that UMS stakeholders' common philosophy, shared faith, similar family structure and socioeconomic background, and flexible schedule added to their capacity to build and sustain a collaborative partnership within the school community. Data did suggest that the unique scheduling and co-teaching aspects of the school model contributed to some struggles in the area of teacher confidence and professional identity. Similar to current literature, school personnel and teachers believed that training and professional development were areas for

continued growth that would increase the confidence of teachers. Additionally, the pressure parents felt to foster high-levels of achievement in their children contributed to confidence issues of their own. These issues linked not only to socio-economic status but also to the high-level of involvement expected of them by teachers and administrators.

The school's growth in enrollment, however, was an indicator that the model has appeal for families seeking a school model that promotes high levels of parental involvement. Study participants perceived that mentoring programs, school leadership, high levels of parental engagement, and faculty availability were strengths of the school that contributed to a strong sense of community and collaboration. Overall, participants believed the model afforded positive student outcomes in academics and character development. Additionally, participants believed the model strengthened the family unit. In closing, although the findings from this study do not appear to be widely transferable to other school settings, there are potential applications for schools that may be considering alternative scheduling to maximize financial resources or seeking flexible ways to address the particular educational needs of families and students.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Algera, H. F., & Sink, C. A. (2002). Another look at character education in Christian schools. *Journal of Research on Christian Education, 11*(2), 161-181.
doi:10.1080/10656210209484937
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: Freeman.
- Barge, J. K., & Loges, W. E. (2003). Parent, student, and teacher perceptions of parental involvement. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 31*(2), 140.
doi:10.1080/0090988032000064597
- Bartholomew, M. K., Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Glassman, M., Dush, C. K., & Sullivan, J. M. (2012). New parents' Facebook use at the transition to parenthood. *Family Relations, 61*(3), 455-469. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2012.00708.x
- Bauch, P. A., & Goldring, E. B. (1995). Parent involvement and school responsiveness: Facilitating the home-school connection in schools of choice. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 17*(1), 21. doi:10.3102/01623737017001001
- Baum, A. C., & Swick, K. J. (2007). Dispositions toward families and family involvement: Supporting preservice teacher development. *Early Childhood Education, 35*(6), 579-584.
doi:10.1007/s10643-007-0229-9
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544-559.
- Belway, S., Durán, M., & Spielberg, L. (n.d.). *State laws on family engagement in education*. Retrieved from Chicago, IL:
<http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2247>
- Binns, K., Steinberg, A., & Amorosi, S. (1998). *Building family-school partnerships: Views of teachers and students*. Retrieved from New York, NY:
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED420648.pdf>
- Bogdan, R. C. B., Sari K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston, MA: Pearson A & B.

- Bracke, D., & Corts, D. (2012). Parental involvement and the theory of planned behavior. *Education, 133*(1), 188-201.
- Brobst, S. (2013). *Academic college readiness indicators of seniors enrolled in University-Model Schools® and traditional, comprehensive Christian schools*. (Doctor of Education Dissertation), Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsoai&AN=edsoai.851439697&site=eds-live> Available from EBSCOhost
- Byrk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S. (2009). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cheung, C. S.-S., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2012). Why does parents' involvement enhance children's achievement? The role of parent-oriented motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(3), 820-832. doi:10.1037/a0027183
- Christenson, S. L., & Sheridan, S. M. (2001). *Schools and families: Creating essential connections for learning*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*, S95-S120. doi:10.1016/B978-0-7506-7222-1.50005-2
- Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McPartland, J., Mood, A. M., Weinfield, F. D., & York, R. L. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Retrieved from Washington D.C.: files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED012275.pdf
- Coleman, M. (2013). *Benefits of family involvement for families and teachers Empowering family-teacher partnerships: Building connections within diverse communities*: SAGE Publications. Retrieved from <http://sk.sagepub.com/books/empowering-family-teacher-partnerships/n4.xml>. doi:10.4135/9781452240510.n4
- Comer, J. P., Brown, F. E., Cooper, C. J., & Savo, C., R. (2015). *Comer School Development Program: How it works*. Retrieved March 14, 2016, from <http://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/comer/about/works.aspx>
- Cook, K. S., & Emerson, R. M. (1987). *Social exchange theory*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cordry, S., & Wilson, J. D. (2004). Parents as first teacher. *Education, 125*(1), 56-62.

- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Curry, K. A., & Adams, C. M. (2014). Parent social networks and parent responsibility: Implications for school leadership. *Journal of School Leadership, 24*(5), 918-948.
- Dill, S. (2015). A different approach to Christian school partnership: The University-Model approach. *Christian School Education, 18*(3).
- Duvall, S. F., & Ward, D. L. (1997). An exploratory study of home school instructional environments and their effects on the basic skills of students with learning disabilities. *Education and Treatment of Children, 20*(2), 150.
- El Nokali, N. E., Bachman, H. J., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2010). Parent involvement and children's academic and social development in elementary school. *Child Development, 81*(3), 988-1005. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01447.x
- Epstein, J. L. (2010). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*(3), 81. doi:10.1177/003172171009200326
- Epstein, J. L. (2011). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Westview Press.
- Flybergg, B. (2010). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. In P. Atkinson & S. Delamont (Eds.), *Qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. doi:10.1177/1077800405284363
- Freeman, B. N. (2016). National Association of University-Model Schools [NAUMS] member school directory. Retrieved March 12, 2016, from <http://naums.net/images/NAUMSSchoolDirectory.pdf>
- Froiland, J., & Davison, M. (2014). Parental expectations and school relationships as contributors to adolescents' positive outcomes. *Social Psychology of Education, 17*(1), 1-17. doi:10.1007/s11218-013-9237-3
- Froiland, J., Peterson, A., & Davison, M. L. (2013). The long-term effects of early parent involvement and parent expectation in the USA. *School Psychology International, 34*(1), 33. doi:10.1177/0143034312454361

- Gardiner, M. E. (1996). *Parent-school collaboration: Feminist organizational structures and school leadership*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Genzuk, M. (1999). Tapping into community funds of knowledge *Effective Strategies for English Language Aquisition: Curriculum Guide for the Professional Development of Teachers Grades Kindergarten through Eight* (pp. 9-21). Los Angeles, CA: ARCO Foundation.
- González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (2013). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Haller, E. J., & Kleine, P. F. (2001). *Using educational research : A school administrator's guide*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Harper, M., & Cole, P. (2012). Member checking: Can benefits be gained similar to group therapy? *The Qualitative Report*, 17(2), 510-517.
- Harris, L., Libresco, J., & Parker, R. (1984). *The American teacher: The Metropolitan Life survey*. Retrieved from New York, NY: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED247230.pdf>
- Hartlep, N. D., & Porfilio, B. J. (2015). Revitalizing the field of educational foundations and PK–20 educators' commitment to social justice and issues of equity in an age of neoliberalism. *Educational Studies: Journal of the American Educational Studies Association*, 51(4), 300-316. doi:10.1080/00131946.2015.1053367
- Hays, P. (2004). Case study research. In K. deMarrais & S. D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Henderson, A., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships*. New York, NY: New Press.
- Hiatt-Michael, D. B. (2006). Reflections and directions on research related to family-community involvement in schooling. *School Community Journal*, 16(1), 7-30.
- Hill, N. (2009). *Education.com: Parent involvement*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.com/reference/article/parent-involvement/>

- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Jones, K. P. (1997). *Parental role construction and parental involvement in children's education*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association [AERA], Chicago, IL.
- Hornby, G., & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: An explanatory model. *Educational Review*, 63(1), 37-52. doi:10.1080/00131911.2010.488049
- Hull, J. (2011). Time in school? How does the U.S. compare? *Organizing a school*. Retrieved April 20, 2017, from <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Organizing-a-school/Time-in-school-How-does-the-US-compare>
- Jacobs, R. L. (2011). Developing a research problem and purpose statement. In T. S. Rocco & T. Hatcher (Eds.), *The handbook of scholarly writing and publishing* (pp. 125-141). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Jeynes, W. H., & Beuttler, F. (2012). What private and public schools can learn from each other. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 87(3), 285-304.
- Kaleem, J. (2016). Homeschooling without God. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from The Atlantic website: <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/homeschooling-without-god/475953/>
- Keene, I. (2014). *Annual statistical report: 2013-2014*. National Association of University-Model Schools. Midlothian, TX.
- Kilbourn, B. (2006). The qualitative doctoral dissertation proposal. *Teacher's College Record*, 108(4), 529-576. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9620.2006.00660.x
- King, S. H., & Goodwin, A. L. (2002). *Culturally responsive parental involvement: Concrete understandings and basic strategies*. Paper presented at the Institute for Culturally Responsive Practice, New York, NY.
<http://www.pacer.org/mpc/pdf/CulturallyResponsivePI.pdf>
- Kleinsasser, A. M. (2000). Researchers, reflexivity, and good data: Writing to unlearn. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 155-162. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip3903_6

- Lam, D. (2014). Charter, private, and public schools work together in Boston: teachers, with very different experiences teaching very similar students, tear through artificial boundaries of school politics to ask how they can better serve students. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 95(5), 35-39. doi:10.1177/003172171409500509
- Lapan, S. D., Quartaroli, M. T., & Riemer, F. J. (2012). *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lub, V. (2015). Validity in qualitative evaluation: Linking purposes, paradigms, and perspectives 2015. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5), 1-8. doi:10.1177/1609406915621406
- Lunenburg, F. C. (2011). The Comer School Development Program: Improving education for low income students. *National Forum of Multicultural Issues*, 8(1).
- Mapp, K. L. (2015). *Moving forward: Building capacity for effective family-school partnerships*. Paper presented at the Model Schools Conference, Atlanta, Georgia. How-to retrieved from <http://handouts.modelschoolsconference.com/>
- Mapp, K. L., & Kuttner, P. J. (2013). *Partners in education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships*. Retrieved from Austin, TX: <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>
- Markow, D., & Pieters, A. (2012). *Teachers, parents, and the economy: A survey of teachers, parents, and students*. Retrieved from New York, NY: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED530021.pdf>
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2009). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *Sage handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 214-253). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi:10.4135/9781483348858
- McDonald, L. (2013). In their own words: U.S. Think tank "experts" and the framing of education policy debates. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 11(3), 1-28.

- McDowell, J., & Hostetler, B. (1994). *Right from wrong: What you need to know to help America's youth make right choices*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.
- McNamee, S. J., & Miller, R. K. (2014). *The meritocracy myth* (3rd ed.). Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Meier, D. W. (1996). The big benefits of smallness. *Educational Leadership*, 54(1), 12-15.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Michigan Department of Education. (2002). *What research says about parental involvement in education: In relation to academic achievement*. Lansing, MI: Michigan Department of Education Retrieved from http://michigan.gov/documents/Final_Parent_Involvement_Fact_Sheet_14732_7.pdf.
- Minnesota Parent Center. (2000). Family-teacher partnerships (Vol. MPC-45). Minneapolis, MN: PACER Center.
- Murray, M. M., & Mereoiu, M. (2016). Teacher–parent partnership: an authentic teacher education model to improve student outcomes. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 40(2), 276-292. doi:10.1080/0309877x.2014.971108
- National Association of University-Model Schools. (2015). National Association of University-Model Schools [NAUMS]. Retrieved May 2, 2015, from <http://naums.net/>
- Noel, A., Stark, P., Redford, J., & Zuckerberg, A. (2013). *Parent and family involvement in education, From the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012* (NCES 2013-028). Retrieved from Washington D.C.: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.
- Park, S., & Holloway, S. D. (2013). No parent left behind: Predicting parental involvement in adolescents' education within a sociodemographically diverse population. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 106(2), 105-119. doi:10.1080/00220671.2012.667012
- Patel, N., & Stevens, S. (2010). Parent-teacher-student discrepancies in academic ability beliefs: Influences on parent involvement. *School Community Journal*, 20(2), 115-136.

- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Designing qualitative studies. *Qualitative designs and data collection* (3rd ed., pp. 209-257). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Peshkin, A. (2000). The nature of interpretation in qualitative research. *Educational Researcher*, 29(5), 5-9. doi:10.3102/0013189X029009005
- Ratcliff, N., & Hunt, G. (2009). Building teacher-family partnerships: The role of teacher-preparation programs. *Education*, 129(3), 495-505.
- Ray, B. D. (2010). Academic achievement and demographic traits of homeschool students: A nationwide study. *Academic Leadership (15337812)*, 8(1), 26.
- Rothstein, R., Carnoy, M., & Benviste, L. (1999). *Can public schools learn from private schools? Case studies in the public and private nonprofit sectors*. Retrieved from Washington D.C.: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED457293>
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75.
- Smith, B. H. (2013). School-based character education in the United States. *Childhood Education*(6), 350. doi:10.1080/00094056.2013.850921
- Smith, M. K. (2000). Curriculum theory and practice. *Encyclopedia of informal education*. from <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-curric.htm>
- Sojourner, R. (2014). It's unanimous: effective character education is not quick or superficial, and it begins with caring relationships. *Journal of Character Education*(1), 69.
- Stacer, M., & Perrucci, R. (2013). Parental involvement with children at school, home, and community. *Journal of Family & Economic Issues*, 34(3), 340-354. doi:10.1007/s10834-012-9335-y
- Sturges, K. M. (2015). *Neoliberalizing educational reform: America's quest for profitable market-colonies and the undoing of public good*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Tekin, A. K. (2011). Parent involvement revisited: Background, theories, and models. *International Journal of Applied Educational Studies*(1), 1.

- Tetnowski, J. (2015). Qualitative case study research design. *Perspectives On Fluency & Fluency Disorders*, 25(1), 39-45. doi:10.1044/ffd25.1.39
- Tezel-Sahin, F., Inal, G., & Ozbey, S. (2011). Parent involvement activities from parents' point of view. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 3(6), 421-425.
- Thompson, B. C., Mazer, J. P., & Flood-Grady, E. (2015). The changing nature of parent-teacher communication: Mode selection in the smartphone era. *Communication Education*, 64(2), 187-2017. doi:10.1080/03634523.2015.1014382
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851. doi:10.1177/1077800410383121
- Turner, J. W. (2001). *Character driven, college preparation: Parents and teachers in partnership through university-model schooling*. Fort Worth, TX: GPA Ministries.
- Wang, M.-T., & Sheikh-Khalil, S. (2014). Does parental involvement matter for student achievement and mental health in high school? *Child Development*, 85(2), 610-625. doi:10.1111/cdev.12153
- Weiss, H., Epstein, J., Henderson, A., Hoover-Dempsey, K., & Jeynes, W. (2005). *Research and evaluation of family involvement in education: What lies ahead?* Retrieved from Montreal: <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/research-and-evaluation-of-family-involvement-in-education-what-lies-ahead-panel-session>
- Weiss, H., Lopez, M. E., & Rosenberg, H. (2010). *Beyond random acts: Family, school, and community engagement as an integral part of education reform*. Retrieved from Austin, TX: http://www.nationalpirc.org/engagement_forum/beyond_random_acts.pdf
- Wherry, J. H. (2009). Shattering barriers to parent involvement. *Principal*, 88(5), 7-7.
- Whittemore, R., Chase, S. K., & Mandle, C. L. (2001). Validity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 11(4), 522-537. doi:10.1177/104973201129119299
- Yancey, G. B. (2014). *Self-efficacy* Salem Press *Encyclopedia of Health*. Amenia, NY: Salem Press.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research design and methods* (3rd ed. Vol. 5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zygmunt-Fillwalk, E. (2011). Building family partnerships: The journey from preservice preparation to classroom practice. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 32(1), 84-96. doi:10.1080/10901027.2010.547653

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Protocol Questions: Parent Focus Groups or Interviews

I appreciate your interest in this study, thank you for coming. Before we begin, I would like you to review the consent form and ask any questions you may have. I have prepared a list of questions to learn about family-school partnerships in a University-Model School. You may elaborate on or decline to answer any question. There is minimal information in the literature specific to University-Model Schooling, and I believe this study will provide valuable insight about the model and how families and schools interact within the model.

1. How long have you been involved in University-Model schooling?
Probe: Why did you choose this model of schooling?
Probe: Have your children attended other models of schools? If so, how is the experience of the University-Model different from other schools?
2. Please share how you believe the University-Model of schooling has benefited your children.
Probe: What challenges have you experienced related to this model of schooling?
3. Please describe the parent-teacher partnership at Heritage Academy.
Probe: How do you believe parent-teacher partnerships influence student learning?
4. How would you describe parental engagement at Heritage Academy?
Probe: How do stakeholders in the school encourage parental engagement?
5. Describe what you believe about the roles of parents and teachers in a University-Model School.
Probe: How are these roles similar or different at Heritage Academy?
6. What training and support is available for parents at Heritage Academy?
Probe: Do you believe the available training and support has increased your confidence and ability to support your children's education?
Probe: What existing training and supports are most helpful? What additional training and support would you like to have available?
7. Describe the communication between parents and teachers at Heritage Academy.
Probe: What are the challenges and supports to communication?
8. Describe communication of parents with one another at Heritage Academy.
Probe: How do parent networks at the school support the teachers and one another?

*Heritage Academy is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the school and participants.

APPENDIX B

Protocol Questions: Teacher Focus Groups

I appreciate your interest in this study, thank you for coming. Before we begin, I would like you to review the consent form and ask any questions you may have. I have prepared a list of questions to learn about family-school partnerships in a University-Model School. You may elaborate on or decline to answer any question. There is minimal information in the literature specific to University-Model Schooling, and I believe this study will provide valuable insight about the model and how families and schools interact within the model.

1. How long have you been involved in University-Model schooling?
Probe: Why did you choose this model of schooling?
Probe: Have you taught in other models of schools? If so, how is the experience of the University-Model different?
2. Please share how you believe the University-Model of schooling benefits family-school relationships.
Probe: What challenges do you see for family-school relationships?
3. How would you describe parent-teacher partnerships at Heritage Academy?
Probe: How do you believe parent-teacher partnerships influence student learning?
4. How would you describe parental engagement at Heritage Academy?
Probe: How do you encourage and support parental engagement in the school?
5. Describe what you believe about the roles of parents and teachers in a University-Model School.
Probe: How are these roles similar or different at Heritage Academy?
6. What training and support is available for teachers in working with parents at Heritage Academy?
Probe: Do you believe the available training and support increases parents' confidence and capacity to support their children's education?
7. Describe communication of parents and teachers at Heritage Academy.
Probe: What training and supports are available for parents at Heritage Academy?
Probe: What additional training or supports would be helpful?

* Heritage Academy is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the school and participants.

APPENDIX C



*Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership, Educational and School Psychology
Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142*

Parent Participant Consent Form

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a study that will examine parent and teacher perceptions about the partnerships of parents and teachers in a University-Model School.

Participant Selection: Parents at Providence Classical Christian Academy will be given the opportunity to participate. From the interested participants, study participants will be narrowed and selections will be made to provide a representation from each grade level and varied years of experience with University-Model schooling. For the study, up to 24 parent participants and up to 24 teacher participants will be selected.

Explanation of Procedures: As a participant, you will be asked to be involved in a focus group discussion, with 4-6 participants, conducted by me. Instead of a focus group, you may also choose to participate in an individual interview. The focus group discussion or interview will consist of 8-10 open-ended questions to seek your perceptions about parent-teacher partnerships in your school. The focus group discussion or interview will last approximately 60 minutes and at take place at Providence Academy. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview so an accurate transcript can be created which will facilitate data analysis and assist me in reporting accurate findings. Transcripts will be available for your review.

Discomfort/Risks: There are no risks, discomforts, or inconveniences expected from your participation in this study. However, if a question makes you uncomfortable, you are under no obligation to respond. You also can skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Benefits: The purpose of this study is to examine the family-school partnership as implemented in a University-Model School (UMS). This study hopes to add to the body of knowledge about family-school partnerships. Results may be published in journals and presented at conferences so I can share with others what is learned from the study.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, in order to make sure the study is done properly and safely there may be circumstances where this information must be released. By signing this form, you are giving the research team permission to share information about you with the following groups:

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board;

Audio recordings will be stored in a password protected computer file for 5 years. The researchers may publish the results of the study. If they do, they will only discuss group results. Your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study. The focus group discussion is confidential to the group. Please do not share what is discussed outside the group.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University or Providence Classical Christian Academy. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You will be provided with a copy of this consent form for your records.

Contact: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Pamela Martin, (316) 688-1161 or plmartin1@shockers.wichita.edu or my advisor Dr. Eric Freeman, (316) 978-6392 (office phone) or eric.freeman@wichita.edu. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that:

- You have read (or someone has read to you) the information provided above,
- You are aware that this is a research study,
- You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction, and
- You have voluntarily decided to participate.

You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature indicates you have read the information provided above and have voluntarily decided to participate.

_____ I give consent to be audio recorded.

Printed Name of Child

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Print Name of Parent/Guardian

Title

Signature of Witness

Date

Print Name of Witness

Title

APPENDIX D



*Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership, Educational and School Psychology
Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142*

Teacher Participant Consent Form

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a study that will examine parent and teacher perceptions about the partnerships of parents and teachers in a University-Model School.

Participant Selection: Providence Classical Christian Academy teachers will be given the opportunity to participate. From the interested participants, study participants will be narrowed and selections will be made to provide a representation from each grade level and varied years of experience with University-Model schooling. For the study, up to 24 parent participants and up to 24 teacher participants will be selected.

Explanation of Procedures: As a participant, you will be asked to be involved in a focus group discussion, with 4-6 participants, conducted by me. The focus group discussion will consist of 8-10 open-ended questions to seek your perceptions about parent-teacher partnerships in your school. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and take place at Providence Academy. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview so an accurate transcript can be created which will facilitate data analysis and assist me in reporting accurate findings. Transcripts will be available for your review.

Discomfort/Risks: There are no risks, discomforts, or inconveniences expected from your participation in this study. However, if a question makes you uncomfortable, you are under no obligation to respond. You also can skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Benefits: The purpose of this study is to examine the family-school partnership as implemented in a University-Model School (UMS). This study hopes to add to the body of knowledge about family-school partnerships. Results may be published in journals and presented at conferences so I can share with others what is learned from the study.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, in order to make sure the study is done properly and safely there may be circumstances where this information must be released. By signing this form, you are giving the research team permission to share information about you with the following groups:

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;

- The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board;

Audio recordings will be stored in a password protected computer file for 5 years. The researchers may publish the results of the study. If they do, they will only discuss group results. Your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study. The focus group discussion is confidential to the group. Please do not share what is discussed outside the group.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University or Providence Classical Christian Academy. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You will be provided with a copy of this consent form for your records.

Contact: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Pamela Martin, (316) 688-1161 or plmartin1@shockers.wichita.edu or my advisor Dr. Eric Freeman, (316) 978-6392 (office phone) or eric.freeman@wichita.edu. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that:

- You have read (or someone has read to you) the information provided above,
- You are aware that this is a research study,
- You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction, and
- You have voluntarily decided to participate.

You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature indicates you have read the information provided above and have voluntarily decided to participate.

_____ I give consent to be audio recorded.

Signature of Participant

Date

Print Name of Participant

Title

Signature of Witness

Date

Print Name of Witness

Title