

Family Engagement in a Teacher Preparation Program

by

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ABSTRACT

There are many benefits for children, teachers, families, and schools when partnerships are formed between families and teachers. However, many new teachers are entering the teaching profession not feeling confident about communicating and engaging with parents. This lack of confidence stems from some teacher preparation programs not including curriculum that explicitly addresses how to communicate and engage with parents. The focus of this study was to investigate the extent to which four Family Engagement Trainings affected preservice teachers during their student teaching practicum. A quasi-experimental approach using an explanatory sequential mixed method action research design was used to measure changes in preservice teachers' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy regarding communicating and engaging with parents throughout the 19 weeks of the study. A survey instrument, personal meaning maps, and reflections were used to gather data. Results indicated the Family Engagement Trainings were effective in positively changing the preservice teachers' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER	
1 LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH	1
Definition of Key Terms	1
Larger Context	1
Situational Context	5
Family Engagement Trainings	8
Research Questions	8
2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GUIDING THE PROJECT	9
Benefits of Family Engagement	9
Preparing Preservice Teachers for Family Engagement	13
Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence	15
Self-Efficacy Theory	19
Implications from Theoretical Frameworks	22
Levels of Family Engagement Partnerships	23
3 METHOD	27
Research Methodology	27
Participants and Sampling	28
Innovation	29

CHAPTER	Page
Data Collection and Instruments	32
Data Analysis.....	35
Threats to Validity	37
4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	39
Effects of Family Engagement Trainings (FETs) on Knowledge (RQ1)	39
Effects of FETs on Self-Efficacy (RQ2).....	43
Effects of FETs on Value (RQ3).....	44
Effects of Implementing FET Strategies (RQ4).....	45
5 DISCUSSION	52
Complementarity and Interactions of Quantitativ and Qualitative Results	52
Connections to Theoretical Frameworks	55
Limitations	58
Recommendation for Practice	60
Implication for Future Research.....	61
Personal Lessons Learned	63
Conclusion	64
REFERENCES	66
APPENDIX	
A FACILITATOR’S GUIDES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TRAININGS	72
B FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY.....	82
C REFLECTION PROMPTS	87
D PERSONAL MEANING MAP RUBRIC	89

APPENDIX

Page

E INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD 91

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Levels of Family Engagement Partnerships with Example Indicators	25
2. Data Collection Instruments and Justification	33
3. Constructs Aligned to FES Items	34
4. Knowledge Construct Descriptive Statistics	40
5. Self-efficacy Construct Descriptive Statistics	44
6. Value Construct Descriptive Statistics	45
7. Qualitative Themes from TC Reflections	47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Epstein’s Overlapping Spheres of Influence of School, Family, and Community on a Child’s Learning	16
2. Example of PMM	47

CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."

-Helen Keller

Definition of Key Terms

Throughout this dissertation the terms *parent/parents* and *family/families* are used. These terms are used interchangeably and refer to the important adult stakeholders who help support the child's development, such as grandparents, foster parents, and aunts and uncles. In addition, the terms *engagement/involvement* are used interchangeably and refer to meaningful relationships that support children emotionally and academically.

Larger Context

The importance of a family engaging in their child's education is not a new issue (Hiatt-Michael, 1994; Tekin, 2011). Beginning in the 1920s, parent cooperative nursery schools were established, which invited parents, primarily middle-class stay at home mothers, to become active in preschool classrooms (Gestwicki, 2016). These preschools were based on the belief that parents know what they want for their children and therefore should be involved in the preschool (Gestwicki, 2016). During the Great Depression and continuing through World War II, the U. S. government started preschool programs to supplement children's nutritional and health care needs involving parents from lower socioeconomic and culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds (Gestwicki, 2016). Government funded preschools offered on-site healthcare with registered nurses, offered care for preschool

and school-aged children during the weekends and holidays, and prepared food for parents to buy and take home to feed their families (Gestwicki, 2016).

The first U.S. federally funded legislation that included parent involvement policies were Project Head Start in 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Gestwicki, 2016; Hiatt-Michael, 1994; Tekin, 2011). Both of these programs focused on improving educational opportunities for low-income families. From its beginning, Project Head Start emphasized parent participation and included detailed language for how parents would be involved in the school's decision-making through parent advisory councils (Fantuzzo et al., 2013; Hiatt-Michael, 1994; Mapp, 2012). Project Head Start required parent involvement, which included being a teacher's assistant, working in the school office, participating in parent education classes or any other school activity, such as chaperoning a field trip (Epstein, 2011; Hiatt-Michael, 1994). Although ESEA was not as specific as Head Start regarding parent involvement requirements, the legislation earmarked funds for schools to increase the involvement of parents (Watson, Sanders-Lawson, & McNeal, 2012). Parent involvement, according to ESEA, is any appropriate activity that will allow parents to work with the school to support their child's academic growth and development (Mapp, 2012). To help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged, low socio-economic students and their peers, Title I of ESEA was created to use federal funds (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Title 1 schools consist of at least 40% of the student population coming from low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Among the requirements to receive Title I funding include establishing partnerships between schools and parents. These partnerships are to consist of two-way meaningful communication that focuses on the

child's academic progress, to involve parents in the schools' planning and improvements, and to encourage parents to be actively involved in their child's education (Epstein et al., 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

In the 1990s, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) set school-family partnerships as a national goal for all schools. It required every state to develop policies to help local schools increase partnerships between schools and parents, especially parents with children who are minority, bilingual or disabled (Tekin, 2011; Watson et al., 2012). No policy was more specific regarding the role families should play in education than the reauthorization of ESEA in the form of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002). Established in 2002, NCLB connected the development of parent involvement policy with the receipt of federal dollars more than any other policy regarding this issue (Watson et al., 2012). According to NCLB, schools receiving Title I funds were required to distribute literature on effective family engagement to all families of children in the school. Furthermore, NCLB family engagement aspects were based on the principle that families, schools and communities working together increases student success (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies, 2007; Tekin, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). These principles were "accountability for results, local control and flexibility, expanded parental choice, and effective and successful programs that reflect scientifically based research" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 1). In other words, NCLB stressed accountability between schools and families for student achievement through policies and school-parent compact, expanded school choice and services for children in low-performing schools, and built families' ability to use research-based best

practices to improve their own child's academic achievement (Henderson et al., 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Most recently, ESEA was reauthorized in the form of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. This act requires districts to reserve at least one percent of Title I money for parent and family engagement activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). According to ESSA, school districts are required to develop goals for parent engagement, and schools that receive Title I funding are required to develop and report on their parent involvement policies (Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2016). School districts' parent engagement policies can include professional development for staff and faculty regarding parent engagement strategies, home-based programs to reach parents and families at their home, disseminating information to staff and faculty at schools regarding best practices for increasing family engagement, and collaborating with the community to increase family engagement (Henderson, 2018).

The aforementioned policies in support of family engagement draw justification from research indicating a positive association between family engagement in schools and academic success for children and adolescents (Hill & Taylor, 2004). For example, for young children, family engagement is associated with higher achievement in academic and language skills, as well as social and emotional development (Alameda-Lawson, 2014; Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Epstein, 1995; Hill & Taylor, 2004). For older students, research shows that family engagement is associated with better student attendance, higher graduation rates from high school, fewer retentions, and higher achievement scores on reading and math assessments (Epstein, 1995; Hiatt-Michael,

2002). The sooner families get involved, the greater likelihood of higher academic success for the child (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989).

In addition to the positive effects on children, family engagement also has positive influences on parents and schools. School-family partnerships can improve school programs by involving parents in the planning and implementation of these programs (Epstein, 1995; Henderson et al., 2007). These partnerships can also improve school climate by building trust and respect among school staff and families (Epstein, 1995; Henderson et al., 2007). Partnerships can additionally provide family services and support, increase parents' leadership skills, and connect families with others in the school (Henderson et al., 2007; Hill & Taylor, 2004). Furthermore, school-family partnerships can have a positive effect on parents' self-development and parenting skills (Epstein, 1995; Hill & Taylor, 2004).

With much attention on family engagement in schools and the known benefits of school-family partnerships, school districts and state governments are looking towards teacher education programs to teach preservice teachers strategies to communicate and engage parents in their classrooms (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015). When preservice coursework addresses family engagement, it typically involves preservice teachers participating in mock parent conversations, parent teacher conferences and integrating family engagement curriculum into courses (Brown, Harris, Jacobson, & Trotti, 2014; Evans, 2013).

Situational Context

Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU) was reported as one of the fastest rising top-tier colleges of education in the United States

(Arizona State University, 2015). The teacher preparation program, MLFTC at ASU, requires senior-year teacher candidates (TCs) to complete student teaching for two semesters in a public-school district while also being enrolled full-time in undergraduate academic courses. This full year of student teaching is known as the senior year residency (SYR). There are over 11 SYR sites across Arizona. Each site consists of a cohort of TCs studying to obtain teacher certification in elementary education, special education, bilingual education, early childhood education, or secondary education.

I have been a site coordinator for the MLFTC teacher preparation program in a local school district for a cohort of early childhood and early childhood special education (ECS) TCs since January 2012. Part of my job responsibilities as a site coordinator includes supervising student teaching experiences and teaching courses to TCs in the ECS program during their SYR. Once a week I teach two of the four courses the TCs take in each of their final two semesters. Within these courses, I model and teach strategies and methods to help them become effective teachers and future leaders of our schools. Each semester I also complete four unannounced walk-throughs while TCs teach in their student teaching placements. These walk-throughs are ten-minute observations of the TCs teaching skills that provide me with insight regarding how the TC is structuring and delivering lessons. Additionally, I complete two formal performance assessments each semester. Performance assessments consist of (1) preconference meeting with the TC, (2) in-person observation of the TC's classroom lesson, and (3) post-observation conference meeting with the TC. The purpose of the preconference is to review and discuss the TC's lesson plan prior to my observation of the lesson. During the in-person classroom observation, I examine and script the lesson discussed in the preconference, and

videotape the lesson for the TC to watch later that day to reflect on the lesson. The final part of the performance assessment is the post-observation conference. This conference allows me the opportunity to give the TC coaching suggestions to improve teaching strategies and allows the TC to discuss her reflection of the lesson.

During the post conference not only are the TCs coached on teaching strategies, but also on professionalism. The professionalism rubric used to evaluate TCs is comprised of nine indicators to gauge multiple elements, including TCs' relationships with others and their demonstrated ability to advocate for students. Two of the indicators focus on communicating with parents. To graduate, TCs are required to score at least a 3, *emerging*, on a 5-point scale on all nine indicators.

Many new teachers graduating from teacher education programs feel unprepared to engage families in their future classrooms (Markow & Martin, 2005) and early childhood ASU graduates indicate similar sentiments. Specifically, this lack of feeling unprepared is exhibited on the exit survey, which is distributed to all ECS TCs near the end of the program completion. One of the exit survey items prompts TCs with the statement, "How well do you think your teacher preparation program prepared you to: Work with parents and families to better understand students and to support their learning." Mean results of this survey item for ECS TCs graduating in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 was 3.49 on a 5-point Likert scale (K. Gordon, personal communication, June 16, 2017). These data underscore my problem of practice, which is ECS TCs feeling they are not adequately prepared to effectively communicate with and engage families. Based on my personal perceptions as well as research that I present in the following chapter, I conjecture that a deficient understanding of families contributes to a hesitation

to engage with families. This lack of knowledge likely contributes to a diminished sense of self-efficacy wherein TCs may believe they are unable to engage in successful relationships with families.

Family Engagement Trainings

To address the problem stated above, I believed the TCs will benefit by participating in research-based Family Engagement Trainings (FETs) during term 7, first semester of their senior year, that I designed. These trainings focused on teaching the TCs research-based strategies to engage with families in their own student teaching practicums. The FETs are fully explained in Chapter 3.

Research Questions

RQ1. To what extent does participating in FETs affect TCs' knowledge about best practices of family engagement?

RQ2. To what extent does participating in FETs affect TCs' self-efficacy to engage with families?

RQ3. To what extent does participating in FETs affect TCs' perceptions of the value of engaging with families?

RQ4. Regarding the implementation of the FET strategies...

- a. How do TCs implement the strategies?
- b. What value do TCs assign to the strategies?
- c. In what ways are TCs' self-efficacy affected by implementing the strategies?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GUIDING THE PROJECT

As described in Chapter 1, many TCs graduate from ASU feeling unprepared to effectively engage parents. Working toward the goal of addressing these sentiments of being ill-prepared, I explored four areas of research. In the first section of this chapter, the benefits of parent engagement are addressed, including those for students, parents, teachers, and schools. The second section discusses the lack of preparing preservice teachers during college to engage with families. Next, the theoretical frameworks that guide this study, the theory of overlapping spheres of influence and self-efficacy theory, are considered in the context of this action research project. Finally, the levels of parent engagement partnerships are explained to frame the innovation of this study.

Benefits of Family Engagement

Family engagement has received an increasing amount of attention in education research in recent years. To illustrate this point, an examination of Google Scholar revealed that publications that used the term *family engagement* increased ten-fold from 1999-2008 to 2009-2018. Family engagement is collaboration between home and school for purpose of improving children's academic success, enhancing the school's capacity to understand the culture of the school's families, and being more effective in meeting each child's needs (Watson, Sanders-Lawson, & McNeal, 2012). Family engagement partnerships are the shared responsibilities of families and schools for children's social, emotional and academic development (Epstein, 2011; Gestwicki, 2016).

Research shows that family involvement in schools is a vital component of children being successful in education (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Henderson et al.,

2007). In an examination of 16,425 kindergarten students, Galindo and Sheldon (2012) found that schools with greater family engagement resulted in higher levels of achievement in reading and math. Research suggests that students at all grade levels do better academically and have more positive school attitudes if their parents are involved and encouraging about school (Epstein, 1990; Henderson et al., 2007; Tran, 2014). Longitudinal studies show that family engagement in education has lasting effects on children's achievement in school regardless of class, ethnicity, gender, or age (Bernard, 2004; Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002). Family engagement in schools is related to greater academic achievement not only on classroom assignments but also on standardized tests (Alameda-Lawson, 2014; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011; Mattingly et al., 2002). For instance, Alameda-Lawson (2014) found that the standardized test scores for low-income, minority students were higher when parents participated in a parent engagement program.

Not only are students' academic achievement positively affected by family engagement, but there are other benefits as well. Studies show that families being involved is positively correlated with better student attendance, positive student attitudes toward education, and improved student behavior (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1987; Mattingly et al., 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Tangri & Moles, 1987). For example, in a longitudinal study of 47 elementary, middle schools, and high schools, Sheldon and Epstein (2002) found that regardless of the schools' prior rates of discipline, the more family and community involvement activities were implemented, the fewer students were disciplined. In addition, for young children, family engagement is associated with language skills and social emotional development (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Middle school students make better transitions between elementary and high school and have higher quality of work when their families are involved (Henderson et al., 2007). High school graduation rates have also been shown to improve when families are engaged within the students' education (Bernard, 2004). For instance, in a longitudinal study of 1,165 children from elementary school to the age of 20, Bernard (2004) found that family involvement in their child's education during the early years have positive benefits including graduating from high school (Bernard, 2004). Finally, children from diverse backgrounds do better academically and socially when families and teachers work together to bridge the gap between home and school cultures (Alameda-Lawson, 2014; Henderson et al., 2007).

Not only are there benefits for children when families are involved in their schooling, there are benefits for the families. Family engagement improves parenting skills, which can help families become better equipped to help their children on homework and other school-related activities (Epstein et al., 2002; Hill & Taylor, 2004;). As families establish relationships with school faculty and staff, they learn important information about the school's expectations for classroom behavior and homework. In addition, families learn how to help with homework and how to help children learn at home (Chung & Pomerantz, 2011; Tran, 2014). Family engagement also enables networking among multiple families to share information about school policies and practices, as well as extracurricular activities (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey, 1987). A final benefit of family engagement for families is that it typically prompts them to develop greater trust and respect for teachers and school personnel (Baker, Wise, Kelley, & Skiba, 2016; Brown et al., 2014; Warren, Hong, Rubin & Uy, 2009). For

instance, using a case study methodology studying three school communities, Warren, Hong, Rubin, and Uy (2009) found that parents felt a sense of empowerment when they were able to collaborate with the faculty and staff at schools.

In addition, family engagement has benefits for classroom teachers. Teachers feel more positive towards teaching and their school when families are involved (Brown et al., 2014; Epstein et al., 2002). They also feel a greater sense of efficacy as a teacher when they feel they are efficacious engaging parents in their classroom (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987). Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987) surveyed 1003 classroom teachers and found that home-school partnerships build teachers' sense of efficacy. Additionally, there are fewer conflicting relationships with their students (Brown et al., 2014). Engaging with families breaks down race and class hierarchies and supports the development of respectful family and teacher relationships (Mapp, Carver, & Lander, 2017). Moreover, when parents and teachers interact, teachers learn about parents' expectations for their children and parents learn about their children's teachers (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Finally, schools are positively impacted through family engagement. When families are involved in the school, they make it possible to expand the curriculum and instruction to increase the support to children (Epstein 199; Tangri & Moles, 1987). Schools have better reputations in the community due to higher levels of trust and respect from the families (Comer & Haynes, 1991) Furthermore, they are more successful at implementing school initiatives when families are involved (McAlister, 2013; Tangri & Moles, 1987).

Preparing Preservice Teachers for Family Engagement

Despite the importance of engaging with families, most teachers begin teaching without an understanding of effective practices to engage with families (Epstein, 1995). A MetLife Survey by Markow and Martin (2005) found that new teachers feel least prepared and most challenged to communicate and engage with parents. Survey results also indicated that 75% of new teachers found their relationship with parents to be unsatisfying (Markow & Martin, 2005). Although new teachers believe in the benefits, they feel they are not competent enough to engage with families (Alacam & Olgan, 2017; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987).

Meister and Melnick (2003) completed three separate in-depth reviews of 30 years of literature examining the transition of preservice teachers to in-service teachers. Among the primary concerns that emerged from their reviews was the finding that new teachers struggle with behavior management, motivating students, insufficient materials, differentiating coursework and relationships with parents (Meister & Melnick, 2003). Additionally, Meister and Melnick (2003) conducted a study with first- and second-year teachers around the United States regarding new teacher concerns. They found that 33% of new teachers do not communicate regularly with parents, 34% involve parents in their classroom activities, and only approximately half of the new teachers made it a priority to contact parents (Meister & Melnick, 2003). The development of the skills and strategies to effectively build relationships with families is not included in most many teacher preparation programs (Brown et al., 2014; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Uludag, 2008). Few states require teacher preparation programs to include the study of families and how families engage with schools (Flanigan, 2007). Broussard (2000) examined curriculum

for 116 college of education programs at universities and colleges throughout the United States and found that 42% of the early childhood certification programs, and less than 6% of the elementary certification programs, recommended a course on working with families. In addition, the few teacher preparation programs that mentioned families, defined engagement in vague terms (Broussard, 2000).

Additionally, de Bruïne and colleagues (2014) analyzed the teacher education curriculum from three different universities in Belgium, Netherlands, and the United States. They found that the curriculum of the three universities showed limited attention other than communication to family engagement. In the United States and Belgium, the family engagement content taught was limited to lectures, whereas the family engagement in the Netherlands was role-playing (de Bruïne, 2014). In addition, the research showed that family engagement was not assessed in any courses (de Bruïne, 2014). For those courses that included family engagement, the training was limited to the inclination of the instructor (de Bruïne, 2014). When college level courses do offer family engagement strategies, they are usually woven into courses for special education or reading; or offered as elective courses (Broussard, 2000; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Caspe, Lopez, Chu, & Weiss, 2011). Leading scholars assert that the strategies usually included in these courses are insufficient in depth. Typically, the strategies taught in the courses focus on facilitating parent conferences and including volunteers in classrooms. Whereas, to be effective, engagement strategies should focus on developing relationships with families or working with families to enhance the child's academic success (Brown et al., 2014; Epstein & Salinas, 2004). The information taught at some universities do not fully prepare preservice teachers to deal with the reality of engaging families to increase

student success (Casper et al., 2011). Furthermore, many preservice teachers' exposures to family engagement are theoretical and do not contain real-life application (Baum & Swick, 2008; Evans, 2013). Consequently, preservice teachers typically graduate feeling unprepared and lacking the necessary self-efficacy to engage families to participate in their children's education (Broussard, 2000).

Theoretical Frameworks

Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

It is important for TCs to understand the actions that people can take to engage families within their classrooms. Epstein's (1990) theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Figure 1) can help TCs understand these actions. Epstein highlights three important stakeholders in a child's environment and shows how they can have an influence in the education of a child.

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence explains the shared responsibilities of home, school, and community for a child's learning (Epstein, 1990, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002). Epstein's theory of school, family, and community partnerships puts the child in the center of the spheres. This is due to the fact that the child is the main stakeholder in school success (Epstein, 1990, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002). School, family and community partnerships cannot alone produce successful students. However, these partnerships can guide and motivate students to be successful in school because if a child feels cared for and supported then the child is more apt to work hard at school and remain in school (Epstein et al., 2002).

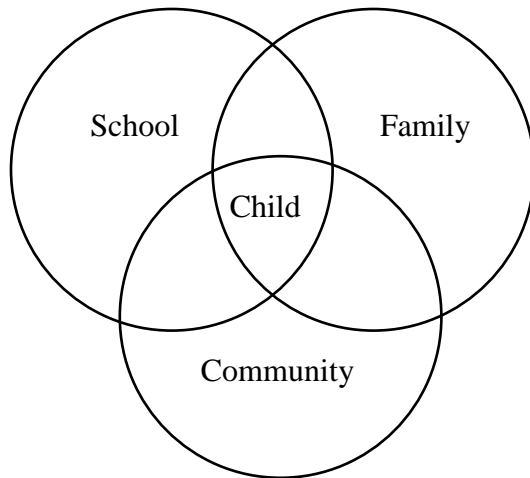


Figure 1. Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence of school, family and community on a child's learning.

The overlap of the spheres indicates influences of the stakeholders in a child's education are mutual and share similar characteristics. Epstein (1995) uses the terms *family-like* and *school-like* to explain how the child is supported academically in the overlap of the spheres between families and schools. In *family-like* schools, all families are welcome. The schools, like families, may individualize attention to make each child feel special (Epstein, 1990; Epstein et al., 2002). The overlap of spheres also shows that relationships between teachers and students are reciprocal and respectful (Epstein, 1990; Epstein et al., 2002). *School-like* families work together to support the child's academic needs (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002). These families teach their child the importance of school by creating *school-like* opportunities or events that reinforce academic success. Communities can create *family-like* settings that will enable families to better support their child (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002). Communities are groups, agencies and services that can support families and children. They can offer programs for students and families by taking into account the needs of the families in the community.

When executed with fidelity, after-school programs, community health fairs, and recreational activities are examples of programs that meet the needs of families. Through time and experience, these spheres may be drawn together or pushed apart (Epstein, 1990; Epstein et al., 2002).

As an example of the application of Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence, Galindo and Sheldon (2012) explored the relationship between family engagement and school outreach with students' achievement gains in reading and math in kindergarten. The researchers found students whose parents were more involved at school and who had higher education expectations at home had higher math and reading gains during kindergarten, regardless of their initial skills in the fall (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). They also found that schools' efforts to communicate and engage families predicted greater family involvement in school (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012).

Additionally, Haines, Gross, Blue-Banning, Francis, and Turnbull (2015) reported the results of two related studies. One study examined the perspectives of families developing partnerships with school staff and the other study examined the perspectives of community partners developing partnerships with school staff (Haines et al., 2015). Their synthesis of these two studies suggests that schools can form optimal family-community-school partnerships if they create a positive and inviting school culture, provide strong administrative leadership, show attributes of trusting partnerships (i.e., commitment, collaboration, and respect), and provide opportunities for shared partnership and involvement (Haines et al., 2015).

Within the three spheres of influence, Epstein posited six types of involvement that influence a child's academic success. These types of involvement identify the actions

that families, schools and communities can engage in to focus on a child's academic success. According to Epstein (1995), the six types of involvement are:

- Parenting: establish home environments to support a child's emotional development and academic success
- Communicating: design effective two-way communication from school to parents and from parents to school
- Volunteering: create opportunities for parents to be active within the school
- Learning at Home: provide parents with activities that will create a school-like environment at home
- Decision Making: include parents in the important decision making at schools and provide leadership opportunities for parents
- Collaborating with the Community: provide resources and programs from the community to strengthen school and family practices

The six types of involvement can guide the development of a balanced, comprehensive program of partnerships, including opportunities for family involvement at school and at home, with potentially important results for students, parents, and teachers (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et. al, 2002). Studies conducted with elementary, middle, and high schools using the six types of involvement show that when schools have high-quality family engagement programs, the parents become more engaged within the school. (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). This holds true even among parents with less education and/or lower incomes who in the past might not have become involved (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). Among the independent variables affecting parent

involvement in children's education, family engagement program quality is as important, and often more important, than family background variables such as race, ethnicity, social class, work status, or language spoken at home (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). Thus, it is important for preservice teachers to understand how the theory of overlapping spheres of influence and the six types of involvement can help them to create effective relationships with parents and the community.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (1977, 1993, 2000) states that people's perceptions of their ability, or self-efficacy, determine the goals they will set for themselves, their choice of activities they participate in, how much effort they will expend, and how long they will persevere during adverse experiences. What people achieve and their self-efficacy are differentiated, because people can believe that what they do might achieve a positive outcome, but if they doubt whether they can perform a task then that doubt will influence their behaviors (Bandura, 1977). In other words, people's self-efficacy will motivate and guide their actions (Bandura, 2000). For example, people who have low self-efficacy shy away from difficult tasks while those with high self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges (Bandura 1977, 1993). Bandura theorized that self-efficacy is malleable and can be positively reinforced by creating an environment that promotes success (Bandura, 2000). For example, creating a positive classroom environment that will allow the TCs to practice teaching math content so they can be successful when they teach it in their student teaching practicum likely affects self-efficacy.

According to Bandura (1977) there are four main sources that contribute to self-efficacy: (a) performance accomplishments, (b) vicarious experience, (c) verbal

encouragement, and (d) emotional states. Performance accomplishments are the most influential source that contributes to self-efficacy because people connect their actual experiences to possible future outcomes (Bandura, 1977). If a person believes that she has completed a task successfully, self-efficacy increases, and a precedent is established for future experiences. On the other hand, if a person does not complete a task successfully it can lead to lowered self-efficacy and future expectations of failure (Bandura 1977, 1993).

The second source of self-efficacy is vicarious experience. This source comes from observing and seeing other people perform or model tasks, especially if they are perceived as difficult (Bandura, 1977). Modeling with clear outcomes conveys more efficacy than those with ambiguous outcomes (Bandura, 1977). People can persuade themselves that if others can accomplish the task they should be able to do it too. This source of self-efficacy is a less dependable source about a person's capabilities than personal accomplishments (Bandura, 1977).

Another source of self-efficacy is verbal encouragement. Verbal encouragement is widely used because it is easy and readily available. People are persuaded, through encouragement, into believing they can complete a task or activity (Bandura, 1977). Persuading and encouraging individuals that they possess the ability to complete a certain activity results in them being more likely to put in the effort and sustain it when problems occur. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy derived from encouragement tends to be weaker than those experiences derived through performance accomplishments or vicarious experiences, as they do not provide an authentic experience.

The last source of self-efficacy, according to Bandura (1977), is emotional states. Emotional states influence self-efficacy. Stressful situations generally elicit emotions that, depending on the circumstances, might cause doubt in a person's competency. Avoidance of these stressful activities impedes development of self-efficacy resulting in a lack of competency (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, individuals are more likely to successfully complete an activity or task when they are not tense or stressed (Bandura, 1977).

Teacher self-efficacy is defined as a teacher's belief in his or her ability to be an effective teacher and to accomplish a specific teaching task in a given setting (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987; Jamil, Downer, & Pianta, 2012). However, it must be noted that self-efficacy is not an actual measure of competence, but a sense of confidence that a teacher expects to display under specific circumstances (Jamil et al., 2012). Research suggests that teachers with low self-efficacy may contribute to not engaging families in classrooms (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987).

In order to reduce teachers' low self-efficacy with engaging families, it is critical to begin with preservice teachers. Demonstrating this point, Amatea, Cholewa, and Mixon (2012) implemented a college course focusing on family engagement to elementary education preservice teachers. Three of the strategies that the course focused on were the preservice teachers' beliefs and expectations of the family's role in school, designing family-school activities to allow parents to have a meaningful role in the child's academic success, and collaborating with parents to problem solve (Amatea et al., 2012). The students participated directly and vicariously in learning experiences both in-class and outside of class to facilitate effective collaboration and partnerships with

parents (Amatea et al., 2012). They found after the 15-week course, the preservice teachers were more confident about involving families in their teaching practices (Amatea et al., 2012).

As further evidence that structured authentic activities can positively affect preservice teachers' self-efficacy, McLaughlin (2015) developed a Saturday Science Program with 27 early childhood preservice teachers. The preservice teachers were responsible to create a science activity that would engage the young students and their families that attended the Saturday enrichment program (McLaughlin, 2015). At the beginning of the study, preservice teachers were concerned that they would not be able to effectively communicate and engage with families about their activity (McLaughlin, 2015). After participating in the Saturday science program, preservice teachers reported positive changes in their self-efficacy to engage with parents (McLaughlin, 2015).

Implications from Theoretical Frameworks

Communicating and engaging families within classrooms is a difficult task for seasoned teachers and can be an insurmountable task for preservice teachers. Even though involving families in classrooms and schools has been a topic of discussion for decades, it still has not been happening in many of our schools (Child Trends, 2013; Warren et al., 2009). Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence asserts the importance of families and schools working together to ensure the success of children. Evidence indicates children benefit when family, school and community systems work together towards a common goal of academic achievement of children (Bernard, 2004; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Hiatt-Michael, 2001). Research also shows the importance of having preservice teachers engage in meaningful interactions with parents so they can

develop the skills and self-efficacy needed to develop positive relationships with families (Amatea et. al., 2012; Brown et al., 2014; Tichenor, 1997). In order for preservice teachers to develop self-efficacy to interact with parents, they need to have experiences to become confident. Therefore, preservice teachers need to be explicitly taught and modeled strategies and have authentic learning experiences engaging and communicating with families so they will feel confident and knowledgeable when they begin their teaching careers.

It is evident that explicit experiences focused on engaging and communicating with parents are needed to promote self-efficacy in TCs. Moreover, TCs need to understand the importance of working with parents to achieve academic success for the children in their current and future classrooms. The themes developed from the theoretical frameworks and related literature supports the development of my innovation and action research approach that I explain in the next chapter.

Levels of Family Engagement Partnerships

Based on the aforementioned findings, the level of family engagement partnerships is envisioned as a continuum ranging from *nascent* to *collaborative* partnerships. Having an awareness of the levels of family engagement partnerships will provide TCs with information to plan collaborative interactions with families to support the child academically, emotionally, and socially. The levels on this continuum are discussed in Table 1.

At the lowest or perfunctory level of the continuum is the *nascent* level of parent engagement. Schools that fall in the nascent level of partnerships view parents through a deficit lens. Faculty and staff at these schools feel that parents do not know what is best

academically for their child and only contact parents when they feel it is necessary, such as for an academic or behavioral problem. As a further example, schools in the nascent category might only mechanically offer obligatory parenting skill workshops. Schools at this level do not take the time to get to know the families of their students.

In the middle of the continuum is *participatory* level of family engagement partnerships. Participatory partnership schools view parents as important stakeholders in the child's academic success. Parents are invited to participate in their child's education through parent-teacher conferences, family engagement nights at the school, and volunteering at the school. Schools at this level might provide resources for families in need by having a resource center with food and clothing and offering courses for parents to learn English or to obtain their GED. At the participatory level, two-way communication between teachers and families is based upon how the child is doing academically or behaviorally.

Table 1

Levels of Family Engagement Partnerships, with Example Indicators

Construct	Level		
	Nascent	Participatory	Collaborative
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families on need to know basis about children's academics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families engaged at school level through parent-teacher conferences and family engagement nights throughout school year • Teachers send home reports of children's academics regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family strengths and resources drawn upon to improve children's social and emotional growth, and academics • Families and schools have continuous two-way communication about children's learning • Families and schools share the responsibility for students' academic success
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and school relationships are shallow • Schools have deficit thinking that families do not know best for their child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families invited to volunteer at the school or in the PTA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families, school staff, faculty and administration have a direct and open relationship • Schools actively engaging with families inside and outside of school • Families involved in all major school decisions • School faculty and staff complete home visits
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools offer workshops on parenting at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools offer family education courses • Schools have interpreters available for parent-teacher conferences or when asked for in advance • Schools have resource center for low-income families • Schools offer resources for families at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools offer courses for variety of family needs • Schools have interpreters available anytime families are present at school • Schools have resource center available for all families • Schools distribute information for families on resources available in the community • Schools offer social services to all families

Finally, at the advanced level of the continuum is *collaborative* level of family engagement partnerships. Schools, teachers, and families view the child's education as a shared responsibility by having continuous two-way communication to help improve the child's social, emotional, and academic growth. At this level, one would expect to find interpreters available at the school so families that do not speak English can communicate with the school and teachers. Families are involved in all aspects of the school by being a part of committees that make decisions for the school. Additionally, schools incorporate ways to engage and support families within and outside of the school. For example, teachers may go on home visits to the child's home or have information on community resources available for a variety of needs for the families. Collaborative level partnerships promote an open relationship between families, schools, and teachers.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology and methods in the context of how they address the research questions. In addition, the research design and innovation are presented. Finally, the data collection instruments and how the data from the instruments will be analyzed are discussed.

Research Methodology

This study is grounded in action research. Action research is a systematic inquiry done by practitioners to gather information to improve their professional setting (Mertler, 2017; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). Action research incorporates a cyclical research process where a practitioner identifies a problem or area of focus, implements an action or innovation, collects and analyzes data, reflects on the results of the data, and then begins again with a revised problem or focus (Mertler, 2017). Using action research allows me to be adaptive and integrate needed change while at the same time developing deeper understanding of TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy related to engaging parents.

A quasi-experimental approach was applied within an explanatory sequential mixed method design study. A quasi-experiment is an experimental method in which the researcher tests an innovation with a group of individuals already formed and then compares the results to a control group (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). The exploratory sequential mixed methods research design involves two phases of data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). In phase one, quantitative data was collected and analyzed to measure if there was change in the TCs' knowledge,

value, and self-efficacy regarding engaging families before and after the innovation.

During phase two, qualitative data was collected and analyzed to help explain and support the quantitative results as well as explore the TCs' perceptions more in depth.

Participants and Sampling

The participants of this study were recruited from the teacher preparation program at ASU and are ECS TCs during their SYR. During SYR, TCs are embedded within a local school district to student teach for an entire school year. The ECS program requires TCs to complete their student teaching practicum in two different classrooms: one semester in a special education classroom and the other semester in a general education classroom. Each of these placements are in grades kindergarten through third grade. When the TCs graduate, they will hold dual teaching certificates to teach in birth to third grade, general education or special education classrooms. The 56 TCs were placed within three cohorts to student teach during the 2019-20 academic year. These cohorts were based upon where they chose to student teach and whether they wanted to be paid or nonpaid during their student teaching. In the paid student teaching model, two TCs share one classroom without a mentoring teacher – essentially making the TCs the teachers of the classroom. The TCs have all the responsibilities of being a teacher such as teaching all day, report cards, parent-teacher conferences and attending all meetings. In the nonpaid student teaching one or two TCs were placed in a classroom with a teacher in the classroom full time. The three cohorts the TCs choose from are in school districts across the Phoenix area, which are Scottsdale Unified School District (nonpaid student teaching), Mesa Unified School District (paid student teaching) and Washington Elementary School District (paid and nonpaid student teaching).

The experimental group participants for this action research study were recruited from my cohort of ECS TCs during term 7, which is their first semester of student teaching. This population is chosen for this study since I am an ECS faculty member at the university in which I teach and supervise a cohort of TCs. TCs from the other two ECS cohorts were recruited to participate in the pre- and post-survey to act as a control group and help determine if the innovation has a discernible effect on the experimental group. During the fall semester of their senior year, TCs were enrolled in a course, ECS 478: Student Teaching in Early Childhood K-3. This course was taught weekly for one hour. The FETs (i.e., the innovation) was taught to the experimental group during four of the course periods throughout the semester.

Innovation

This study was based on authentic learning with learning reinforced through structured metacognitive reflection. Herrington and Oliver (2000) describe authentic learning as consisting of authentic activities, modeling of processes, collaborative construction of knowledge, and reflection and articulation of knowledge.

The innovation consisted of four FETs focusing on strategies the TCs used to engage families in their student teaching practicum classrooms which were adapted from the iTeachAZ Community Embeddedness Project funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The FETs were taught during Fall 2019 in four of the 15 ECS 478 course sessions throughout the semester. The TCs learned strategies based on Epstein's (2002) six types of involvement to implement in their own student teaching practicums. The FETs topics consisted of understanding the community in which TCs were student teaching, planning and facilitating family school events, creating home-school

connections with parents, and facilitating casual parent conversations that focus on developing a positive relationship. After each session, the TCs had the opportunity to role-play scenarios during class using the strategies taught in the FET. They also developed games and activities based on student achievement data for home-school connections. Brief point-in-time discussions occurred soon after implementation of the FETs.

After learning each research-based strategy, the TCs implemented the newly learned strategy with parents of students in their student teaching practicum classrooms. Before the TCs implemented the strategies, a discussion regarding the strategies took place via Zoom with the TCs' mentors regarding the four FET strategies to be implemented in their classroom and their thoughts regarding the strategies. After the discussion, all mentors were in support of allowing the TCs to implement the strategies in their classroom. Additionally, mentors were given a handout explaining each strategy that would be implemented with families in their classroom for their reference. The families that participated in the strategies were recommended by the mentor and gave their verbal consent to participate to the TCs and mentors. The four FETs are generally described in the following sections. A complete facilitator guide is provided in the appendix (Appendix A).

Understanding the Community FET. TCs learned how to be an ethnographer to determine a community's assets and non-assets through a nonbiased lens. They learned how to locate resources and community information online about their community, such as housing costs, median annual income, and unemployment rate. After the session, TCs worked in small groups to drive around the neighborhood and the community in which

their placement school is located. As they drove around the community, they noted assets and resources available in the community. Next, they constructed a community map consisting of the information they discovered during their drive and from their online investigation.

Planning and Facilitating Family Events FET. Many schools and school districts view family events as parent engagement. Therefore, it was important for TCs to understand the rationale behind having these events and how to implement a successful family event at a school. Hence, this FET focused on strategies to engage families and how to have casual interactions with parents during a family event night. In addition, it focused on how to become involved in school events.

Creating Home-School Connections FET. During this FET, TCs learned the importance of sharing academic data with parents. They learned how to talk about data to parents using vocabulary and terms parents readily understand. In addition, they learned how to develop activities aligned to the data such as addition games using cards. The week following the Home-School Connections FET, each TC brought data related to one student in their classroom to class and created their home-school connection activity. Some examples of activities that were created are using letter cubes to spell CVC words, making addition problems using dice, and playing BINGO to learn new vocabulary. After the activity was created, they rehearsed discussing the students' academic data and teaching the activity to other TCs. Finally, the TCs discussed the specific academic data and implemented the activity with a parent in their student teaching placement after a parent-teacher conference. Parents took the activity home to continue to work on the content area or skill with their child.

Facilitating Casual Parent Conversations FET. The emphasis for this professional development is to develop a positive relationship with parents by having a casual conversation, not focusing on academics, but focusing on the child. The following were the suggested questions that TCs asked the parents.

- What does your child do at home?
- What do you like to do as a family?
- What is your child passionate about?
- Does your child like school?
- How do you feel about the school and your child's learning?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your child?

In addition, TCs learned strategies to use when talking to parents, such as using positive body language and facial expressions, appropriate places to have casual conversations, and how to successfully begin conversations. TCs were encouraged to have this conversation outside of the classroom such as on the playground or at parent drop off/pick up.

Data Collection and Instruments

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected throughout Fall 2019. An instrument inventory is provided in Table 2.

Survey instrument. At the beginning and end of the semester, ECS TCs in all three cohorts were recruited to complete the Family Engagement Survey (FES). The FES was online and the majority of the items were Likert-type questions (Appendix B). Most surveys for family engagement focus on parents, teachers and school, but not preservice teachers. The FES was created specifically by the researcher for preservice teachers. It

included questions regarding knowledge of family engagement, self-efficacy towards engaging families, and what family engagement strategies are considered valuable. FES results were used to determine the degree to which the FETs affected change in the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy regarding engaging families.

Table 2

Data collection instruments and justification

Instrument	Administration Date	Justification	RQs Addressed (truncated)
Family Engagement Survey (experimental and control groups)	August, 2019 (pre)	Helped to gain an understanding of how the TCs changed over the course of the study in terms of their knowledge, value and self-efficacy towards family engagement	Effect of FETs on knowledge (RQ1), self-efficacy (RQ2), value (RQ3)
	November, 2019 (post)		
Personal Meaning Maps (experimental group)	August, 2019 (pre)	Helped to gain an understanding of how the TCs changed over the course of the study in terms of what they perceive to be family engagement strategies	Effect of FETs on knowledge (RQ1),
	November, 2019 (post)		
TC Reflections (experimental group)	Four times throughout the semester	Helped to gain an understanding of how the TCs perceptions of their self-efficacy to engage families changed over the course of the study	Ways FETs are used and effect on TCs (RQ4)

The FES is one of two tools used to address RQ1: *To what extent does participating in FETs affect TCs' knowledge about best practices of family engagement?*

The FES additionally serves as the primary means of collecting data to address RQ2: *To what extent does participating in FETs affect TCs' self-efficacy to engage and communicate with families?;* and RQ3: *To what extent does participating in FETs affect*

TCs' perceptions of the value of engaging with families? The FES assesses three constructs: *knowledge of family engagement strategies; self-efficacy towards engaging families; and perceived values of engaging families.* Example FES items for each construct are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Constructs aligned to FES items

Construct	Example FES Item
Knowledge of family engagement strategies	Please rate your familiarity with successful strategies for talking to families about their child's academic success.
Self-efficacy towards engaging families	Please rate your confidence in your ability to teach families strategies to work with their child at home on math.
Perceived values of engaging families	Please rate the degree to which you think having casual conversations with families is valuable to help teachers learn about the child and family.

Personal meaning maps. At the beginning and end of the Fall 2019 semester, ECS TCs in the experimental group constructed personal meaning maps (PMMs) on the topic of family engagement. A PMM is a variant of a concept map designed to measure how a learning experience affects each individual's understanding (Kalof, Zammit-Lucia; 2011; Judson, 2012; Whitely, 2013). The PMM established the TCs knowledge about family engagement before and after all four FETs. The PMMs were completed during our first and last course meeting dates during Fall 2019. In conjunction with the FES, data

from the PMMs served as a means to address RQ1: *To what extent does participating in FETs affect TCs' knowledge about best practices of family engagement?*

The PMMs assess one construct: *knowledge of family engagement strategies*. In August 2019, the TCs wrote the word *family engagement* in the middle of a blank sheet of paper. They used a black colored pen to write the strategies that they know and consider to be family engagement. In November 2019, the TCs were given back their PMM to add any additional knowledge on family engagement using a red colored pen.

TC Reflections. Four times during the semester, the TCs reflected about the FET strategies after implementing each with parents in their student teaching placement. The reflections were provided on written pages, typically about 400 words. The reflections served as a means to gain information regarding RQ4: *Regarding the implementation of the FET strategies, (a) how do TCs implement the strategies?; (b) what value do TCs assign to the strategies?; and (c): in what ways are TCs' self-efficacy affected by implementing the strategies?*

The reflections assessed two constructs: *perceived values of engaging families and self-efficacy towards engaging parents*. Qualitative data from the reflections were used to help explain and support the FES data. After each FET, TCs engaged families in their student teaching practicum using the strategy addressed. Once they implemented the strategy they reflected on the journal prompts (Appendix C).

Data Analysis

Survey Instrument. To assess overall TC dispositions, distribution of FES responses per item for the control group and experimental group was determined. Knowledge, Value, and Self-Efficacy scores were calculated as the sum of values on

corresponding Likert-scale items. Knowledge, Value, and Self-Efficacy score means and standard deviations for both the experimental and control groups were calculated.

To determine the comparability of the experimental and control groups, a comparison of the groups' pre-FES Knowledge, Value, and Self-Efficacy scores was conducted through a series of nonparametric Mann-Whitney U tests to determine equivalency at the beginning of the study. Nonparametric tests were used since data were not normally distributed (Field, 2016). Next, to evaluate the effect of the FETs on the experimental group, nonparametric Wilcoxon tests were applied to the pre- and post-FES for each construct to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the two surveys. Finally, nonparametric Mann-Whitney U tests were applied to determine if significant differences existed between the experimental and control groups' change scores. Three change scores were calculated as the difference between pre- and post-FES Knowledge, Value, and Self-Efficacy scores.

Personal meaning maps. Content was examined to determine the quantity of key phrases used as well as the big ideas that the TCs convey through the PMMs. Responses on the pre- and post-PMM were calculated by the quantity of pertinent phrases written down and given an Expression Score. For instance, the phrase "parent-teacher conference" was only calculated as one term. The PMM Rubric was used to gauge the TCs' depth of knowledge of family engagement and given a Depth Score (Appendix D). The Depth Score was classified and scored as *shallow(1)*, *traditional(2)*, or *informed(3)*. The calculated and rubric scores for each TCs' pre- and post-PMM was compared by running a Wilcoxon signed-rank test to assess if the TCs' knowledge of family engagement changed from August to November.

Reflections. The reflections were analyzed using qualitative analysis. After each reflection was submitted, the TCs' open-ended responses were coded using an emergent coding system. Once the reflections were all coded, the codes were categorized into themes. Common themes and themes that arose in response to implementing specific FET strategies are highlighted.

Threats to Validity

Validity of research data refers to the extent to which data accurately measures what it is believed to have measured (Brualdi, 1999; Mertler, 2017). The threats to validity that may affect this study are history, maturation, nonequivalence, and experimental effect.

History. History can result in a threat to internal validity. Events that occur that are not part of the independent variable can have an effect on the dependent variable (Smith & Glass, 1987). For my study, events that occur during my innovation, can affect my results. For example, parent engagement is now becoming a focal point for some districts and districts are incorporating professional development around this topic. Since the participants are placed throughout different school districts in the Phoenix area, they may participate in other professional development around this topic. If this occurs, it may affect my dependent variables (Smith & Glass, 1987). Since the study is using a quasi-experimental design, TCs in both the experimental and control group may receive a variety of family engagement professional developments that may affect this validity threat.

Maturation. Due to my study lasting a semester, maturation may be a threat to the internal validity of my research. The participants are student teaching during my

study. This increase of knowledge in family engagement may be due to the increase in their experiences with parents and growth in their confidence during their student teaching and not just due to the innovation.

Nonequivalence. Nonequivalence is differences in characteristics of the populations in the experimental and control groups (Smith & Glass, 1987). Teacher candidates have a choice between a few districts in which to student teach. I do not have a choice of which teacher candidates I will be teaching and supervising for the experimental group. Even though most of the teacher candidates are female, there may be differences in their ages, ethnic backgrounds and teaching experiences.

Experimental effect. Since I am the experimental group's supervisor and course instructor, they may feel my excitement towards the innovation and the topic. Therefore, the participants may score themselves higher on the post-survey instrument to please me. Not intentionally, I also may give them more support than I originally planned. To ensure that the post-survey instrument scores are accurate, I used additional data to measure the TCs' knowledge and self-efficacy throughout the semester using reflective journals and personal meaning maps.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Results of this study are organized according to the research questions:

RQ1. To what extent does participating in FETs affect TCs' knowledge about best practices of family engagement?

RQ2. To what extent does participating in FETs affect TCs' self-efficacy to engage with families?

RQ3. To what extent does participating in FETs affect TCs' perceptions of the value of engaging with families?

RQ4. Regarding the implementation of the FET strategies...

a. How do TCs implement the strategies?

b. What value do TCs assign to the strategies?

c. In what ways are TCs' self-efficacy affected by implementing the strategies?

Effects of Family Engagement Trainings (FETs) on Knowledge (RQ1)

To address Research Question 1, items comprising the *knowledge construct* on the Family Engagement Survey (FES) were examined. The *knowledge construct* is comprised of five Likert scale items rated on a 1 to 4 scale, with higher scores representing greater self-reported knowledge. Changes in *knowledge construct* scores were analyzed from pre- to post- for the experimental and control groups. Additionally, *knowledge construct* comparisons between the experimental and control groups were evaluated. Data were further explored through personal meaning maps (PMMs) to specifically understand what FET elements resonated with the TCs.

Effects on knowledge as measured by the FES. As described in Chapter 3, the 19 question FES was administered to a control group ($n = 25$ [pre]; $n = 21$ [post]) and an experimental group ($n = 21$) in August 2019 before the experimental group participated in the four FETs. Four of the 25 participants in the control group did not respond to the post-survey. The FES was administered again as a post-assessment to both groups in November 2019. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the *knowledge construct* for the pre- and post-FES for the control group and experimental group (Table 4). The possible range of scores for the *knowledge construct* was 5 to 20 (i.e., five 1 to 4 Likert-scale items). Table 4 reveals the mean score for the experimental group increased substantially more than the control group's mean score. When comparing this pre- to post- *knowledge construct* change between the control and experimental groups, Mann-Whitney U tests indicated growth of the experimental group was significantly greater than growth of the control group ($p \leq .001$).

Table 4

Knowledge Construct Descriptive Statistics

Group	n	Mean	SD
Pre-FES Control	25	14.62	3.12
Pre-FES Experimental	21	15.64	2.36
Post-FES Control	21	15.38	2.31
Post-FES Experimental	21	18.86	1.46

Moreover, related to the data presented in Table 4, the groups were examined separately to assess if pre to post *knowledge construct* growth was significant. Wilcoxon

signed-rank tests indicated the change for the control group was not significant ($p = .428$); however, there was statistically significant change for the experimental group ($p \leq .001$).

Effects on knowledge as measured by the PMMs. Similar to the FES, pre- and post-PMM data were collected from the experimental group. The PMMs prompt TCs to reveal their knowledge about family engagement before and after the four FETs by having the TCs write words or phrases regarding what they know about family engagement as a pre-assessment using a black pen and then adding to their concepts after completion of the FETs using a red pen. An example is provided in Figure 2 of one TC's PMM wherein the words and phrases that were added on the post-PMM are enclosed within dashed lines.

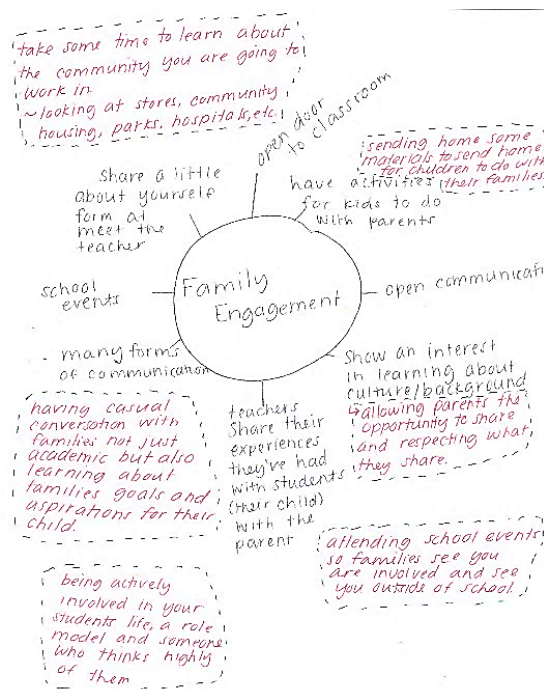


Figure 2. Example of PMM

PMMs were evaluated in two ways. First, an Expression Score was calculated on the pre- and post-PMMs by totaling the number of pertinent phrases written down. These phrases broadly represented knowledge and understandings. For instance, the phrase "attending school events so families see you are involved and see you outside of school" from Figure 2 was calculated as one relevant phrase. The TCs' most reported family engagement ideas were *creating a home-school connection activity binder*, *participating in family events hosted at the school*, and *involving families through volunteering opportunities in the classroom and school*. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated there was a statistically significant change in Expression Scores from pre- to the post-PMM ($p \leq .001$).

Second, the PMM Rubric (Appendix D) was used to determine TCs' depth of knowledge of family engagement, thus yielding a Depth Score. Depth of knowledge was classified and scored as *shallow (1)*, *traditional (2)*, or *informed (3)*. PMMs rated as *shallow* focused on elements such as report cards and e-mail to families about academic struggles. PMMs rated as *traditional* focused on elements such as family engagement nights, parent-teacher conferences, and newsletters with activities to do at home to support content taught in class. PMMs rated as *informed* focused on elements such as open two-way communication, meeting family needs by providing resources, and connecting school and home through resource binders. Depth Scores for each TC's pre- and post-PMM were compared by applying a Wilcoxon signed-rank test to assess if depth of knowledge of family engagement changed after participating in the FETs. The mean Depth Score increased from 1.81 to 2.52 and this was a statistically significant change ($p \leq .001$).

Effects of FETs on Self-Efficacy (RQ2)

To address Research Question 2, items comprising the *self-efficacy construct* on the FES were examined. The *self-efficacy construct* is comprised of nine Likert scale items rated on a 1 to 6 scale, with higher scores representing greater self-reported self-efficacy. Changes in *self-efficacy construct* scores were analyzed from pre to post for the experimental and control groups.

Effects on self-efficacy as measured by the FES. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the *self-efficacy construct* for the pre- and post-FES for the control group and experimental group (Table 5). The possible range of scores for the *self-efficacy construct* was 9 to 54 (i.e., nine 1 to 6 Likert-scale items). Table 5 reveals the mean score for the experimental group increased more than the control group's mean score. When comparing pre- to post- *self-efficacy construct* change between the control and experimental groups, Mann-Whitney U tests indicated growth of the experimental group was significantly greater than growth of the control group ($p = .011$).

Furthermore, the control and experimental groups were examined separately to measure if pre to post *self-efficacy construct* growth was significant. Wilcoxon signed-rank tests indicated the change for the control group was not significant ($p = .397$); however, there was statistically significant change for the experimental group ($p \leq .001$).

Table 5

Self-efficacy Construct Descriptive Statistics

Group	n	Mean	SD
Pre-FES Control	25	43.20	6.58
Pre-FES Experimental	21	41.81	8.50
Post-FES Control	21	44.05	5.01
Post-FES Experimental	21	48.81	3.42

Effects of FETs on Value (RQ3)

To address Research Question 3, items comprising the *value construct* on the FES were examined. The *value construct* is comprised of five Likert scale items rated on a 1 to 4 scale, with higher scores representing greater self-reported value. Changes in *value construct* scores were analyzed from pre- to post- for the experimental and control groups.

Effects on value as measured by the FES. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the *value construct* for the pre- and post-FES for the control group and experimental group (Table 6). The possible range of scores for the *value construct* was 5 to 20 (i.e., five 1 to 4 Likert-scale items). Table 6 reveals the mean score for the experimental group increased slightly, whereas, the control group's mean score decreased slightly. When comparing pre- to post- *value construct* change between the control and experimental groups, Mann-Whitney U tests indicated growth of the experimental group was not significantly different than growth of the control group ($p = .542$).

Additionally, the control and experimental groups were examined separately to measure if pre to post *value construct* growth was significant. Wilcoxon signed-rank tests indicated the change for the control group was not significant ($p = .829$) and the change for the experimental group was not significant ($p = .198$).

Table 6

Value Construct Descriptive Statistics

Group	n	Mean	SD
Pre-FES Control	25	19.40	0.76
Pre-FES Experimental	21	19.10	1.26
Post-FES Control	21	19.14	1.39
Post-FES Experimental	21	19.52	0.75

Effects of Implementing Family Engagement Trainings (FETs) Strategies (RQ4)

To address the three parts of Research Question 4, qualitative data were collected from the TCs' reflections. Four times during the semester, the TCs provided written reflections to prompts regarding (a) their implementation of the FET strategies, (b) the value of the FET strategies, and (c) their self-efficacy about implementing the FET strategies with parents in their student teaching placement. The reflections were examined holistically to assess RQ4a (how strategies were implemented). To address RQ4b (value assigned to strategies) and RQ4c (effect on self-efficacy), qualitative data from the written responses to the prompts were analyzed. Prevalent themes that arose in the qualitative data are highlighted in Table 7. A theme was defined as prevalent if it

emerged on at least five TC reflections (i.e., one-fourth of the reflections) on one or more of the reflection sets.

Implementation of FETs (RQ4a). Implementation of the strategies (RQ4a) aligned with the expectations taught during the FETs. For example, TC number 11 wrote regarding the Home-School Connection strategy she “implemented the home school connections strategy with one of the families in my placement. I created an activity binder to help one of my students practice her ELA goal at home.” Additionally, for the Facilitating Casual Parent Conversations strategy TC number 21 wrote, a parent “stood on the playground under the shade by herself. So, I decided to have a casual conversation with her.”

Value gleaned from FETs (RQ4b). To assess the *value* TCs garnered from the strategies promoted by each FET (RQ4b), responses to the following prompt were analyzed: *Was implementing this family engagement strategy valuable to you? Why or why not?* After each reflection was submitted, the TCs' open-ended responses were coded using an emergent coding system. Codes were then categorized into themes. Responses within each theme were tabulated and organized per FET (Table 7).

Table 7

Qualitative Themes from TC Reflections

Themes	<i>n</i>			
	FET1	FET2	FET3	FET4
Value				
Learning about community and resources				
around school	16	0	0	0
Understanding students and families better	7	5	0	21
Beneficial to support student learning	5	0	0	6
Connecting with families	0	13	13	0
Gaining confidence engaging with families	0	7	9	0
Including families in the students' education	0	0	12	0
Self-efficacy				
Understanding how to support students' needs	8	0	6	16
Furthering relationships with families	0	16	0	7
Understanding how to engage families	0	0	12	0
Knowing strategies to understand the				
community	12	0	0	0
Understanding the community of the school	0	5	0	0

FET1 = Reflection of Understanding the Community FET strategy

FET2 = Reflection of Planning and Facilitating Family Events FET strategy

FET3 = Reflection of Creating Home-School Connections FET strategy

FET4 = Reflection of Facilitating Casual Parent Conversations FET strategy

Regarding the first FET, Understanding the Community, TCs indicated they most valued learning about the community and resources surrounding the school, understanding students and families better, and felt the strategy was beneficial to support student learning. Sixteen TCs noted that the strategy helped them learn about the community surrounding the school. TC #12 affirmed this by writing, “This strategy was valuable to me because it gave my group and me the opportunity to research not only the families that we will be working with during our student teaching career this year, but the area around the school and neighborhood that the families live in.”

For the second FET, Planning and Facilitating Family Events, many of the TCs valued understanding students and families better, connecting with families, and gaining confidence engaging with families. TC #6 indicated, participating in the family event “gave me the chance to further develop my relationship with my students and their families.” This statement aligns with five TCs feeling that family events helped them to connect with families. Additionally, one-third of the TCs gained confidence engaging with families. This was noted by TC #13 writing, “This strategy was valuable to me as it helped bring me out of my shell with regards to working with parents and school staff.”

Additionally, for the third FET, Creating Home-School Connections, TCs indicated they most valued connecting with families, gaining confidence to engage with families and including families in the students’ education. Thirteen TCs felt the strategy of Creating Home-School Connections helped them to connect with families. TC #5 confirmed that the strategy helped the connection with families by writing, “I think that this strategy was a good start to connect with the student’s family outside of school and to show just a little more support.”

Finally, the fourth FET, Facilitating Casual Parent Conversations, had two prevalent themes. One theme, TCs valued understanding students and families better, was valued by all of the TCs, while the other theme, beneficial to support student learning, was valued by some. Both of these themes were prevalent in TC #1's reflection, "From this conversation, I got to learn more about my student and hear more about her home life and some of the challenges she is currently facing."

Self-efficacy effects (RQ4c). To assess effects on *self-efficacy* due to implementing FET strategies (RQ4c), responses to the following prompt were analyzed: *How confident do you feel to implement this strategy in the future? Why?* Similar to the method applied to assess *value*, TCs' open-ended responses in each reflection were coded using an emergent coding system and then categorized into themes (Table 7).

Furthermore, the confidence stage for each response was categorized into one of four levels: *extremely confident*, *very confident*, *confident*, *fairly confident*. These stages were based upon exact words the TCs used in their reflections. All TCs expressed one of the four stages specifically in their responses.

For the first FET, Understanding the Community, over a third of the TCs indicated their self-efficacy increased in *understanding how to support students' needs* and over half of the TCs indicated their self-efficacy increased in *knowing strategies to understand the community*. This increase in self-efficacy of *knowing strategies to understand the community* was noted by TC #18, "This activity has given me the resources to get information about the community, the questions to ask, and the specifics to look for when trying to find out about a community." Of the 21 TCs, 29% felt

extremely confident or *very confident* and 71% felt *confident* or *fairly confident* to implement the first FET's strategy in the future.

The second FET, Planning and Facilitating Family Events, had two prevalent self-efficacy themes emerge: *furthering relationships with families* and *understanding the community of the school*. Sixteen TCs stated that Planning and Facilitating Family Events strategy helped them to *further their relationships with families*. This is noted in TC #17's reflection, "I feel confident because of the results that I got after talking with the parents. I felt closer to them and the students and I felt like they made the connection with me as well." For the Planning and Facilitating Family Events strategy, 29% *felt extremely* or *very confident* and 71% felt *confident* or *fairly confident* to implement it in the future.

In regards to the third FET, Creating Home-School Connections, TCs gained confidence in *understanding how to support student needs* and *understanding how to engage families*. *Understanding how to support student needs* was stated in six reflections. In one reflection, TC #21 noted how she will use the Home-School Connections strategy to *support students' needs* in her own classroom when stating, "In the future, I would use this for my students and try to send all students home with binders that have activities to fit their needs." TC # 14 reflected on *understanding how to engage with families* by writing "this gave me the confidence and a strategy to work with parents." Ten percent of the TCs felt *extremely confident*, 52% felt *very confident*, 14% felt *confident*, and 24% felt *fairly confident* to implement this strategy in future classrooms.

Finally, for the fourth FET, Facilitating Casual Parent Conversations, many TCs indicated their self-efficacy increased in *understanding how to support students' needs* and *furthering relationships with families*. Sixteen TCs felt that facilitating casual conversations helped them to *understand how to support the students' needs*. This was affirmed by TC #19 who wrote, "I love having the insight and knowledge from parents to better understand their beliefs, their child and to be better equipped to be the best teacher I can be." Forty-three percent of the TCs felt *very confident*, 52% felt *confident* and 5% felt *fairly confident* to implement casual conversations with families in the future. However, none of the TCs felt *extremely confident*.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The problem driving this research was TCs feeling inadequately prepared when graduating to communicate and engage with families. To address this issue, Family Engagement Trainings (FETs) were developed to teach and model research-based strategies to communicate and engage with families. The FETs were then implemented in the TCs' student teaching practicums. This study was designed to examine the effects of the FETs on the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families.

This chapter discusses the interactions of the quantitative and qualitative results and how the goals of the study were met. Additionally, discoveries that emerged related to theoretical frameworks will be discussed, as well as how they may inform future practice and research. Finally, limitations and personal lessons learned are explained.

Complementarity and Interactions of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

For this research study, a mixed methods approach for data collection and reporting was used for purposes of complementarity. Complementarity between quantitative and qualitative data serves to elaborate, enhance, or broaden relationships and interpretations between each type of data in a way to complement the other (Green, 2007). Results from this study reveal complementarity regarding the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families. Analysis of all data sources, including the FES, PMMs and reflections, suggests that participating in the four FETs and implementing the research-based family engagement strategies in their student

teaching practicums was effective in positively influencing the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families.

Coherence was evident in the results from this study in improving the TCs' knowledge of self-efficacy. The quantitative data from the FES indicated that there was a significant change in the experimental group's knowledge and self-efficacy engaging with families. However, the change for the control group's knowledge and self-efficacy was not significant. Many of the experimental group's TCs indicated on the FES that they now have a lot of knowledge regarding having casual conversations with parents and developing strategies for families to use at home to help increase their child's academic performance at school. Additionally, all TCs indicated on the post-FES that they feel confident in their abilities to teach families strategies to work with their child at home, communicate with families about how their child is doing in school, and encourage families to talk to them whenever they have a concern about their child.

The significant change in the experimental group's TCs' knowledge was also reflected in the data collected from the PMMs. There were more pertinent phrases written on the post-PMM than the pre-PMM. Additionally, there was a significant change in their Depth Score indicating their knowledge of family engagement increased from participating in the FETs.

Connections between the qualitative and quantitative data indicated coherence. Qualitative data collected from the reflections the TCs wrote after implementing the research-based strategies taught in the FETs support the findings of the quantitative data regarding the TCs' self-efficacy. All TCs indicated they were engaging and

communicating with families after the implementation of each of the strategies. Many also stated they feel confident in implementing the strategies in their future classrooms.

Quantitative data from the FES indicated there was not a significant change for either group in valuing family communication and engagement. All TCs in the experimental group indicated on the pre-FES it was *very valuable* communicating with families to further their student's academic success. In addition, they indicated it was *valuable* or *very valuable* to facilitate family engagement to improve children's behavior issues in class and creating strategies and share with families to further their child's academic success. With the TCs indicating they already value communicating and engaging families in the pre-FES, the scores on the post-FES was positively affected but only minimally.

Additionally, the qualitative data from the reflections corroborates the TCs value communicating and engaging with families. Understanding students and families was the most common theme the TCs valued after engaging with families in three of the four FET reflections.

The sum and coherence across the data collected throughout the study demonstrates the success of the FETs in positively influencing the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy communicating and engaging with families. The theoretical frameworks were used to guide the FETs, Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence and Bandura's self-efficacy theory, were critical to the development and success.

Connections to Theoretical Frameworks

Incorporating aspects of Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence and Bandura's self-efficacy theory into the design of the FETs emerged as a contributing factor to the improvements in the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families. Informed by broader literature about engaging families and increasing self-efficacy, the FETs were structured to include qualities of theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et. al, 2002) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura 1977, 1993). The following sections outline how these theoretical frameworks played out in this research and contributed to the FETs and participating TCs.

Relevance of theory of overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein's (1995) theory of overlapping spheres of influence posits it is the shared responsibility of a child's home, school, and community to support the child's learning. Thus, the FETs were developed to form a partnership between the TCs and students' families to not only support the learning of the students but to increase the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families. Furthermore, the FETs gave the TCs opportunities to engage with families at school and outside of the school environment.

Additionally, the six types of involvement within the theory of overlapping spheres of influence helped to guide the development of the comprehensive FETs. The six types of involvement include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Communicating with families was integrated into three FETs: Planning and Facilitating Family Events, Creating Home-School Connections, and Facilitating Casual Parent Conversations. This

allowed the TCs at least three opportunities to develop two-way communication with families to help increase the TCs' knowledge and self-efficacy and to understand the value in communicating with families. Learning at home was integrated into Creating Home-School Connections. The TCs provided families with activities that would help to create a school-like environment at the students' home thus giving the TCs another opportunity to increase their knowledge, value, and self-efficacy engaging with parents. Finally, collaborating with the community was integrated in Understanding the Community FET. Epstein (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et. al, 2002) states that collaborating with the community is providing resources to families. For this FET TCs did not provide resources for families, but they learned how to research and view resources in the community allowing them to increase their knowledge about the families that attended the school where their student teaching practicum was located. Epstein's parenting, volunteering and decision-making types of involvement were not included in FETs. These types of involvement revolve around school, not teacher, action and decisions.

The quantitative data collected from the FES and PMMs suggests the TCs increased their knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families over the course of the study by participating in the FETs and implementing the family engagement strategies. The reflection data reveals the family engagement strategies allowed the TCs the opportunity to understand families and to connect with families. For example, for the Planning and Facilitating Family Events FET, TC#17 wrote, "I feel like this strategy really helped me to become closer with the families at my school and gave me the chance to communicate with them in a setting where they were not pressured by academics." Additionally, the TCs realized the importance and benefits

of partnering with families by including them in the child's education. This was apparent when TC #7 wrote about partnering with parents for the Home-School Connection FET, "This helps the parents and teacher relationship make a positive influence on the students' progress."

Relevance of self-efficacy theory. Bandura (2000) theorized by creating a positive successful environment self-efficacy can be positively influenced. The FETs promoted a successful environment by integrating Bandura's (1977) four sources that contribute to self-efficacy: (a) performance accomplishments, (b) vicarious experience, (c) verbal encouragement, and (d) emotional states. Performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, and emotional states were achieved by modeling the strategies, allowing the TCs to practice them during the FETs to become confident with the strategies before implementing them in their student teaching practicum. Verbal encouragement was given during the FETs while the TCs practiced implementing the strategies. The increase in self-efficacy was shown in the TCs reflections. TC#9 affirmed this by writing, after completing the Facilitating Casual Parent Conversations strategy she felt "confident in implementing it again because the questions were geared towards success in learning about the student." Additionally, TCs felt their self-efficacy was positively influenced in furthering their relationships with families and understanding families. Reflecting on understanding families, TC #12 wrote that implementing the Understanding the Community strategy allowed her to "be more understanding of the families and students I will be working with." Furthermore, the data collected from the FES showed there was a significant increase in their self-efficacy scores.

Overall, the data indicates integrating facets of the theory of overlapping spheres of influence and self-efficacy theory into the design and implementation of FETs contributed to the improvements to the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families in their student teaching practicums.

Limitations

Using an action research approach in this study allowed a better understanding of my TCs and how to help them positively influence their knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families. However, as with any study, there are factors that may have influenced the outcomes of the research.

Research limitations. As insightful as the research study was, the small sample size and the use of only one school district for the TCs' student teaching practicum prevents the implications from being generalizable. Although a control group was used, the districts and student teaching experiences were very different. The experimental group experienced a typical student teaching experience by being placed in a classroom with the classroom teacher as the mentor. The mentor was always in the classroom coaching the TC. Many of the TCs in the control group were the actual teacher of the classroom and the mentor was only in the classroom sporadically throughout the day to coach the TC. Additionally, the TCs of the control group were being paid a stipend since they were the teacher of the classroom, whereas, the experimental group was not paid. Furthermore, this study was conducted in a real, functioning school district. Throughout the course of the research, there were many opportunities for the TCs to gain other family engagement strategies through their student teaching experience and PD opportunities provided by the school district.

Participant limitations. As stated above, the TCs in the experimental group were placed in a classroom where a mentor teacher was always present in the classroom. With this continued support by mentor teachers, TCs could focus solely on implementing the family engagement strategies without juggling other teaching responsibilities. Additionally, mentor teachers were able to support TCs when implementing the strategies. Finally, the TCs chose which families participated in their strategies. The mentor teachers could inform the TCs regarding which families would be more open to participate in the strategies thus increasing the success of implementing them.

In addition to the mentor support, the participants may have felt the need to do well for me since I am their instructor for courses and their student teaching supervisor. I have been the course instructor for many of the TCs for the past two years so a professional as well as personal relationship has developed. Furthermore, the TCs may have felt my excitement for the family engagement strategies and wanted me to have positive results for my research.

Though the differences of student teaching experiences between the control and experimental groups, lack of controlled settings, small sample size, mentor support, and relationships with the TCs somewhat limit the applicability of this study and prevent the ability to say with certainty the FETs were the only contributors for improvement among the TCs knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families, the quantitative and qualitative data support these conclusions and lend credibility to the results.

Recommendation for Practice

Using trainings to teach and model family engagement strategies was beneficial. Prior to participating in the FETs, data from exit surveys upon graduating from ASU indicated TCs felt the college did not adequately prepare them to communicate and engage with families. However, after participating in the FETs, the experience positively influenced the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families. TCs described the implementation of the strategies as valuable, enjoyable, and felt confident to implement the strategies in the future.

Based on the results of the study, I plan to continue to implement the FETs with future cohorts of TCs in ECS and hopefully expand the use of the FETs to other site coordinators and cohorts of TCs. I will also consider developing other FETs to model additional family engagement strategies. Furthermore, the FETs can be modified to be used in other teacher preparation courses that students take before entering their student teaching.

Moreover, I believe this study has implications for practice beyond my own situated context as other colleges of education begin to integrate family engagement strategies within their teacher preparation program courses. As stated in Chapter 2, few colleges include curriculum in their teacher preparation programs related to teaching preservice teachers how to communicate and engage with families (de Bruïne, 2014). If teacher preparation programs begin to integrate family engagement strategies within their curriculum, using the FETs can help to guide the content and strategies integrated into the courses. Additionally, the FET model could serve as a guide for teacher preparation

programs to develop other family engagement strategies to integrate into their curriculum.

Implications for Future Research

Results from this study suggest three main areas of future research. The first area pertains to longitudinal data collection. The study was only one semester in length which only allowed the TCs to implement each strategy one time. Longitudinal data could be collected to see if their knowledge, value, and self-efficacy continued through their second semester of student teaching, and, ultimately, into their first year of teaching. Longitudinal data could also be collected to compare the knowledge, value, and self-efficacy of the control group and experimental group to measure if the significant differences continue between the two groups.

Another area of implication for further research is to look at the effect of the strategies holistically by including mentor teachers and families in the data collection. I received comments from mentor teachers about the strategies, but these comments were not included in the data collection process. Additionally, TCs received letters and emails from families expressing their thoughts on the strategies. It would be beneficial to include these other stakeholders in the research to gain other perspectives on the effectiveness and value of the FET strategies.

Further research could be extended to other cohorts of TCs at MLFTC or other colleges of education to see if the FETs are successful in different programs such as elementary or secondary and to see if they are successful at different universities. Parents of children in younger grades tend to be more apt to be involved in their children's schooling than parents with older students. It would be beneficial to see if TCs in older

grade levels similarly experience an increase in knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to engage and communicate with parents. Additionally, researching the impact of the FETs on TCs in other universities would be valuable to see if the content is transferrable to other college of education programs.

Lastly, further research could include examining the process of the TCs creating the home-school connection activities and disseminating the information. For this research, each TC collected data for a specific student and then examined the data to determine a skill in which the student needed additional help. Next, the TCs developed at least three activities that provided additional practice on the chosen skill. Binders were created for each student that included the activities and materials needed to complete the activities. One example of an activity that was developed was creating tiles that had rimes on them (e.g., at, it, un) and then cubes with single letters. The student made words by picking a rime and rolling the cube to get the beginning letter of the word. The student wrote the word, drew a picture of the word, or wrote a sentence using the word. Finally, TCs met with parents after discussing the data during a parent-teacher conference, modeled the home-school connection activities, and allowed the parents to take home the home-school connection binder. Future research could include how specific students and skills were identified and how the activities were chosen for the home-school connections. Furthermore, research could include the steps how the information was disseminated to the parents. This research would be beneficial to see the consistency of creating and discussing the home-school connections, as well as, refining and replicating the process for future preservice and classroom teachers.

Personal Lessons Learned

I have been a practitioner in the field of education for over 25 years with eight of the years in higher education. My understanding of teaching in higher education was to follow the syllabus and do what other instructors have done. The only family engagement component to my courses was in the student teaching course when the TCs completed a unit plan. There was one component to the unit plan that stated “What is the plan for closure and to be public and celebrate the end of the unit plan/project?” This only implies families should be involved, but does not specifically state that families need to be engaged in the unit. Additionally, I only found one other course the TCs took before becoming a senior that asked them to communicate and engage with families.

As a classroom teacher, I engaged with families often, but it was not until I was involved in a grant at ASU that I realized the importance of modeling and teaching specific strategies to preservice teachers to communicate and engage with families. I often heard my TCs stating they were nervous to communicate with families and did not know how to engage with them. Previously, I addressed these statements each year with a quick discussion during one class period on strategies without modeling them and without the expectation of the TCs implementing them. Participating in the grant showed me the value of developing specific strategies to allow the TCs to communicate and engage with families. Additionally, the data from the exit survey the TCs take when graduating from ASU stating they do not feel adequately prepared to effectively communicate and engage with families solidified the need for family engagement strategies to be an essential component in the teacher preparation program.

Through the experience of identifying a problem of practice, exploring scholarly literature and theoretical frameworks, planning, implementing, and evaluating an innovation through various cycles of action research, I learned how to understand research in a discerning manner. Gaining this experience and understanding has changed my perspective regarding the value of educational research. Furthermore, I am better prepared to use quality research to improve my own teaching practices and to identify further problem of practices.

Conclusion

The African proverb “it takes a village to raise a child” is true for the children in our classrooms. Throughout the years, many teachers have felt they need to “raise a child” alone in their classroom even though the U.S. government started programs to include families in classrooms during the Great Depression. The U.S. government continues to fund legislation that ties federal money to family engagement in schools.

Teacher preparation programs have the responsibility to equip preservice teachers with strategies to engage families within their classrooms when they enter the teaching profession. Preservice teachers must enter the profession prepared with the knowledge of a variety of strategies to communicate and engage with families so the whole “village” can help raise the child. Moreover, they need to understand the value of communicating and engaging with parents and feel confident to implement the strategies in their student teaching practicums and within their future classrooms.

Through the innovation, this action research study sought to prepare preservice teachers to communicate and engage with families. I was inspired to find strategies to effectively improve the TCs knowledge, value, and self-efficacy of family engagement.

Due to the limited amount of resources for family engagement curriculum in teacher preparation programs, four FETs were developed and implemented with TCs during their Senior Year Residency. The FETs were developed, implemented, and tested during my study, effectively and positively affected the TCs' knowledge, value, and self-efficacy to communicate and engage with families in their student teaching practicum. The goal of the study was to help TCs see the importance of establishing and maintaining a relationship with students and their families to better provide for all students' needs.

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APPENDIX A

FACILITATOR'S GUIDES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TRAININGS

Facilitators Guide
Understanding the Community Family Engagement Training

Time

100 minutes (in class)

60 minutes (driving community)

Materials

- Chart paper – 2 pieces for each group
- Poster board – 1 piece for each group
- Markers
- Slide show with pictures that include people in different cultures such as teachers during marching for Red for Ed, soldiers during war, children playing on the playground

Objective(s)

- To design a community that people live in
- To define a community
- To determine assets and non-assets of a community
- To research and draw your student teaching school's community

Content

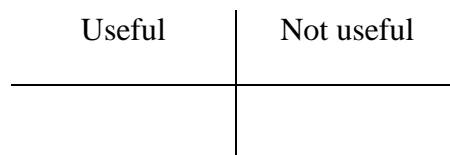
This training establishes what constitutes a community including the assets and non-assets you may find in a community. It outlines how to research important information about communities such as employment rates, housing costs, free and reduced lunch percentages. It provides opportunities for teacher candidates to become familiar with a school's community through the eyes of an ethnographer by driving throughout the school's community and researching the school's community and population.

Lesson

Place participants into small groups of 4-5 people at each table.

Discussion: (50 minutes)

- Pose the questions, "What is in a community?" and "What do you expect to find in a community?" Allow small groups to discuss the questions for 5 minutes. Have each small group design a community on chart paper including all of the characteristics that was discussed at their table. Have groups share their communities stating the characteristics that they included in their communities.
- Pose the questions, "What is useful in a community? Why?" and "What is not useful in a community? Why?" Have each group make a t-chart on chart paper:



- In their small groups, have each group fill out their t-chart for 5-10 minutes. Allow each small group share their t-chart.
- After the discussion, change the word useful to asset and not useful to non-asset. Explain that assets are positive programs, places and institutions that make a community safe, healthy, productive and supportive of families.
- Explain that ethnography is of people and culture (looking through a non-biased lens). Discuss examples of culture that may be found in a community.
- Show slide show. For each picture pose the questions, "What do you see?", "What would you hear?" and "What would you smell?" Remind the participants that they being unbiased and only stating the facts of each picture.

Activity: (60 minutes)

- Divide participants into groups according to their student teaching placement schools. Give each group a map of the school's community boundaries. Have the students make a plan to drive the boundaries and streets of the school's community. Remind them to use their skills of observations as an ethnographer to:
 - Find landmarks: where do people go and what for?
 - Find who lives in the school's community
 - Walk through stores or grocery stores that they are not familiar with and notice what types of things are being sold
- Assign jobs for each group to complete the activity:
 - Driver
 - Co-driver: maps out the major streets and helps the driver navigate the community; keeps track of time
 - Recorder: records landmarks, housing, types of people
 - Photographer: takes pictures of landmarks, housing, items found in stores
- Participants drive the school's community

Assignment (50 minutes)

Assignment will be completed in class

- After driving the community, have participants draw the school's community on poster board noting key landmarks, streets and the variety of housing.
- Participants research the school's community. Research can include information such as employment rates, housing costs, ethnicity, free and reduced lunch rates. Write the research findings on the school community map.
- Display all community maps.
- Discuss how the different assets and non-assets in each school's community.

After the creating the community map, participants will reflect on what they learned about the community after driving around the community, researching the community, and creating a community map.

Facilitators Guide
Planning and Facilitating Family Events Family Engagement Training

Time

35 minutes

Materials

- Chart paper
- Markers

Objective(s)

- To discuss the importance of hosting family events at schools
- To discover what needs to be considered during family events

Content

This training establishes the importance of having family events at school and aspects that need to be considered when hosting family events.

Lesson

Place participants into small groups of 4-5 people at each table.

Discussion: (35 minutes)

- Pose the question, "Think back to when you were in school or during your internships. What family events were hosted?" Allow small groups to discuss for 5 minutes. Have each group share their responses with the entire group and discuss the differences between different events.
- Ask the question, "Why should there be family events at schools?" Allow small groups to discuss 5-10 minutes with each group recording their discussion on chart paper. Have each group share their discussion with the entire group.
- Share research related to the importance of family events:
 - Research shows that family involvement in schools is a vital component of children being successful in education (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Henderson et al., 2007).
 - Research suggests that students at all grade levels do better academically and have more positive school attitudes if their parents are involved and encouraging about school (Epstein, 1990; Henderson et al., 2007; Tran, 2014).
 - Longitudinal studies show that family engagement in education has lasting effects on children's achievement in school regardless of class, ethnicity, gender, or age (Bernard, 2004; Mattingly, Prislun, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002).
- Have a whole group discussion about what needs to be considered when hosting a family event. Some important discussion points include:
 - Themes – focus on a single theme related to a topic such as math, literacy or fitness

- Goals – set one or two goals for the family event such as providing ways to support learning at home
- Activities – choose hands on activities that can be completed during the family event or taken home
- Access – provide materials in different languages and different ability levels; have the family event free or at a low cost; provide materials for families that cannot attend
- Resources – supply handouts on how families can try the activities or other activities at home

Assignment

Assignment will be completed out of class.

Explain the family event assignment process:

1. Ask your mentor what family events happen at your school and who is in charge of each event
2. Talk to the person in charge regarding the date and joining the committee to help plan
3. Help to plan and facilitate the event (or plan your own)
4. Attend the event
5. Talk to families during the event

Participants will help to plan and facilitate a family event at their student teaching school. After the family event, they will reflect on their experience planning and facilitating a family event and what information was gained about the students and families.

Facilitators Guide

Planning and Facilitating Home-School Connections Family Engagement Training Time

45 minutes

Materials

- Binders (one for each participant)
- Plastic pocket protectors (5-6 for each participant)
- Binder pencil pouch (one for each participant)
- Dry erase markers (2 for each participant)
- Dry erase eraser (1 for each participant)
- Various manipulatives to use for activities in binders (e.g. blank dice, blank spinners, numbered dice, counters, decks of cards)
- One completed home-school connection binder for an example

Objective(s)

- To learn how to facilitate a conversation around data
- To find activities that align to data
- To create a home-school connection binder
- To teach a parent the activities in the home-school connection binder

Content

This training establishes the importance of having academic conversations with parents and creating activities that align to a students' academic challenge. It outlines how to look at data to find a content area that a student is struggling with, align activities to help a student academically, how to approach a parent to talk about data, and how to explain the home-school connection binder.

Lesson

Each participant needs to bring data on one student who is struggling in a specific content area.

Place participants into small groups of 4-5 people at each table.

Discussion: (20 minutes)

- Pose the questions, "How should you discuss academics with the families of your students? What conversations have you seen during your student teaching?" Allow small groups to discuss for 5 minutes. Have each group share their responses with the entire group and discuss the commonalities between their answers.
- Share some tips to talk to families about their child's academics (if they were not discussed above):
 - Set up a time to meet with the families
 - Start with the child's academic strengths.
 - Proceed into discussing the academic content that the student is struggling with. Do not overwhelm the parents by telling them many content areas that are challenging. Focus on one or two.

- Base academics on observations, assessments, portfolio and classroom work
- Use positive language and body language
- Work with the parents to come up with suggestions on how to improve the child's struggling academics
- Show the example of the home-school connection binder and go through the contents.
- Model a conversation with a parent using the suggestions above and introduce the home-school connection binder during the conversation on how to improve the child's academics. Model with the "parent" how to play the games and activities within the binder. Explain that the parents will take home and keep the home-school connection binder to work with their child on the activities. Explain that new activities can be given once the child has mastered the activities within the binder.
- Binders will include:
 - A pencil pouch with all manipulatives to complete the activities, dry erase markers and dry erase eraser
 - Two-three activities that align to the content area
 - All activities are placed within a plastic sheet protector so it can be used over and over
 - Directions to the activities
- Explain the assignment that the students will be create a home-school connection binder based on the data they brought today.
- To help facilitate the activity and assignment pose the following questions and have a discussion:
 - How will I initiate the home-school binder conversation with families? How will I greet them? What will I say and do?
 - According to my data, what will I communicate and what order?
 - What types of activities would support the data and the student that the families can facilitate the learning?
 - How will I introduce and facilitate the activities with the families?

Activity: (25 minutes)

- Have participants look at the data they brought for a student that will be creating a home-school connection binder.
- Encourage participants to discuss with the other people at their table different activities that they can create to help the student improve in the content area of the data.
- Give time for the participants to research some activities and to write down their ideas (if you have a printer, they can create their activities and print them out)
- Distribute manipulatives according to what is needed for each participants' binder.
- Allow time for the participants to assemble their home-school connection binder. They may need to print off activities at their home.

Assignment

Assignment will be completed out of class.

Participants will arrange a time to meet with a family when it is convenient for everyone (e.g. after a parent-teacher conference). Participants will review the data they have for the

student. Then present the home-school connection binder by explaining everything in it and allowing an opportunity for the families to play the activities within the binder. The home-school connection binder will be sent home with the family. After the meeting with the parents, they will reflect on their experience planning and facilitating a home-school connection and what information was gained about the students and families.

Facilitators Guide
Facilitating Casual Parent Conversations Family Engagement Training

Time
50 minutes

Materials

- Chart paper
- Markers
-

Objective(s)

- To discuss the importance of engaging in casual conversations with families
- To learn how to facilitate a casual conversation with families

Content

This training establishes the importance of having casual conversations with families. It outlines what questions can be asked during a casual conversation with families, how to actively listen to parents and where to hold casual conversations.

Lesson

Place participants into small groups of 4-5 people at each table.

Discussion: (35 minutes)

- Pose the question, "why should we have casual conversations with families?" Allow small groups to discuss for 5-10 minutes with each group recording their discussion on chart paper. Have each group share their responses with the entire group and encourage a group discussion regarding some of the responses by asking questions such as "why is that an important reason?" Some points to include in discussion if they are not covered are:
 - It is an opportunity to get to know about the families (e.g., background, interests)
 - It is an opportunity to get to know the student (e.g. likes/dislikes, celebrations, traditions, strengths)
 - It is a tool to help understand families have a wealth of information and experiences
- Show video "Building relationships between parents and teachers: Megan Olivia Hall at TEDxBurnsvilleED": <https://youtu.be/kin2OdchKMQ> After video discuss how the teacher communicates with parents and the information she was able to obtain about her students by communicating with parents
- Discuss communication strategies and active listening techniques. Explain to the participants that during casual conversations they should:
 - Let family members know you are listening by using nonverbal cues and responding to their ideas and shared information
 - Help families see that you value what they offer.
 - Realize communication styles differ from family to family. Take cues from family members about what communication style they are comfortable with.

Activity: (15 minutes)

- Pass out examples of questions that can be asked during casual conversations with families. Remind participants that the conversation is not about academics, it is about getting to know the families and students. Examples include:
 - What does the student do at home?
 - What do you like to do as a family?
 - What is the student passionate about?
 - Does the student like school?
 - How do you feel about school and your child's learning?
 - What are your hopes and dreams for your child?
- Allow participants to practice asking a partner the questions while modeling communication strategies and active listening techniques.

Assignment

Assignment will be completed out of class.

Explain the casual conversation process:

- Appointment (this may or may not be necessary): In advance, together decide date, time, and location of a conversation. Since it is a casual conversation the conversation should not take place in the classroom.
- Monitor Interactions: You are visiting to learn about the family and student. Listen first. You will not come away with as much information if you do all the talking.
- Time: Be aware of the time. The conversation should last between five and ten minutes.
- Note of Appreciation: Be sure to thank parents for visiting with you and helping to learn about their son/daughter and family.

Participants will have a casual conversation with two different families in their student teaching placement. After each conversation, they will reflect on their conversation and what information was gained about the student from talking with the families.

APPENDIX B
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Parent Engagement Survey

Dear Teacher Candidates:

My name is Tamera Riethmann and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Eugene Judson, a faculty member in MLFTC. We are conducting a research study on perceptions of teacher candidates' confidence and knowledge to engage and communicate with families.

We are asking for your help, which will involve your participation in a 19-question survey concerning your perceptions about early childhood teacher candidates feeling they are not adequately prepared to effectively communicate with and engage families. We anticipate the survey will take about 10 minutes of your time.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there will be no penalty whatsoever. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

The benefit to participation is the opportunity for you to reflect on and think more about your perceptions regarding engaging and communicating with families. Your survey responses will also inform future iterations of the study. Thus, there is potential to enhance the experiences of our students and parents. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Dr. Eugene Judson at eugene.judson@asu.edu or (480)727-5216 or Tamera Riethmann at tamera.riethmann@asu.edu or (480)510-7866.

Thank you,

Tamera Riethmann, Doctoral Student
Eugene Judson, Associate Professor

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

For the purpose of this questionnaire, *family* is defined as any important adults in a students' life. In other words, family includes parents, grandparents, foster parents, aunts, uncles and any important person that affects the child's development.

Part 1: Demographics

Gender: Male / Female / Other / Prefer not to answer

Age: _____

Student Teaching Placement: Special Education / General Education

Student Teaching Grade-Level Placement: K 1 2 3 (Select all grade levels that apply)

Part 2: Questionnaire

Section One: Knowledge of family engagement

I possess _____ about _____.

	A Lot of knowledge	Some Knowledge	Slight Knowledge	No Knowledge
how to talk with families about their child's academic successes and weaknesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
implementing different strategies to communicate with families throughout the school year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
having casual conversations with families outside of the classroom about what their child likes to do at home..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
creating academic goals with families for their child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
developing strategies for families to use at home to help increase their child's academic performance in school..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section Two: Value of family engagement

Valuable is defined as something you see as important.

How valuable is it for K-3 teachers to...

	Very Valuable	Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Minimally Valuable
communicate with families to further children's academic success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

facilitate family engagement to improve children's behavioral issues in class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
have casual conversations with families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
have discussions with families to create an academic goal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
create strategies and share with families to further children's academic success.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section Three: Self-efficacy of family engagement

I feel confident in my ability to...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Speak to families formally about their child's grades during a parent meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
teach families strategies to work with their child at home on math.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
communicate with families about how their child is doing in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
talk with families in a casual conversation to find out their hopes and dreams for their child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speak with families about their child's academic successes and weaknesses during a parent meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- encourage families to talk to me whenever they have a concern about their child at school.
- work with families to develop specific academic goals for their child.
- engage families casually in a conversation after school about their child.
- develop strategies to show families how to work with their child at home on reading.

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX C
REFLECTION PROMPTS

Script:

Thank you for participating in this study. Please answer the following journal prompts after implementing each parent engagement strategy. Be sure to provide as much detail as possible. Remember that all of your answers will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used in the final write-up. Thanks again.

1. Which strategy did you implement with families?
2. Was implementing this family engagement strategy valuable to you? Why or why not?
3. How confident do you feel to implement this strategy in the future? Why?

APPENDIX D

PERSONAL MEANING MAP RUBRIC

Depth of Knowledge		
Shallow	Traditional	Informed
The personal meaning map reflects limited knowledge of family engagement. The map may be restricted to a few terms or phrases associated with family engagement. The map may yield only one or two basic terms or phrases.	The personal meaning map reflects some knowledge of family engagement. The map may include terms from the participatory level of family engagement (Chapter 2). The map may reveal terms or phrases related to family engagement without demonstrating a deep understanding.	The personal meaning map reflects a strong knowledge of family engagement. The map may include terms from the collaborative level of family engagement (Chapter 2). The map reflects a clear understanding of family engagement.

APPENDIX E
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD



EXEMPTION GRANTED

Eugene Judson
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Polytechnic Campus
480/727-5216
Eugene.Judson@asu.edu

Dear Eugene Judson:

On 5/3/2019 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Family Engagement in a Teacher Preparation Program
Investigator:	Eugene Judson
IRB ID:	STUDY00010084
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IRB Recruitment Consent Form.pdf, Category: Consent Form;• IRB TRiethmann.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;• Survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);• Reflections Script.pdf, Category: Participant materials (specific directions for them);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (1) Educational settings, (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 5/3/2019.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Tamera Riethmann