

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN FAMILY AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

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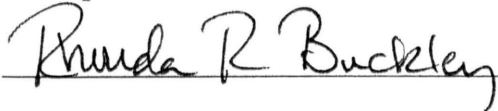
To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Irene Denise Evans-Jackson entitled "The Role of Technology in Family and School Partnerships." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommended that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Family Studies.

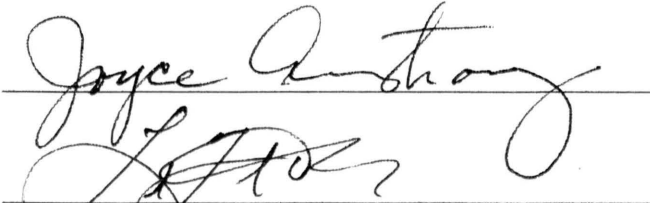


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We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:







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ABSTRACT

IRENE DENISE EVANS-JACKSON

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN FAMILY AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how educators and parents perceived the usage of technology for creating active family and school partnerships. This study also explored how parents and educators used technology applications to create family and school partnerships. Educators and families from a 4-A school district in North Central Texas were recruited to participate in the study. A sample size of eleven educators participated in an interview and/or a focus group session. Eleven parents participated in an interview and/or a focus group session.

Parents and educators both perceived that technology played an active and positive role with regards to keeping families informed of grades, school events, and other general information. Technology was also considered a useful tool for parent and teacher communication. However, both families and educators articulated the need for

effective technology training programs. Educators indicated that current training methods did not always yield positive outcomes. Parents voiced the need for training that would provide the knowledge needed to utilize tools provided by the schools. Parents also voiced concerns regarding assumptions made by schools regarding technology access in the home and a lack of support by schools regarding how to properly use technology applications.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4, Title 2, Section 1 of the Texas Education Code cites the mission of Texas public schools which is to ensure that all students have access to a quality education (Education Code, 2003). In providing quality education, Texas public schools are preparing students to participate in future social, economical, and educational opportunities (Education Code, 2003). The mission of the Texas public school is grounded in the beliefs and principles that an education is essential to citizen's rights thus are directly related to family and parental involvement (Education Code, 2003). The Education Code objectives include (a) parent and school partnerships, (b) the preparation of students by educators to be active citizens that can be producers in a free enterprise society, and (c) the use of technology to aid improvement in various educational areas including student achievement, instructional management, and professional development (Education Code, 2003).

As schools strive to fulfill the mission of educating all students, it is essential to include families in this effort. Prior to mid 20th century families and schools had a strong partnership (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Parents were responsible for the hiring of teachers and providing apprenticeships in their businesses. However, the shift in the separation of families and school in which schools were responsible for academic development and families for moral and cultural development (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Currently another shift has occurred as the demands of accountability and students achievement have risen. Families and schools are once again partners in education (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Family and school partnerships are essential as such partnerships lead to increased student achievement (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2009). Partnerships give families opportunities to grow, support, and assist in the development of leadership skills in their students (Epstein, 1995). Families and parents have the opportunity to be stakeholders in the educational process. These collaborative efforts assist teachers in managing student behaviors (Minke & Anderson, 2005) thus creating a positive school climate (Epstein, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

Family involvement in the school is considered to be an important and essential component to educational success. Families can support schools by helping with homework, attending school-related meetings and activities, and volunteering for committees (Planty et al., 2009). However, despite the different ways families can be involved with schools, not all families are included in family/school partnerships. For example, families with linguistic differences have difficulty participating in family and school partnerships (Colombo, 2006). Planty et al. (2009) reported that students in grades K-8 have greater family participation than those in grades 9-12. The report by Planty et al. (2009) also indicated that parental participation in school activities varied according to parental ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Differences are noted by decreases in participation (Planty et al., 2009). In 2007, approximately 74% of K-12 parents attended school events; however, only 46% volunteered on school committees (Planty et al., 2009). Therefore not all families are afforded opportunities to engage in family/school partnerships.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how educators and families perceived the usage of technology for creating active family and school partnerships. This study also explored how families and educators used technology applications to create family/school partnerships.

Research Questions

The following research questions that were addressed in the study:

1. What are teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology used to create active school partnerships with families?
2. How do schools use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships?
3. What are families' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology used to create active partnerships with schools?
4. How do families use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships?

Theoretical Perspective

The conceptual framework used to guide this study was a school/family involvement framework. Joyce Epstein's parental involvement framework is widely used by schools to develop effective partnerships with families and communities (Epstein, 1995, 2008). The framework consists of six different collaborative opportunities that promote different partnership associations (Epstein, 1995). The six types of involvement are (a) parenting, (b) communication, (c) volunteering, (d) extending learning at home, (e) decision making, and (f) community collaboration. In addition to the six types of involvement, Epstein's (1995) framework also provides positive outcomes and promotes awareness of program concerns that may arise during the involvement program implementation process.

Type one involvement is parenting. Schools should strive to provide parents the opportunities to develop parenting skills as well as help families establish a home environment that promotes educational growth (Epstein, 1995). This type of involvement is accomplished by providing a variety of parenting workshops (Epstein, 2008). The results of this type of involvement are (a) improved

student attendance, (b) parental awareness of parenting challenges, and (c) an increased awareness by teachers of family cultures represented in the school (Epstein, 1995). This step presents some concerns for schools. One of which is the ability to provide information to parents in a manner that can be utilized by families. Another concern is finding ways to get information to all families.

Type two involvement is communicating. Communication activities between schools and family provide families with information and opportunities for increased school involvement and programming (Epstein, 2008). This type of involvement is accomplished through parent conferences with follow-ups and student's work sent home with comments. The use of translators, regular use of weekly or monthly newsletters, and phone calls are all tools that aid in providing positive communication between schools and families (Epstein, 1995). The results of communication between families and schools (a) promote students with an awareness of academic success, (b) parents with the ability to monitor student's success, and (c) teachers are able to received assistance from the family (Epstein, 1995). While communication between families and schools can lead to

positive outcomes there are concerns faced by schools associated with communicating with non-English speaking families and families that cannot read (Epstein, 1995).

Type three involvement is volunteering. Volunteering requires schools to actively seek, recruit, and train volunteers to aid in supporting student academic and extra-curricular programs (Epstein, 2008). This type of involvement is accomplished by the creation of parent and volunteer workrooms and parental patrols to assist with school safety (Epstein, 1995). The results of volunteering are (a) the ability to increase student learning opportunities, (b) parents will be able to develop an awareness of the importance and values of families in school, and (c) teachers have an awareness of the talents of their parents (Epstein, 1995). While volunteering has positive outcomes, schools must address concerns such as the ability to provide training for participants and making scheduling flexible for volunteers to participate (Epstein, 1995).

Type four involvement is learning at home. Learning at home includes home activities that are coordinated with the school curriculum (Epstein, 2008). This type of involvement

is accomplished by having family math, science, and technology nights at school and the creation of calendars that provide at home activities (Epstein, 1995). The results of learning at home for students is (a) the successful completion of homework assignments, (b) for parents is the understanding of the school curriculum and academic expectations, (c) and teachers will also develop a better respect of how family time is utilized away from school (Epstein, 1995). Even though learning at home provides positive family and school collaboration however concerns faced by schools are the ability to coordinate homework assignments and getting families to become involved in all curricular areas (Epstein, 1995).

Type five involvement is decision making. Decision making provides families with an opportunity to become stakeholders in the policy making process that positively impact schools and families (Epstein, 2008). This type of involvement is accomplished by establishing parent groups such as the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), and other parent networks (Epstein, 1995). The result of decision making for students is (a) an understanding of students' rights, (b) for

parents is since of ownership in the school, (c) and for teachers an awareness of the families' role of regarding policy development (Epstein, 1995). While involving parents in the decision making process is important, a concern faced by schools is making certain all stakeholders are actively involved (Epstein, 1995). Stakeholders include educators, families, students, and community members and organizations.

Type six involvement is collaborating with the community. Shared collaboration with the community between community stakeholders such as businesses, universities, religious groups, and other community organizations aids in strengthening school and family programs (Epstein, 2008). This type of involvement is accomplished by providing information on community health services and community programs that play on the talents and interest of the students (Epstein, 1995). The results of collaborating with the community for students is (a) the benefit of extra curricular activities, (b) for parents the ability to interact with other families within the community, and (c) for teachers the awareness of resources available within the community (Epstein, 1995). This step presents a concern

for schools as not all schools have the ability to ensure that all parents are informed about various community programs (Epstein, 1995).

Significance of the Study

Information from this study could be utilized by school personnel such as classroom teachers, program developers, and administrators with the development and evaluation of school/family programs. Professional development opportunities could arise from the study for school personnel regarding ways to create family partnerships. Workshops could be created for families that address family/school related issues. Schools could use the study to also aid in evaluating current technology goals and applications in order to assess if the goals include family/school partnerships.

Limitations

This study was instigated by the researcher's interest in the topic of the role of technology in parent and teacher relationships. Interests in educational technology lead to the curiosity regarding technology's role in promoting family and school partnerships. The study confined itself to a voluntary convenience sample

consisting of a single school district in Texas; and therefore, study results were not generalized to all school districts in Texas.

Delimitations

School participants for this study were currently public school teachers assigned to a classroom and not serving as a substitute teacher in the classroom. Teachers were also currently an in-service teacher of record in either grades PK (pre-kindergarten) thru 12th. School participants held a Texas standard teaching certificate and had at least one year of experience. School participants must currently teach grades PK thru 12th. Family participants for the study had to currently have a child enrolled in one of the district's public schools and were the primary caregiver of the child.

Definitions and Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

1. School is defined by educators.
2. Educators that are currently certified by the state of Texas and are considered the classroom teacher of record in a classroom will represent schools.

3. Family or families are parents, guardians, or primary caregivers.
4. Family involvement is any act that represents an active connection to the school. Family involvement includes participation in workshops, communication between family and schools, volunteering, expanding learning at home, and participating in the decision making process (Epstein, 1995, 2008).
5. Technology is any electronic or digital device used by schools and families.
6. Partnerships are collaborative efforts between families, schools, and community stakeholders that promote in the best interest of the student (Epstein, 1995, 2008).

Summary

Texas public schools' mission is to provide a quality education to all students. Such a mission is to be accomplished through partnerships with families. Parental involvement in schools is an essential component to students' achievement. Family/school partnerships aid in creating a positive school climate and provide families with opportunities to develop leadership skills. However not all families are involved in family/school

partnerships. Families with linguistics differences have difficulty participating and differences in participation have been indicated across grade levels, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The purpose of this study was to explore how educators and families perceive the usage of technology for creating active family and school partnerships. This study also explored how families and educators use technology applications to create family/school partnerships.

The six types of involvement conceptual framework was used to guide the study. This study will aid in the development of programs to increase family/school partnerships. A limitation of the study included the use of a convenience sample. A delimitation of the study is the explorations of public school teachers and parents.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following review of literature includes information on the roles of the family in education and the use of technology in the creation of family/school partnerships. This review of literature will further explore the evolution of technology in education, and technology requirements for Texas educators. College education teacher training programs and pre-service educators are also included in the review of literature.

The Roles of the Family in Education

Families have numerous roles in education. The roles addressed in this section include families as supporters of student achievement, safety monitors, and volunteers. A positive relationship in many instances between schools and communities is essential as often neighborhoods are unable to remain healthy without good schools and vice versa (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). Therefore, parental involvement in schools not only improves schools but provides parents with a voice thus involvement sends a positive message to children (Machen, Wilson, & Notar,

2005). Children who have involved parents are more likely to have better grades, have regular attendance, earn required course credits for promotion, and are consequently more likely to enroll in college (Bird, 2006).

School administrators and teachers have a responsibility to encourage parental participation efforts (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). Research has indicated that this can be achieved by (a) creating opportunities for positive communication, (b) reducing barriers to participation by providing childcare for activities that are during after school hours, and (c) providing educational workshops (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). For example, Darling (2008) reported that school programs aimed at improving student literacy yield positive results. Teachers indicated an increase in test scores that resulted from school programs that targeted training parents how to utilize reading strategies at home.

Sanders (1996) reported that schools that have successful partnership programs use Epstein's (1995, 2008) six types of involvement framework, have action teams, and project facilitators that guide and support action teams. One program entitled Pops on Patrol used grandfathers and

grandmothers to patrol the school in the mornings and afternoons. The program sent messages to students regarding safety and the importance being on time (Sanders, 1996). Another school created a parent room. The parent resource room had information regarding child development issues. Parents were encouraged to utilize the facility to meet with other parents. Once parents were using the room the principal could then discuss opportunities for volunteering (Sanders, 1996).

Technology and Family/School Partnerships

Technological applications such as the Internet, cell phone texting, telephone systems, and videos have provided opportunities for family and school partnerships. As early as the 1990s, schools communicated with parents by sending home notes with students, unfortunately most notes never made it home (Villano, 2008). Many schools utilized a calling tree system to make personal calls to parents. This method was not always effective as phone numbers were not always accurate and it would take a considerable amount of time to contact all parents (Villano, 2008). Technological advances have allowed schools new opportunities to connect with parents through the use of computer-based systems

(Villano, 2008). For example, teachers can now access local school database systems and retrieve student information. As a result if the parent has an e-mail address, the teachers can send e-mails to all parents regarding meetings, events, or assignments. These systems are now doing work in just a few minutes that would have taken hours or even days without the use of technology (Villano, 2008). Mitchell, Foulger, and Wetzel (2009) after completing observations and conducting teacher interviews compiled a list of ways for schools to keep families involved through the utilization of the Internet. The creation of classroom websites can be used to display information about events. Web pages can also provide educational links that can be used to extend learning at home and host an area for a parent discussion forum (Mitchell, Foulger, & Wetzel, 2009). Individual and group e-mails can be used to highlight students' accomplishments and engage in two-way communication (Mitchell, Foulger, & Wetzel, 2009).

In addition to providing ways to keep families involved, Mitchell, Foulger, and Wetzel (2009) also addressed concerns that may arise with the use of Internet

communication by schools. The first concern addressed the importance of providing all families access to school information that is presented in electronic media forms. The second concern addressed the need for parent training on the use of technology tools (Mitchell, Foulger, and Wetzel, 2009). Training opportunities for parents should include hands-on experiences as well as a list of available resources that provide families with public computer access. The final concern addressed was the need for teacher training. Training opportunities for teachers should include learning to use new technology and online tutorial sessions (Mitchell, Foulger & Wetzel, 2009).

Schools are utilizing a variety of text messaging systems in communication with families. Villano (2008) described two such systems. The first messaging service, CellTrust, assists schools in sending a text message blast to all families informing them about upcoming test and school events. The use of text messages has proven successful for schools, as research indicates parent participation in school events had almost reached one hundred percent (Villano, 2008). The second messaging system, TeleParent, is a notification system that helps

schools connect with families. This system allows schools the opportunity to send messages in multiple languages thus giving schools opportunities to reach multi-lingual families. The use of such a system keeps families informed therefore resulting in increased attendance and classroom participation (Villano, 2008).

While videos have been used for decades in instructional delivery, its application is now being used to keep parents connected to the schools. An example of a video technology program was presented by Feiler et al. (2008), videos of literacy lessons were created and used as a family learning tool. Videos were also used to enhance homework and provide home enrichment activities. Teachers modeled literacy strategies for parents. Written materials explaining reading goals and strategies accompanied videos resulting in complete literacy lessons set to be used by families (Feiler et al., 2008). Another program highlighted videos made by students that provided families with opportunities to connect with schools. Such videos showed interactions between teachers and students and included information regarding how to help students be successful,

materials needed for special projects, and descriptions of school programs (Clevenson, 1999).

The Evolution of Technology in Education

This section addresses the evolution of technology in education as it spans across four decades. The use of technology in education is not a new phenomenon. Its full emergence as integrated knowledge and skills concepts across grade levels K-12 can be traced to the 1970s. Early beliefs regarding technology integration focused on the possibility of machines replacing teachers (Dible, 1970). Eventually, such perceptions evolved to an understanding that technology is an extension of a teacher and not a replacement (Dible, 1970). During the 1970s, it was noted that students were becoming unhappy in traditional classroom settings; and therefore, teacher centered classrooms were questioned (Johnson, 1970). Johnson (1970) indicated that perhaps educators who understood the role of technology in education could aid in the creation of a learning environment that would encourage inquiry and motivation in the classroom.

The next decade, the 1980s, represented a time in which educational technology was no longer in a state of

curiosity by some educators but a useful educational tool (Valdez, 1986). During the 1980s the focus was on how to use computer software to supplement teaching (Polly & Moore, 2008). The decade also represented a change from programming to the use of utility software such as word processing and spreadsheets (Valdez, 1986). Technology had advanced becoming interactive addressing the needs and interests of individual students. An increase of computers in elementary and secondary schools was noted by an increase of computer usage by teachers (Valdez, 1986). Valdez (1986) further reported that computer assisted instruction aided in an increase in the students' retention of educational objectives as well as promoted positive attitudes regarding school.

However, as students entered the 1990s, the Internet became an essential part of the learning process. The Internet offered students the opportunity to be part of the process that creates knowledge (Doyle, 1999). Currently, as a result to the evolution of technology, in the 2000s technology is to be infused throughout the curriculum as an essential component to enhance learning (Polly & Moore, 2008; Texas Education Agency, 2008).

For example, elementary teachers use technology in the development of family life skills as K-4 teachers have utilized technology to teach students the basics of financial responsibility and financial management (Lucey, Giannangelo, Grant, Hawkins, & Heath, 2007). Technology can also aid in teaching students about the importance of diversity. Educators with the use of technology can aid in promoting social consciousness while addressing issues regarding gender, class, and family culture (Glimps & Ford, 2008).

Students could use genealogical Internet based research tools to discover family origins and cultural heritage. The Internet could also be utilized to create global pen-pals that aid in the development of an acceptance and exploration of global diversity (Glimps & Ford, 2008). Online newspapers could also be used to compare and contrast events that promote awareness regarding the similarities and differences of life experiences of other students (Glimps & Ford, 2008). Such assignments done at school provide all students the opportunity to use computers and engage in Internet creativity. Such experiences are important due to the fact

that some students only have computer access at school (Lewis, 2007).

Technology Requirements for Texas Educators

This session addresses the evolution of technology requirements for Texas educators. Electronic Learning (1982) reported the results of a national 1982 survey that indicated state mandates regarding computer usage had not been established. Yet, the lack of these mandates did not negatively impact interest in computer-based instruction (EL's second annual survey of the states, 1982). The 1982 survey of the states computer usage in education indicated that Texas had a high interest in the area of computer-based instruction. Such an indication was evident by the state's education service centers that provided workshops and assistance to schools regarding computer-based instruction. Another indicator of high interest was the State's affiliation with several user groups that provided information on computer-based instruction through conferences and newsletters (EL's second annual survey of the states, 1982).

Currently, Texas educators are expected to meet state and federal mandates regarding technology usage in the

classroom (Texas Education Agency, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Expectations of technology requirements can be found in the Texas Teacher Technology Competency Certification (TexasTTCC), Texas Knowledge and Essential Skills (TEKS), Technology Standards Applications For All Beginning Teachers, and the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS).

Texas Teacher Technology Competency Certification was developed as a result of the collaborative effects of the regional Education Service Centers. The certification was designed to provide documentation of Texas teachers' ability and competency to effectively integrate technology in the curriculum (Texas Teacher Technology Competency Certification, n.d.). Educators must complete the electronic portfolio assessment before receiving the certification. The ability to create rubrics, spreadsheets, multimedia presentations, and software evaluations are a few of the skills that must be demonstrated (Texas Teacher Technology Competency Certification, n.d.). The performance-based assessment meets the requirements for the No Child Left Behind federal mandate and the certification

provides districts with a tool that aids in documenting teachers proficiency in technology.

Beginning teachers are not exempt from being required to have the necessary knowledge and skills with regards to providing technology enhanced instruction, assignments, and opportunities. Technology standards are provided by the State Board for Educators Certification (SBEC) agency and are incorporated in the Professional Pedagogy and Responsibilities certification exam. Standards for beginning teachers are directly stated by SBEC and are as followed (State Board for Educator Certification, n.d.):

Standard I - All teachers use technology-related terms, concepts, data input strategies, and ethical practices to make informed decisions about current technologies and their applications. Standard II - All teachers identify task requirements, apply search strategies, and use current technology to efficiently acquire, analyze, and evaluate a variety of electronic information. Standard III - All teachers use task-appropriate tools to synthesize knowledge, create and modify solutions, and evaluate results in a way that supports the work of individuals and groups in

problem-solving situations. Standard IV - All teachers communicate information in different formats and for diverse audiences. Standard V - All teachers know how to plan, organize, deliver, and evaluate instruction for all students that incorporates the effective use of current technology for teaching and integrating the Technology Applications Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) into the curriculum.

Educators' knowledge of how to use technology applications is a necessary component in order to assist students in mastering technology applications outlined in the Texas Knowledge Essential and Skills (TEKS). Chapter 126 of the TEKS provides a detailed description of the skills that students need to master as a result of technology devices. Students in grades K-12 have the same four essential knowledge curriculum strands. The strands are (a) foundation, (b) information acquisition, (c) problem solving, and (d) communication (Texas Education Agency, 2008). Each is represented by a series of skill components that aid in the development of a students ability to do the following (Texas Education Agency, 2008):

1. Communicate using different technology tools.
2. Make a plan in which technology is used to access, analyze, and evaluates information.
3. Develop problem-solving skills in which students work as individuals or in a group setting using technology to evaluate the situation, find a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness.

In order to ensure that all educational standards are met, teachers are evaluated or appraised annually using the Professional Development and Appraisal System. The PDAS was designed as a tool to enhance student performance.

Educators are evaluated and scored on educational domains. Domain II evaluates learner-centered instruction and within that domain educators are evaluated on the use to technology in the classroom (PDAS, n.d.).

Pre-service Teacher Education Programs

Pre-service teacher education programs recognize and address the need for preparation programs to provide technology integration courses. The early need for pre-service educators to be trained in technology integration was recognized in the 1980s. In 1982, a fifteen-item questionnaire was distributed to universities and colleges'

Departments of Education that were part of the American Association Colleges for Teacher Education (Kull & Archambault, 1984). The questionnaire addressed courses in computer education that were offered within the curriculum of the teacher education department (Kull & Archambault, 1984). The survey was sent to 740 colleges and universities representing all fifty states. Five hundred and seventy five of the surveys were completed and returned in the spring of 1983.

Results from the questionnaire indicated that only 63% of the colleges that responded to the survey had a computer education component within the teacher preparation program (Kull & Archambault, 1984). Some colleges had courses taught within the college of education while others had courses that were taught in collaboration with other departments. Results of the survey also indicated that students in teacher education programs were taught to evaluate software and create computer assisted instruction materials. Unfortunately, field experience was a missing component in a majority of the programs (Kull & Archambault, 1984).

Currently, in the 21st century, the need for pre-service training for technology integration has continued to be recognized at the national level. The U. S. Department of Education provided grant monies for the Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3) program. The program provided funds that enabled colleges and universities to provide training to pre-service teachers (Christensen & Knezek, 2006). At the state level, The University of North Texas, funded the Millennium Projects with grant funds from 1999-2003 (Christensen & Knezek, 2006). The Millennium Project developed goals that were to be achieved during the completion of the project. The project strived to provide future educators with technology skills that would enable them to create a learner-centered classroom with a technology infused curriculum (Christensen & Knzek, 2006).

The first goal objective was to increase the number of students that graduated with a technology infused degree from 20% to 80%. In order to meet this goal an additional course was designed and added to the existing curriculum (Christensen & Knezek, 2006). The new course was hands on; therefore, students were engaged in a variety of tasks that

provided the opportunity to learn how to effectively integrate a variety of technology applications and platforms. Tasks included evaluating software and websites, creating web pages, and using digital cameras. As a result of the new course implementation more than 80% of the students graduated with a technology infused degree.

The second goal objective was for collegiate educators to model the integration of technology into core curriculum courses of pre-service educators (Christensen & Knezek, 2006). There were several outcomes to this objective. Outcomes included integration technology procedures in reading and math courses. The faculty was provided with a variety of tools to implement in courses, created web sites, and provided resources (Christensen & Knezek, 2006).

The third goal objective was for the special education program to create and model multimedia assessment components (Christensen & Knezek, 2006). An outcome of the goal was the creation of technology integrated assignments library for the pre-service educators. Another outcome of the goal was the incorporation of technology integrated assignments that aided in helping pre-service educators learn how to meet the needs of all types of learners

(Christensen & Knezek, 2006). The fourth goal objective was the modeling of technology integrating by the faculty within courses taught in the schools of music, visual arts, and arts and sciences. The goal outcome was the revising of courses that supported technology integration (Christensen & Knezek, 2006).

Pre-service Educators

The beliefs and perceptions of pre-service educators play a significant role in influencing their behaviors as they continue their educational career (Wang, 2002). Therefore beliefs regarding the use of educational technology during pre-service could impact usage when educators enter the classroom. Doering, Hughes, and Huffman's (2003) qualitative study indicated that pre-service educator's beliefs regarding technology could change over the course of their pre-serve preparation. Data was collected in the form of a focus group prior to participation in technology preparation courses, after the courses were completed, and after the completion of student teaching. The results of the study indicated that prior to taking the preparation courses, pre-service educators believed that technology was a tool that was to be utilized

for maintaining records and the Internet could be used to gather information for a topic. Technology should also be used only after subject matter had been taught using traditional methods. Pre-service educators were also skeptical about using technology because they believed that schools would most likely not have adequate technology resources (Doering et al., 2003).

After preparation courses were completed, pre-service educators were able to develop ideas that included technology integration. Ideas were derived from the modeling activities that had been presented by instructors. The overall belief regarding technology integration was positive. Pre-service educators did however express the fear that technology when used in the classroom would not work properly (Doering et. al, 2003). After student teaching was completed the pre-service educators reported that in the classroom, barriers to successful technology integration included availability, support from the cooperating teacher, and classroom management. Nonetheless despite barriers, the pre-service educators after the completion of student teaching believed that technology was a tool that could aid in learning. Pre-service educators

also believed that students should also become active learners in the process using technology (Doering et al., 2003).

On the other hand, not all teacher preparation programs strived to produce positive beliefs regarding the use of technology integration for educators. Early childhood educators in a teacher preparation program designed to immerse pre-service educators in a technology-enriched environment did not view technology as an effective teaching tool (Laffey, 2004). As a result of the program, the early childhood educators were able to use technology efficiently as students. They were able to communicate with peers and teachers and meet the university's requirements for achieving technology proficiency (Laffey, 2004). Consequently, the pre-service educators expressed that they planned to use technology in the classroom to prepare materials and communicate with school personnel (Laffey, 2004).

Summary

A positive relationship between the school and families is important, as they are both needed to thrive and be successful (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). School

administrators and teachers have a responsibility to encourage parental participation. Technological advances have allowed schools with new opportunities to connect with and notify parents through the use of computer-based systems (Villano, 2008). Schools are now using e-mail, text messaging, and telephone systems to keep families and school connected. Video technologies are also being used to keep parents connected (Clevenson, 1999).

Educational technology used in the classroom has evolved over the past four decades. During the 1970s technology was a subject in which students studied programming, computer parts, and how to make programs work. In the 1980s the focus was on the how to use computer software to supplement teaching (Polly & Moore, 2008). During the 1990s the students became creators of knowledge through the use of the Internet. Currently, technology is to be infused throughout the curriculum as an essential component to enhance learning (Polly & Moore, 2008).

With the evolution of technology in the classroom came the evolution of standards for educators. Texas educators have state and federal mandates that must be met in order to receive various certifications and proficient

appraisals. Therefore, to ensure that educators are proficient in technology skills, college teacher education programs strived to redesign courses. Modeling by faculty and hands on experiences were implemented in teacher education programs in order to increase student success in technology integration. However, despite the efforts made by college preparation programs, not all students believe that technology can be an effective teaching tool.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research examined the perceptions of Texas public school educators and families regarding family and school partnerships. Perceptions regarding the role of technology in family/school partnerships were identified. Differences in parental involvement across grade levels, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were indicated by the National Center for Education Statics. Therefore, this research adds to body of knowledge regarding technology factors that enhance family and school partnerships. The six types of involvement framework were used to guide this study in addition to qualitative methodology of phenomenology.

Research Design

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is used as a theoretical framework in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to view and illustrate individual experiences as valid within the research area (Daly, 2007). Furthermore, within the phenomenological framework, individuals are allowed the

opportunity to share and describe lived experiences (Daly, 2007). Commonalities are then compiled to describe the experiences of individuals that live within the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Using a transcendental phenomenology approach the research will focus on the participant's experience and not the researcher's interpretation (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology provided the educators and families in the study the opportunity to share and describe experiences and note that all experiences are valid.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in the study to explore how educators and families perceived the usage of technology for creating active family and school partnerships. The following research questions were also used to explore how families and educators used technology applications to create family/school partnerships.

1. What are teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology used to create active school partnerships with families?

2. How do schools use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships?

3. What are families' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology used to create active partnerships with schools?

4. How do families use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships?

Population and Sample

The 305 educators were recruited from a 4A school district in the North Texas area. The district consists of five campuses, three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The district received a Recognized rating awarded by the Texas Education Agency during the 2009-2010 school year. The student population was approximately 2200 students and 305 teachers. According to the district's Highly Qualified Teachers Summary Report, all teachers have received a highly qualified status. All information regarding the district was found on the district's website.

Educators that met the following criteria were asked to participate in the study: (a) at least one year experience, (b) attended a college preparation program, (c) are currently serving as a classroom teacher and not a substitute, and (d) had a Texas standard teaching

certificate. Eleven educators participated in this study.

The family participants in the study were also recruited from the same school district as the educators. Parents who met the following criteria were asked to participate in the study: (a) currently had a child enrolled in one of the district's public schools and (b) must be the legal guardian of the child. Eleven parents participated in this study.

A purposive sampling technique was used in the study. A purposive sampling technique is utilized in qualitative research as it provides the researcher with participants that have the characteristics that make them rich sources of information (Babbie, 2004). Participants were recruited through the use of the district's e-mail system and snowball sampling technique.

Researcher Perspective

The identification and clarification of biases, values, and beliefs is essential for qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). During the research process the researcher was actively involved with the participants. Therefore such clarifications provided the researcher the opportunity to be more open about the findings of the study

(Creswell, 2003). At the time of the research project the researcher was a doctoral candidate in Family Studies department of Texas Woman's University. As a student in family studies the researcher used a systemic lens to understand the relationship that the school system has with the home system. Therefore, the researcher made an assumption that the technology skills of educators assist in developing a variety of ways to connect with families. The researcher believed that technology tools such as web pages, blogs, podcasts, and wikis support the creation of family and school partnerships.

In addition to being a doctoral candidate, the researcher has been a public school teacher for ten years, was currently employed with the school district, and served on the district's technology committee. The interest in studying this phenomenon was the result of the participation in the district's technology committee and the interest in the utilization of how various technology tools can be used to promote partnerships with families.

Protection of Human Rights

This research project was approved by the Texas Woman's University Institutional Review Board (IRB)

committee (Appendix A) and the participating school district (Appendix B). To protect human rights, all participants were provided a detailed explanation of the study. Participants were made aware of any risk and benefits involved with participating in the study. Participation was voluntary and as a result the researcher informed the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality was essential to the rights of the participants. The actual names of the participants were not used in the reporting of the study results and all notes, computer printouts, and other written data were kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. All computer information storage devices were also stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. Participants were informed that all information provided was for the sole purpose of completing the research study and all results were to be published. Participants were also provided with a copy of the results of the study.

Collection of Data

Focus groups and individual interviews were used to gather data for the study. Focus groups are also referred

to as group interviewing (Daly, 2007). This format brings together participants that have a shared experience (Daly, 2007). Focus groups provided the researcher the opportunity to observe the interactions of the group as experiences were being shared (Daly, 2007). Focus groups had several advantages, first they placed the participants in a natural social setting that promoted and encouraged interaction (Krueger, 1994). Another advantage of focus groups is the facilitator was provided the opportunity to explore unforeseen issues that arose from the discussions (Krueger, 1994).

Individual semi-structured interviews were also used to collect data for the study. This method of interviewing provided structure and organization for the interview session (Daly, 2007). Semi-structured interviews further aided in maintaining focus on topics addressed (Daly, 2007).

Focus group and interview questions were open-ended and each participant was given the opportunity to respond (Appendix C). Open-ended questions allowed the participants the opportunity to determine the direction of their responses (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Therefore, this type of

questioning encouraged individuals to respond based on their personal situation and experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The use of open-ended questions provided information that was based on the participants' feelings as opposed to what the participants thought the researcher wanted to hear (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Instrumentation

The following questions were used to gather information for research question one: What are teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology being used to create active school partnerships with families?

1. Describe your beliefs regarding technology integration in schools: as it relates to students, families, and school personnel.
2. Describe your technology training experiences.
3. What significance would you place on your training?
4. In what areas has your training been most beneficial?
5. In what areas has your training been least beneficial?

6. How would you describe family/school partnerships?
7. What is your belief regarding how your training as helped you develop a partnership with families?
8. What areas do you feel need to be further explored?
9. How would you evaluate your ability to use technology to engage in partnerships with families?
10. What other information would you like to give about your beliefs regarding the role technology and family/school partnership?

The following questions were used to gather information for research question two: How do schools use technology to aid in development of family/school partnerships?

1. How would you describe your current use of technology?
2. What areas do you feel technology is the most beneficial?

3. What areas do you feel technology is the least beneficial?
4. Can you describe how you/or the school is currently using technology to create a partnership with families?
5. Describe the effectiveness of the methods used?
6. What improvements or changes would you make in current methods used?
7. What other information would you like to offer regarding the use of technology to create partnerships with families?

The following questions were used to gather information for research question three: What are families' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology being used to create active partnerships with schools?

1. Describe your beliefs as they relate to family/school partnerships.
2. What is your perception of technology integration in the school?
3. Describe your beliefs regarding the uses for technology in schools.

4. What is your belief regarding the role that technology plays a role in creating school/family partnerships?
5. How have schools aided in being active participants in technology enhanced partnerships opportunities?
6. How have families aided in being active participants in technology enhanced partnership opportunities?
7. What other information would you like to give regarding your beliefs regarding the use of technology to create partnerships with schools?

The following questions were used to gather information for research question four: How do families use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships?

1. Describe your current comfort level with technology use?
2. How does this level impact your interaction with schools?

3. What type of tools do you use to interact with school? Describe your comfort level using those tools.
4. If you could change any of the technology tools used by schools to aid in partnerships with families, what changes would you make?
5. What do you believe schools are doing to aid in training families to use technology resources to promote partnerships?
6. What more would you like to see done?
7. What other information would you like to give regarding the use of technology to create partnerships with schools?

Procedures

Recruitment

The educators who met the criteria were asked to participate in the study. All campus principals were contacted via e-mail and provided with information regarding the study (Appendix D). Principals were sent an educator recruitment flyer via e-mail and were asked to present the flyer at the next faculty meeting (Appendix E). Principals posted the information in faculty/staff areas.

Once campus principals had made their announcement, educators were invited by the researcher to participate in a focus group using the district's e-mail system (Appendix F). The e-mail from the researcher contained an attachment of the educator recruitment flyer that listed the times and dates of the focus group sessions. Participants were asked to respond via e-mail to the researcher regarding attendance. Follow-up reminder e-mails were sent to the educators the day prior to all initial meeting dates. After the initial meeting dates had passed, the researcher sent another follow-up e-mail with a recruitment flyer attached. The flyer provided the educators with new dates and times of focus group sessions. The educator participants were asked to respond via e-mail to the researcher regarding attendance.

The family participants that met the criteria were asked to participate in a focus group. Families received a recruitment flyer inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix G). The flyer was placed inside their child's weekly folder that was provided by the district. Approximately 700 flyers were sent home. The recruitment flyer provided participation criteria, meeting times, and

location. Families were encouraged to respond to the researcher via phone or e-mail regarding participation in a focus group session. After the flyers were sent home a snowball recruitment technique was implemented.

A total of 22 individuals responded to the flyers or to snowball recruitment and participated in the study, 20 females and 2 males. There were 11 family volunteers and 11 educator volunteers. Six educators participated in both the interview and focus group session and one family participant participated in the both the interview and focus group session.

Possible factors that could have attributed to low educator recruitment include a lack of interest and time. Educators could also have been absent when the flyer was initially presented by the principals during the faculty meeting. Difficulty retrieving the e-mail attachment sent by the researcher was another possible factor that could have attributed to low educator recruitment. Lack of time and interest were also possible factors that attributed to low parent recruitment. Flyers placed in the student's folders may not have made it home to the families. Some

families may have received the flyer but had difficulty reading and comprehending the content.

Focus Groups Protocol

The goal for each group was to have six to ten members and be held for 60 to 90 minutes in length (Daly, 2007). The selected number of participants in each group provided everyone the opportunity to participate and was easier to control (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Families and educators participated in separate focus groups.

All participants were asked to sign a consent form upon entering the room (Appendix H). In addition to signing a consent form educator participants were asked to provide the following demographic information: years of experience, gender, ethnicity, grades taught, and years with the district (Appendix I). Family participants were asked to provide the following demographic information: ethnicity, ages of children, and grades of children (Appendix J). The participants were asked to sit in the discussion group as chairs were placed in a circle formation. Refreshments were provided at that time. The researcher served as the facilitator of the discussion and explained all procedures to the participants.

First, the participants received an overview of the study. Second, the groups were notified that the session would be audio-recorded in order to provide accurate information upon transcribing. Audio-recording confidentially procedures were also discussed. Participants were asked to be considerate of each other and let one person finish talking before another one began. Participants were provided with information regarding the risks of participating in the study and all steps taken to minimize the risks. Because participation was voluntary, participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Interview Protocol

All participants were asked to sign a consent form upon entering the room (Appendix H). Participants that participated in the focus groups held prior to the interviews were not asked to sign another consent form. In addition to signing a consent form, educator participants were asked to provide the following demographic information: years of experience, gender, ethnicity, grades taught, and years with the district (Appendix I). Family participants were asked to provide the following

demographic information: ethnicity, ages of children, and grades of children (Appendix J). The participants were asked to sit in a chair that was placed across from the researcher. Refreshments were provided at that time. First, the participants received an overview of the study and interview procedures. Second, participants were informed that the session was audio-recorded and handwritten notes were to be taken in order to provide accurate information upon transcribing. Audio recording confidentially procedures was discussed at that time. Participants were also informed that all note taking was in the words of the participants and written responses were read back to the participants to ensure accuracy of information. Participants were provided with information regarding the risks of participating in the study and all steps taken to minimize the risks. Because participation was voluntary, participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Analysis of Data

Once all focus groups had been conducted the researcher reviewed the audiotapes. The researcher transcribed each group verbatim for data analysis. Once

interviews had been conducted all audio recordings and interview notes were transcribed verbatim for data analysis. The data analysis format for the focus groups and interviews occurred in the following steps as followed by Creswell (2003, 2007):

1. Transcripts were reviewed three times. The first time the researcher read the transcripts to get an overall view of participants.
2. The second time the transcripts were reviewed to identify reoccurring themes. Reoccurring themes were color coded for each transcript.
3. The third reviewing of the transcripts was done in order to determine consensus within the group. Themes were then grouped in order to represent the experiences of the participants.
4. A peer debriefer utilized the same steps as the researcher to analysis the data. The peer debriefer reviewed all transcripts separate from the researcher.
5. The researcher and peer debriefer collaborated in order to form a consensus on the themes presented within the experiences of the participants. Themes were then reported for each data collection group.

6. The researcher then provided a description of what was experienced by the participants and provided examples.

Validity

According to Creswell (2003) the validity of a qualitative research study refers to the strength of the study. Validity also refers to the findings reflecting the phenomenon of the participants (Creswell, 2003). To ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research several validity strategies were implemented.

A peer debriefing validation strategy was used in the study. Peer debriefing provided an external check in which a peer aided in guiding the research to ensure that the reflection of the participants was present. The peer debriefer asked the researcher questions regarding all areas of the research process to ensure the integrity to the study (Creswell, 2003, 2007). The peer debriefer also reviewed all transcripts and provided input on themes that was discovered during data analysis.

Triangulation is the process in which multiple methods are used to gather information on a topic (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation for the study was conducted in the form of

data collection methods, focus groups and interviews. After all focus groups have been conducted. Educators and parents were asked to participate in an in-depth interview.

Interview participants were asked the same questions as the focus group participants. Results from the focus groups and interviews were compared. The use of rich and thick descriptions was another validity strategy that was implemented. Rich and thick descriptions provided a detailed description of the study and provided transferability of results (Creswell, 2007).

Summary

The current study explored the perceptions of schools and families regarding the role the technology in family/school partnerships. Qualitative methodology using transcendental phenomenology approach was used to conduct the study. Educators participants were recruited from a 4A school district using the district's e-mail system and a recruitment flyer presented by campus principals. Families were also recruited with a recruitment flyer and snowball sampling techniques. A total of 22 individuals participated in the study. There were eleven educator participants and eleven family participants.

The protection of human rights and the confidentiality of the participants were maintained by the use of a locked cabinet in the researchers' office. Focus groups and individual interviews were used to gather data. During focus group and interview sessions participants responded to open-ended questions. The focus groups and interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Notes that were taken during interviews were in the words of the participants and were read back to ensure accuracy of information. The data was analyzed using a multistep qualitative process. Peer debriefing, triangulation, and rich and thick descriptions were used in the study to ensure validity.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Sample Demographics

A total of 22 individuals participated in the study. There were 11 parent volunteers and 11 educator volunteers. Twenty females and two males participated in the interview and focus group sessions. One parent participated in both the focus group and an interview session. Six educators participated in both the interview and focus group session. Ten of the educator participants reported their ethnicity as Caucasian and one as Hispanic. Ten of the parent participants reported their ethnicity as Caucasian and one as Hispanic as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Participant Demographics (N=22)

	<u>Educators</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Number of Participants	11	11
Gender		
Females	11	9
Males	0	2
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	10	10
Hispanic	1	1

Educator focus group participants' total years taught ranged from 10 years to 31 years. The average years taught for the group was 17. Years with the district ranged from 3 to 19 with an average of 10 years teaching in the district. Teachers taught grades PK – 8th in addition to English as a second language and reading support services. Educator interview participants' total years taught ranged from 8 years to 31 years. The average years taught for the group was 15.7. Years with the district ranged from 3 to 19 with an average of 9.8 years teaching in the district. Teachers taught grades PK – 8th in addition to math, special education, reading, and English as a second language support services as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Educator Participants (N=11)

	<u>Focus Group</u> (n=7)	<u>Interview</u> (n=10)
Range of years teaching	10-31	8-31
Average years teaching	17	15.7
Range of years with the district	10-19	3-19
Average Years with District	10	9.8
Grades /Subjects Taught	PK-8 ESL Reading	PK-8 ESL Reading Math

Parent focus group participants' children's ages ranged from 6 to 17. Parents also had students in grades kindergarten, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 11th and 12th. Parent interview participants also reported children ages ranging from 6 to 17. Parents had students in kindergarten, 2nd, 3rd, 7th, 9th, 10th, and 12th as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Parent Participants (N=11)

	<u>Focus Group</u> (n=6)	<u>Interview</u> (n=6)
Age Range of children	6 to 17	6 to 17
Grades of Children	K, 3, 4, 5, 7 8, 9, 11, 12	K, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12

Theme Analysis

Data were analyzed for each group separately. Transcripts were evaluated for themes related to the research questions. First, the researcher read all transcripts to receive an overall and general idea of the responses provided by the participants. Interviews were reviewed as separate documents using numbers in order to maintain confidentiality and to provide reference for rich and thick descriptions. Focus groups were reviewed as one

document with page numbers used to provide reference for the rich and thick descriptions. All transcripts were then reviewed a second time in order to identify any reoccurring themes. Recurring themes were then color-coded for each transcript. Transcripts were reviewed a third time to determine if themes identified an overall consensus throughout the group. A peer debriefer utilized the same steps in analyzing the transcripts separate from the researcher. The researcher and the peer debriefer then compared themes for each group and formed a consensus on the themes represented for each group.

Themes that emerged for educator interviews and focus group were reviewed and reported. Themes that emerged for parent interview and the parent focus group were reviewed and reported. The researcher then provided a description of what was experienced by the participants and provided examples. Verbatim participant responses for the educator interview group are represented by EI and by participant number. Verbatim participant responses for the parent interview group are represented by PI and by participant number. Verbatim participant responses for the educator focus group are represented by EF and by participant

number. Verbatim participant responses for the parent focus group are represented by PF and by participant number.

Educator Interview Theme Analysis

Ten of the 11 educators participated in an individual semi-structured interview. Each educator was asked the same series of questions. Research question one addressed perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology used to create active partnerships with families. Educators expressed that technology aided in being a helpful communication tool with parents. Technology was perceived as positive and enhanced communication with families. Even though the educators perceived technology as a tool that enhanced communication it was also expressed that their skill level had an impact on their ability to communicate with parents. Two themes emerged for research question one, enhanced parent/teacher communication and the technology training of educators. One theme emerged for research question two, web pages as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Educator Interview Themes

Research Question 1

Theme 1: Enhanced Parent/Teacher Communication

Theme 2: Technology Training of Educators

Research Question 2

Theme: Web Pages

Enhanced Parent/Teacher Communication

Nine of the ten educators indicated that technology aided as a tool that enhanced communication with parents. Educators' perceptions and beliefs were indicated as follows:

With busy lives, technology helps conference on the phone, they can look up the Internet they can pull info from the website, e-mail. (EI3)

It is great the parents can get on parents access, e-mail for communication. (EI4)

Our online grade book helps the parents to be aware of the student's progress. It also helps me as a teacher to see if they are logging on. It's another communication tool. (EI9)

I think it has helped a lot to be able to have a website to post what is happening in the classroom. It helps the parents stay involved. (EI10)

I feel it has made parents more involved in schools and what's going on. One example is to be able to send home a class newsletter. The web page online lets the parents pull up information on a lot of different areas at school. (EI5)

Technology Training for Educators

Educators perceived their technology skill ability level to range from low to very high. Technology training appeared to play a positive and negative role in assisting educators with using technology to aid in the development of partnerships with families. Five of the ten educators indicated that technology training has helpful and adequate whereas the other five indicated that additional training was needed.

Partnership with the parents between school and home — just some sort of training that would show us (educators) a better way to help parents interact. (EI2)

I think my skills are low and I feel unsure of myself when I use technology, I feel inadequate with my web page trying to communicate with families. (EI1)

We (teachers) have to be taught. We need to teach them (parents), family interactive; an activity together. (EI4)

I am average as far as the knowledge I have to share. But I feel like there is room for improvement. (EI7)

Research question two addressed how schools use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnership. Educators discussed the importance of web

pages and the role web pages play in the creation of partnerships. Therefore, the theme of web pages emerged. In addition to web pages, e-mail and the automatic call out system were mentioned.

Web Pages

Nine of the ten participants reported that web pages aided in the development of family and school partnerships. Educators' suggested that teacher, district, and campus web pages were tools that provided families with a variety of school related information.

I think parents look more to the web page for information. I sort of hear them say I saw that on the web page. And I think they want and expect to see information on the web page. (EI9)

Many teachers use the web page to put vocabulary, spelling words, academic information, and links to good websites for parents to be proactive with their kids. (EI1)

School has a web page that has not only teacher web pages linked to it, but has lots of information about the school. (EI5)

School information, scheduling, school information. I mean daily activity things that are posted on the web page. (EI7)

I think it is good we have web pages, automatic call out, and have access to students' information. (EI1)

Just the web page, links on the web page, the automated system regarding lunch accounts. (EI2)

I think the call outs are very effective. The websites are also effective. The parents can look at what we are studying and the newsletters. (EI10)

Parent Interview Theme Analysis

Six of the eleven parents participated in an individual semi-structured interview session. Each parent was asked the same set of questions. Research question three addressed the families' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology being used to create active partnerships with schools. Families perceived that technology enhanced the communication with schools. However, family members expressed the need for training to access technology tools and the concern for decreased personal contact. Therefore, three themes emerged for research question three, enhanced communication, parent training, and personal interaction. One theme emerged for research question four, lack of school support as shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Parent Interview Themes

Research Question 3

Theme 1: Enhanced Communication

Theme 2: Parent Training

Theme 3: Personal Interaction

Research Question 4

Theme: Lack of School support

Enhanced Communication

All of the parents expressed how technology creates, promotes, and enhances communication between families and schools. Parents believed that information was provided quickly. Family Access and web pages aided in fostering school involvement.

I think computers have played a good role in fostering the parent/teacher relationship. It promotes it more. I think it is good thing. I think it's funny when the teacher replies back to the email from her blackberry. That amazed me. (PI1)

As far as the teacher's web pages are good because you can stay involved without actually being involved at the school. You can know absence or tardies for older grades. Then there is Family Access. (PI3)

It is wonderful parents can access grades, calendar, and teacher's web pages, and homework help. (PI2)

My beliefs as they relate to technology, parents, and schools – helps get information more quickly. I especially like Family Access. (PI4)

I think that family access is a good example, their website are kind of neat to find out what's going on. (PI1)

Parent Training

Five of the six parents indicated a need for training. Parents believed that schools should aid in training parents on how to use technology tools provided by the school.

I am one of the parents lost in the shuffle. The school could help the parents that don't know much about technology or don't rely on it as much. Don't assume all parents are in their 20's or 30's. (PI6)

I think the school could do a better job aiding parents with learning how to use Family Access and making them aware of those tools. (PI4)

It would be nice if schools could get training for parents. (PI2)

Some parents are utilizing the tools given to them and some are not. (PI4)

Personal Interaction

Five of the six parents expressed concern for a decrease in the personal interaction that could develop as a result of technology. Parents believed that personal interaction with schools should not be replaced by technology. Personal interaction between teachers, students, and families is still important.

Hope teachers still retain personal contact with the kids. It's good teachers still need to remain in personal contact. (PI6)

My thing is, I think the use of email and parent access are wonderful tools. However this should not replace parent/teacher face-to-face interaction. (PI4)

I feel like that it's the one and only connection we have with the school. I don't feel it's very personal any more. It's more like e-mails. (PI5)

But I don't think it should take the place of, well not yet anyway of books, hand written test and teacher interaction with the children. (PI1)

It is a tool only, cannot replace parent/teacher interaction. I do see it as a good tool but not to be solely relied upon. (PI4)

I believe parents should stay involved. As for joining the PTA, staying connected to the teacher, being at the school, volunteer as much as possible to know what's going on. (PI3)

Research question four addressed how families use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships. Parents reported their self-assessed technology comfort levels ranging from low to average. Technology tools used by parents were e-mails, cell phones, computers to access the Internet, websites, and Family Access. However, all of parents expressed an overall concern for the lack of support provided by the school in assisting families with using tools to aid in partnerships. Therefore, one theme emerged for research question four, lack of school support.

Lack of School Support

All six participants commented on the need for school support. The areas of training parents and providing parents with the necessary information to access and use technology tools were addressed. Parents expressed that such support was needed to assist in the development of family and school partnerships.

Just letting them know it is out there to use. Like had, had the Family Access id since kindergarten but the end of second grade is the first time I logged in used it. And once I did I saw how resourceful it could be. But I think in kindergarten three years ago. I had to ask for the id. And three years ago later when I am enrolling my daughter in kindergarten for the first time it was in here, the application a request form for the id was in the enrollment package plus there was another page in there of students already in and maybe they used that paper to link the students to the parent so by providing more information it would promote me as a parent to use it more. (PI1)

Nil, it would be nice if they (schools) had tech training for parents. (PI2)

Tech training for parents in the evening when it is feasible for parents to attend. (PI2)

They can encourage parents to be on the website more at open house, at meet the teacher they can have a training session for the website just so parents can get around. (PI3)

Help the people that are not as savvy, inept at the computer. (PI6)

Just that they need to help the people that can't figure it out on their own. (PI6)

Not enough I had no idea about Family Access until my kids were a freshman and sophomore in high school. Parents need to be informed more than just through e-mail because they are not using e-mail. They need to be informed via letters and through some type of required parent/administrator meeting at the beginning of each year. (PI4)

They could give us a packet or paper reminding us of what the school has to offer-like family access. (PI5)

Educator Focus Group Theme Analysis

Seven of the eleven educators participated in the focus group. Six of the participants also participated in an individual semi-structured interview session. All of the teachers were currently serving on an elementary campus. Educators answered open-ended questions that were related to the research questions. Research question one addressed teacher's perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology used to create active partnerships with families. Teachers expressed that technology was a good communication tool to use with parents. Technology provided teachers with an opportunity to communicate with parents that have to work and as a result are not able to attend conferences. Teachers also indicated that technology training provided by the school was not always adequate. Two themes emerged for research question one, good

communication tool and technology training concerns. One theme emerged for research question two, parent training as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Educator Focus Group Themes

Research Question 1

Theme 1: Good Communication Tool

Theme 2: Technology Training Concerns

Research Question 2

Theme: Parent Training

Good Communication Tool

Teachers expressed that technology proved to be a useful tool for communicating with parents. Technology provided an avenue to reach both parents in the event that parents are divorced.

Technology helps when you have a parent that works all of the school hours. And never can come to a conference, never, you only talk to them on the phone. They can e-mail you back and forth. (EF3)

That's when e-mail comes back in, parents that are connected through e-mail, both parents are getting the reminders. They can look on your web page and see that note. (EF5)

Good way to participate with people that can't be there all the time. (EF5)

I have e-mail contact, my web page up. I put my newsletter on there. Web page is simple but I faithfully put up my newsletter. So even if a child is absent. I feel really good about it. (EF2)

I had an ARD before that was a conference call. Is that not technology too? It was a three-way call and that was handy. (EF2)

Technology Training Concerns

Teachers expressed concerns with the training that they were receiving in the area of technology. Since teachers' ability levels varied greatly with the same and across campuses, teachers' felt that ability based technology training should be considered. Statements indicated that current training methods used such as large group training sessions were not always beneficial. Teachers also mentioned being hesitant to ask questions when they lack an understanding of how to use technology tools.

When we have mass group, it is really difficult. Tech training should be held in a small group setting and by level of expertise. In a small group setting of 15 to 20 at a time. It is tailored to the need of the teacher and that way people are not getting lost as much. (EF7)

The disparity between the presenter who's obviously extremely knowledgeable, and the novice, and the large group setting they don't all out work together. (EF2)

Big group training, like grade book at the end of a 30 minute lesson you better know how. (EF5)

You have people sitting beside you going how much longer and you are going now what? Because you are two steps behind. (EF1)

I think it would be nice to have more people at the computer trainings to help us. (EF1)

After the program is over, extra time that is allotted for those who need extra help. (EF1)

The older kids know how to do things better than I do on the computer. I say come do it then; they can find something on the Internet faster than I can because they know the path to follow. (EF3)

Research question two addressed how schools use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships. Teachers felt that schools utilized multiple technological modalities such as websites, emails, the call out system, and the Family Access program to create partnerships with families. Such programs provide parents opportunities to view lunch accounts, grades, attendance, and disciplinary actions. However, it was suggested that parent training was needed in order to provide parents with opportunities to engage in technology-enhanced partnerships. The theme that emerged was parent training.

Parent Training

Offering training classes to parents of all ethnic groups and I was even thinking, not meet the teacher, but if we had a separate night in the beginning of the year. I know that's more on the teachers, but even if you invited just

your parents to come to your class, and now that we have the hue you can show them how to access your web page. (EF1)

We assume, that we're just so use to everyone having a computer but not everybody does. (EF1)

Just like we would want that hands on training I would love for my class parents to come to the technology lab, sit here and look this is what I'm going to give you throughout the year and this is how you can use it. (EF4)

It's becoming so much technology we never had to think about having a meeting for our parents. But now it's becoming so abundant and relevant for them to, it would be really helpful. (EF1)

Yeah like even filling out those background checks for parents. I had to sit down and kind of walk them through it. It is so easy to just say that form is on the LDISD website. There's a link and they are like, what? (EF2)

I know its just one person doing the program but A--- bringing those parents in and whatever they do on the computers. She is doing something with them on the computers. Last year it was a typing program teaching them how to type. (EF2)

I think we should do like the library does as a public service, offer computers for a certain time parents can have access to. (EF2)

Parent Focus Group Theme Analysis

Six of the eleven parents participated in the focus group. One parent also participated in a semi-structured parent interview session. Open-ended questions were asked. Parents were encouraged to respond openly and freely. Research question three addressed families' perceptions and

beliefs regarding the role of technology being used to create active partnerships with schools. Family members reported that technology provided various avenues for accessing information as well as being a good communication tool. However parents reported that having limited access to technology was a concern because it was often difficult to obtain computer access. Family members mentioned that often, outdated equipment has an impact on parents' ability to create active partnerships. The two themes emerged for research question three, avenues to access and limited technology access and outdated equipment emerged. Two themes emerged for research question four, limited technology access and parent training, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Parent Focus Group Themes

Research Question 3

Theme 1: Avenues to Access Information

Theme 2: Limited Technology Access and Outdated Equipment

Research Question 4

Theme 1: Limited Technology Access

Theme 2: Parent Training

Avenues to Access Information

Parents utilized technology to check grades, lunch accounts, behavior, and missing assignments. Additional tools such as online textbooks and teacher websites all provided parents with information to assist their children with assignments. Parents also suggested that technology opens up communication.

Overall in relation to that, I think there is a lot of active partnerships going on and dialogue better the school by having services available for kids. There is study island, textbook websites. The lunch accounts, the grade accounts, the homework, the teacher pages, and the curriculum links. (PF3)

Family access is to check on grades, the students-their lunch account, the whole behavior and missing work. (PF2)

I think it opens up more avenues for communicating with the parents. (PF6)

When you have split families, you can communicate with both parents. (PF5)

Online textbooks, teacher websites, having to retrieve homework assignments, and downloads for homework assignments. (PF5)

The thing that is cool is the auto links that they send through the e-mails. (PF3)

They send reminders for like, conferences. (PF1)

Limited Technology Access and Outdated Equipment

Parents expressed having difficulty obtaining access to technology. Such difficulty results in the inability to receive information thus making it difficult for families to have partnerships with schools.

In many populations they do not have access on a daily basis. (PF6)

I know in some cases in some classrooms they don't give a book. Kids have to access it online, how can they if they don't have access to a computer. (PF6)

The one thing I do find a little bit difficult is that we have dial-up. So sometimes my computer crashes or won't download something. So we usually have to find some other way like go to the library to get it done. Or she has to do it at school which can sometimes be difficult. (PF5)

There are a lot of times that happens and I have to call up to the school. And say don't mark my child she does her homework and I'm sorry we couldn't open it. (PF5)

It could be if you your computer is more than three years old, you're out of date. Because I can't access anything that the school sends out that has an attachment to it. There is no way I can do it unless I enter that software. That is a problem because most parents can't afford that. (PF2)

It is unrealistic to expect we as parents to get our kids to the public library. (PF6)

Research question four addressed how families use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships. Parents' self-assessment level of technology usage was described as petty comfortable to very

comfortable. Parents also indicated that levels of technology made it easier to interact with the school. E-mails and websites were tools used and parents were very comfortable using those tools. However, parents indicated that technology usage was impacted by limited access and parent training. Therefore, two themes emerged for research question four, limited technology access and parent training.

Limited Technology Access

Parents expressed the desire for easy accessible use of computers and software. Parents also acknowledged that the school made assumptions about technology access.

I think yet again don't make assumptions that families have access to technology. (PF6)

Access to computers, to bear in mind that it's not available to everyone. (PF6)

Software is not available to everyone or can't afford it for everyone. (PF3)

Be very cautious about requiring to do technology based projects or assignments because it's not available to everyone. (PF6)

Software being made available. (PF2)

Parent Training

Parents expressed the desire for training sessions on how to use technology tools used by the school. Such

training would aid in providing parents the skills needed to develop partnerships with the school.

There are probably parents who don't understand family access. They don't know how to get on it. Don't know how to log on. But if there was a training at a PTA meeting, I think that would be nice. (PF4)

The district's website is pretty good but if you've never been on it it's hard to find. It's hard to navigate. So that if you don't know that you are looking for a school and you don't know you need to go up and tab on it, you can just go to it and say this is not telling me anything and just give up. (PF4)

Even the Family Access thing, the first time I went on it when they changed it, I went on and I couldn't get a hold of it. And finally my husband was sitting there and says the little line which was not highlighted. If you click that it will get you in there. But it was not highlighted so how would I know to punch that little line. It didn't say punch here, start, go. (PF2)

Training. (PF6)

Training available at all times. (PF2)

They are assuming that you all know. (PF5)

Summary

Transcripts were reviewed to present findings from the focus groups and interviews. The themes from the transcripts emerged and were reported for each group. Themes for the focus groups and interview groups were reported separately. Verbatim responses from the participants were used to support the theme findings.

The themes that emerged from the educator interviews were enhanced parent/teacher communication, technology training of educators, and web pages. The themes that emerged from the parent interviews were enhanced communication, parent training, personal interaction, and lack of school support. The themes that emerged from the educator focus group were good communication tool, technology training concerns, and parent training. The themes that emerged from the parent focus group were avenues to access information, limited technology access and outdated equipment, limited technology access, and parent training.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how educators and families perceived and the usage of technology for creating active family and school partnerships. This study also explored how families and educators used technology applications to create family/school partnerships.

Eleven parents and eleven educators participated in the study for a total of twenty-two participants. Data were collected from a focus group of parents, an educator focus group, ten educator interviews, and six parent interviews. Six of the educators and one of the parents participated in both an interview and the focus group session. Transcripts from interviews and focus groups were analyzed for emerging themes. Themes were reported and verbatim responses from participants were used to add rich and thick descriptions (Creswell, 2007; Krueger & Casey, 2009). The themes found during the educator and parent sessions were analyzed and then commonalities and contrasts were reported.

Educator Interview and Focus Group

Research question one addressed teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology used to create active school partnerships with families. The themes that emerged for research question one from the educator interview group were enhanced parent/teacher communication and concerns regarding the technology training of educators. Research question two addressed how schools use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships. Only one theme emerged for research question two, web pages. Educator focus group themes for research question one were the use of technology as a good communication tool and technology training concerns. Only one theme emerged for research question two, parent training.

The findings for the educator interviews and the focus group indicated that educators in both groups believed that technology was a tool that enhanced communication with parents. Such tools provide parents with ready accessible academic progress and information about school events. The interview group particularly believed that web pages were beneficial in providing parents with a variety of

information. Epstein's six types of involvement framework supports this finding. Epstein's (1995, 2008) framework is used as a guideline for schools to aid in building partnerships with families and communities. Epstein's type two involvement is communicating. According to the participants technology has provided opportunities for communication. Educators and schools have the opportunity to reach families and keep them informed. Technology enhanced communication allows families to be connected to the school without having to be physically present.

Despite the perceptions of technology being used as a positive communication tool, educators from both groups believed that technology training for educators was an area of concern. Training techniques by the district were not always viewed as effective. Educators expressed the need for additional support as varied skill levels among the educators needed to be one of the factors used to drive instructional training. This finding was supported by the recommendations of Mitchell, Foulger, and Wetzel (2009). They indicated that one of the challenges facing schools that engaged in Internet communication was educator training. It was suggested that educators utilize a variety

of resources to develop technology skills (Mitchell, Foulger, and Wetzal, 2009). Educators in the study believed that opportunities to learn how to utilize technology applications were needed. In addition, opportunities to share that knowledge with families were also needed.

The educator focus group suggested that parent training would aid in equipping parents with the necessary technology tools to be actively involved with schools. Educators' believed that in order for parents to be active partners with schools technology access and training opportunities needed to be provided. This finding is consistent with the recommendations made by Mitchell, Foulger and Wetzal (2009). Mitchell et. al (2009) indicated that parent training is a challenge when schools utilize Internet based communications. Parents needed to be provided with learning opportunities. For example, during open house or conferences, time can be allotted for parent training on the use of technology tools. Such training will aid in closing communication gaps that could occur from parents' lack of knowledge (Mitchell, Foulger, & Wetzal, 2009).

Parent Interviews and Focus Group

Research question three addressed families' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology used to create active partnerships with schools. The themes that emerged for research question three from the parent interview group were enhanced communication, parent training, and personal interaction. Research question four addressed how families use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships. One theme emerged for research question four, lack of school support. Parent focus group themes for research question three were avenues to access and limited technology access and outdated equipment. The themes that emerged for research question four were limited technology access and parent training.

The findings from the interviews and focus group indicated a need for parent training. The need for parent training was also expressed by the educator focus group. Again this finding is supported by the recommendation of Mitchell, Foulger, and Wetzell (2009). Parents expressed the overall need to have the opportunity to learn more about the tools provided by the school. Training sessions on how

to use the district's computer applications, Family Access and website navigation were suggested. Parents also expressed how schools prematurely makes assumptions about parents' technology-based skills. The parent interview group expressed a lack of support by the schools in area of parent training.

Both groups also conveyed the importance of communication and the need for positive communication. These findings were also supported by the conceptual framework of parent involvement by Epstein (1995, 2008). Epstein's (1995,2008) type two involvement is communicating. Parents perceived that technology provided communication opportunities with the school. Epstein (1995, 2008) indicated that communication for families and schools is an essential for partnerships to develop.

The parent focus group perceived limited access to technology and outdated technology equipment as a factor that needed to be taken in consideration when schools use Internet based communications. Parents expressed needing to find additional resources when assisting with homework assignments. Parents also mentioned not always being able to receive information from schools due to incapability

with software. The assumption made by schools according to the parents is that all families have access to technology. Unfortunately, not all families have access to computers. Lewis (2007) reported that the National Center for Educational Statistics indicated there is a disparity among ethnicity, family income, and education as it relate to computer usage in the home. Therefore, schools can assist with closing the gaps by providing access to technology tools for families and students at each campus (Lewis, 2007). Access provided by the schools will aid in eliminating some of the issues and concerns presented by the parents.

Conclusions

Parents and educators believed that technology played an active and positive role with regards to keeping families informed of grades, school events, and other general information. Technology is also a useful tool for parent and teacher communication. However only the parents expressed the challenges faced regarding technology access and equipment. Therefore, schools need to be aware of the concerns that families face as it relates to technology access and equipment. Limited technology access and a lack

of resources needed to update equipment can hinder the development of partnership opportunities with schools. Parents also expressed that schools are somewhat lacking in the area of technology support services for families. All concerns addressed by educators and parents need to be also addressed at the school and district level.

Educators and parents believed that technology training for teachers and parents should be a primary concern for school districts. Training received by educators needs to be presented in a format that is conducive to learning for all skill levels. Training for parents needs to be implemented to aid in promoting awareness of the tools provided by the district.

Educators and parents in the study agreed that technology plays an active role in creating family and school partnerships. With the enhanced opportunities that technology provides for family and school interaction, it will become essential that training needs to occur. Even though generalizations for all families, educators, and schools cannot be made according to this study training needs to occur as technology opportunities increase.

Implications

Epstein's (1995) framework establishes the importance of communication between families and schools to create partnerships. Communication activities between schools and families provide families with the necessary information to become involved in school programs (Epstein, 2008). Therefore, based on this component of the framework implications can be made for families, educators, schools, and districts.

An implication for parents and families is that training opportunities for parents is essential to their involvement in technology enhanced communication opportunities. Therefore, without training, parents will not have the ability to access information regarding events and academic progress. Training opportunities for parents is an essential component in closing any information and technology gaps that occur between families and schools.

Another implication for parents and families promotes a more proactive approach in creating partnerships with school. It is important that parents become aware of the partnership opportunities that are available. Therefore all materials distributed by the schools needs to be reviewed

and questions should be asked if the parent/family does not understand the content.

An implication for educators is similar to that of parents. As technology enhanced opportunities increase the need for educator training will also need to be provided. Educators will need to be provided opportunities to learn new technology, share their expertise with other educators, and assist in training their parents. Technology training will also provide more opportunities for communicating with families.

An implication for schools is the need to provide opportunities for educators and parents to receive training. Educators in the study expressed that training techniques were not always effective. Therefore, ineffective training techniques could lead to teachers not utilizing the technology tools that the school provided. The nonuse of technology tools could lead to gaps in communication between families and schools. Some families may rely on technology applications to create partnership with schools. Therefore, without the use of technology tools those families would not be engaged in partnership opportunities. The same principal could also apply for

parents. Parents that do not receive proper instruction using technology tools could lead to nonuse and therefore a gap in communication with the schools. Another implication for schools is to provide parents and families with options for communication. Parents can provide schools with information regarding the technology tools that are accessible in the home. Schools can use that information to identify and use the technology tools that will produce the best results.

An implication for the district is to ensure that both teachers and parents receive training on all tools that would aid in effective family/school partnerships. Districts can also assist in making technology available to parents. Parents in the study expressed the need for an understanding by the district that not all families had access to technology and updated software and equipment. Districts can also review the technology methods used to create partnerships with families in order to evaluate if such methods are enhancing partnerships or creating more barriers.

Epstein's (1995) framework also suggests that volunteering is important when developing school and family

partnerships. Volunteering requires schools to actively seek, recruit, and train volunteers to aid in supporting students programs (Epstein, 2008). Therefore, based on this component of the framework implications can be made for families, educators, schools, and districts.

Technology tools aid in enhancing communication opportunities further more the need to maintain personal interaction is important. Parents in the study expressed the concern regarding a decrease in personal interaction as technology use increases. Therefore, an implication for parents is to maintain personal contact by attending open houses, PTA meetings, parent conferences, and volunteering. An implication for teachers is to aid in maintaining personal contact by providing opportunities for volunteering, inviting parents to PTA meetings and other school events, and scheduling regular conference times.

An implication for schools is to aid in maintaining personal interaction by making sure parents are informed about all events and having a place that volunteers can work and be part of the school environment. An implication for districts is to aid in maintaining personal interaction

with families by making sure that all families have access to information, especially those without technology at home.

Recommendations

Results of this study cannot be generalized to all school districts. Therefore, it is recommended that future research be conducted at the school, district, region, and state levels. The data could then be compiled to provide information on the resources needed to assist all education levels with acquiring tools needed to create parent and teacher technology training programs. Such programs could aid in creating active partnerships with families and schools by creating more opportunities for communication.

Epstein's (1995, 2008) framework expressed the importance of communication between families and schools. Therefore it is important for schools and districts to find ways to provide technology training for parents and teachers. For example, schools could partner with Family Studies programs at local colleges and universities. Family Studies programs could provide assistance with the creation of parent education programs. Parents could also take advantage of training sessions during PTA meetings or

parent conferences. Educators could also begin peer-training programs.

It is further recommended that the current school district create a quantitative instrument from this qualitative data. The quantitative measurement could be utilized as a needs assessment for parents and teachers. The data collected could assist in determining how schools can aid both groups in becoming more equipped to use technology to create partnerships. The district could also use the instrument to assess any current programs to identify areas for improvement.

Even though the educators that participated in the study had a wide range of experiences (PK - 8), it is recommended that additional research be conducted at each level. Elementary, middle, and high school teachers and parents may have different technology needs and concerns. Each level may also have different needs in terms of training for parents and educators.

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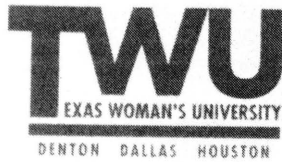
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APPENDIX A
IRB Approval Letter



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378 Fax 940-898-3416
e-mail: IRB@twu.edu

January 6, 2010

Ms. Irene Denise Evans-Jackson
1408 Teasley Lane, Apt. 2111
Denton, TX 76205

Dear Ms. Evans-Jackson:

Re: The Role of Technology in Family and School Partnerships

The above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and appears to meet our requirements for the protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt PRIOR to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp and a copy of the annual/final report are enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. The signed consent forms and final report must be filed with the Institutional Review Board at the completion of the study.

This approval is valid one year from January 6, 2010. According to regulations from the Department of Health and Human Services, another review by the IRB is required if your project changes in any way, and the IRB must be notified immediately regarding any adverse events. If you have any questions, feel free to call the TWU Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kathy DeOrnellas, Chair
Institutional Review Board - Denton

enc.

cc. Dr. Larry LeFlore, Department of Family Sciences
Dr. Joyce Armstrong, Department of Family Sciences
Graduate School

APPENDIX B

District Approval Letter

LAKE DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

315 E. Handley Drive • P.O. Box 548
LAKE DALLAS, TEXAS 75065
940-497-4039
Fax 940-497-3737
www.ldisd.net

October 13, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

Irene Denise Evans-Jackson has permission to conduct research at the Lake Dallas Independent School District Campuses. The LDISD administration is aware that the results of the study will be published and the district will be provided a copy of the results. The confidentiality procedures for the research study and potential risks have also been provided by the researcher. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Dr. Marci Malcom at mmalcom@ldisd.net or 940 497-8405.

Sincerely,



Marci Malcom, Ph.D.
Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Lake Dallas ISD
940 497 8405

APPENDIX C

Focus Group and Interview Questions

The following questions were used to gather information for research question one: What are teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology being used to create active partnerships with families?

1. Describe your beliefs regarding technology integration in schools: as it relates to students, families, and school personnel.

2. Describe your technology training experiences.

3. What significance would you place on your training?

4. In what areas has your training been most beneficial?

5. In what areas has your training been least beneficial?

6. How would you describe family/school partnerships?

7. What is your belief regarding how your training as

helped you develop a partnership with families?

8. What areas do you feel need to be further explored?

9. How would you evaluate your ability to use technology to engage in partnerships with families?

10. What other information would you like to give about your beliefs regarding the role technology and family/school partnership?

The following questions were used to gather information for research question two: How do schools use technology to aid in development of family/school partnerships?

1. How would you describe your current use of technology?
2. What areas do you feel technology is the most beneficial?
3. What areas do you feel technology is the least beneficial?
4. Can you describe how you/or the school is currently using technology to create a partnership with families?
5. Describe the effectiveness of the methods used?
6. What improvements or changes would you make in current methods used?
7. What other information would you like to offer regarding the use of technology to create partnerships with families?

The following questions were used to gather information for research question three: What are families' perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of technology being used to create active partnerships with schools?

1. Describe your beliefs as they relate to family/school partnerships.
2. What is your perception of technology integration in the school?
3. Describe your beliefs regarding the uses for technology in schools.
4. What is your belief regarding the role that technology plays a role in creating school/family partnerships?
5. How have schools aided in being active participants in technology enhanced partnerships opportunities?
6. How have families aided in being active participants in technology enhanced partnership opportunities?
7. What other information would you like to give regarding your beliefs regarding the use of technology to create partnerships with schools?

The following questions were used to gather information for research question four: How do families use technology to aid in the development of family/school partnerships?

1. Describe your current comfort level with technology use?
2. How does this level impact your interaction with schools?
3. What type of tools do you use to interact with school? Describe your comfort level using those tools.
4. If you could change any of the technology tools used by schools to aid in partnerships with families, what changes would you make?
5. What do you believe schools are doing to aid in training families to use technology resources to promote partnerships?
6. What more would you like to see done?
7. What other information would you like to give regarding the use of technology to create partnerships with schools?

APPENDIX D

E-mail Script to Principals

Irene Denise Evans-Jackson

Title of the Study: The Role of Technology in Family and School Partnerships

E-mail Script below is the information that will be sent to all principals in the Lake Dallas School District:

My name is Irene Denise Evans-Jackson and in addition to being a teacher at Lake Dallas Elementary I am also a doctorate student at Texas Woman's University. I am currently conducting research for my dissertation to fulfill the requirements for a PhD in Family Studies. I have attached a copy of the recruitment flyer for the teachers at your campus. I am requesting that you read it at your next faculty meeting and then place the flyer in a location that can be viewed by all teachers. If you have any questions regarding the study please contact me at 940-497-2222 or devans@ldisd.net. Thank you for your time.

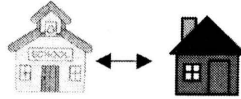
Irene Denise Evans-Jackson

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading and Internet transactions.

APPENDIX E

Educator Recruitment Flyer

The Role of Technology in Family and School Partnerships



Be part of an important educational study

Are you currently a classroom teacher with at least one year experience, attended a college preparation program, and have a Texas standard teaching certificate.

If so then you may be eligible to participate in the study.

- The purpose of this qualitative study will be to explore the perceptions of school teachers and parents use of technology for active family and school partnerships. This study will also explore how technology is used to create family/school partnerships.
- Benefits include meeting and talking with other teachers about ideas and experiences as well learning some new ideas and information regarding educational technology and home and school collaboration.
- Participants will receive a free meal for participating in one of the focus group sessions.
- Participation is voluntary and therefore you may withdraw from the study at anytime.

This study is being conducted at:

Lake Dallas Elementary

401 Main St.

Lake Dallas, TX 75065

Conference Room at 3:30 PM on 4/19/10, 4/20/10 and 4/21/10

Please note that there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading and internet transactions.

Please contact Irene Denise Evans-Jackson at (940) 497-2222 or e-mail devans@ldisd.net for more information.

APPENDIX F

E-mail Script to Educators

Irene Denise Evans-Jackson

Title of the Study: Role of Technology in Family and School Partnerships

E-mail Script below is the information that will be sent to all educators in the Lake Dallas Independent School District.

My name is Irene Denise Evans-Jackson and in addition to being a teacher at Lake Dallas Elementary I am also a doctorate student at Texas Woman's University. I am currently conducting research for my dissertation to fulfill the requirements for a PhD in Family Studies.

I have attached a copy of the recruitment flyer. The flyer will contain the criteria for study participation. If you do not meet the requirements for participation please disregard this e-mail and I would like to thank you for your time. If you do meet the criteria for participation I would like to invite you to come and participate in one of three focus groups that will be held in the Lake Dallas Elementary Conference room at 3:30 PM on April 12th, April 13th, or April 14th.

Once you have reviewed the recruitment flyer and are interested in participating please email me a date and time in which you would like to attend. If you have any questions regarding the study please contact me at devans@ldisd.net. Thank you for your time.

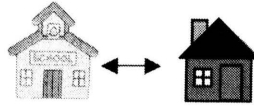
Irene Denise Evans-Jackson

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading and Internet transactions.

APPENDIX G

Parent Recruitment Flyer

The Role of Technology in Family and School Partnerships



Be part of an important educational study

Do you currently have a child enrolled in a LSISD public school, and are be the legal guardian of the child.?

If so then you may be eligible to participate in the study.

- The purpose of this qualitative study will be to explore the perceptions of school teachers and parents use of technology for active family and school partnerships. This study will also explore how technology is used to create family/school partnerships.
- Benefits include meeting and talking with other parents about ideas and experiences as well learning some new ideas and information regarding technology and home and school collaboration.
- Participants will receive a free meal for participating in one of the focus group sessions.
- Participation is voluntary and therefore you may withdraw from the study at anytime.

This study is being conducted at:

Lake Dallas Elementary

401 Main St.

Lake Dallas, TX 75065

Conference at 3:30 pm on 5/4/10 , 5/6/10 and 5/7/10

Please note that there is there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading and internet transactions.

Please contact Irene Denise Evans-Jackson at (940) 497-2222 or e-mail devans@ldisd.net for more information.

APPENNDIX H
Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: The Role of Technology in Family and School Partnerships

Investigator: Irene Denise Evans-Jackson 940-497-2222
Advisor: Joyce Armstrong, Ph.D. 940-898-2690

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are asked to be a participant in a research study conducted for the completion of a doctoral dissertation of Irene Denise Evans-Jackson at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of the research is to explore the perceptions school teachers and parents use of technology for active family and school partnerships. This study will also explore how technology is used to create family and school partnerships.

Research Procedures

The researcher will conduct three focus groups for educators and three focus groups for parents. Each participant will attend only one of the focus groups. The researcher will ask the group questions and allow participants to respond freely. The groups will be video taped by the researcher and later transcribed. The sole purpose of using video recording is to aid in accurate data analysis. Each participant will be asked to attend one focus group session lasting 60 to 90 minutes. Four participants will also be chosen to participate in follow-up individual interviews, lasting 45 to 60 minutes. The participants will be chosen during a random selection process after all focus groups have been conducted, therefore, the 4 participants will participate in both the focus group and interview session for a total time commitment of 120 to 150 minutes. Once all sessions and individual interviews have been completed the researcher will use the video recordings to transcribe the information.

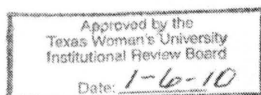
Potential Risks

The researcher will ask questions regarding the use of technology for family and school partnerships. A possible risk in this study is fatigue as a result of the questioning. If you at all experience fatigue and become tired you may take as many breaks as needed. You may also stop participation at any time. There is a potential risk of lost of confidentiality in all e-mail, downloading, and internet transactions. Therefore all e-mail and telephone correspondence will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office.

Another potential risk is a lost of confidentiality regarding study participation. Confidentially will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. Actual names will not be used in the reporting of the study's results and all information related to the study kept in locked filed cabinets. Loss of anonymity is also a potential risk. To minimize that risk actual names will not be used in the reporting of the study's results and all information related to the study kept in locked filed cabinets.

Initials

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Video tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and the researcher will be the only one with access to the tapes. The focus group tapes will be destroyed within 3 years after the study has been completed. All written and typed materials and computer storage devices from the interviews and focus groups will also be stored in locked cabinet in the researcher's office. All written and typed materials and computer storage devices will also be destroyed within 3 years after the study has been completed. Coercion is a potential risk therefore the participants will be provided opportunities to ask questions regarding the purpose of the study and who has access to the information regarding the study. All participants have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time because participation is voluntary. Video tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and the researcher will be the only one with access to the tapes. The focus group tapes will be destroyed within 3 years after the study has been completed.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to try to prevent any problem that could happen as a result of the research being conducted. If any problems should arise please inform the researcher immediately so that assistance can be provided. Please understand that TWU is not responsible for medical or financial assistance for any incidents that may occur as a result your participation in the research study.

Participation and Benefits

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Benefits for parental participants is the opportunity to meet and discuss with other parents ideas and experiences as well learning some new ideas and information regarding technology and home and school collaboration. Educator benefits include meeting and talking with other teachers about ideas and experiences as well learning some new ideas and information regarding educational technology and home and school collaboration. All focus group participants will receive a free meal that will be provided at the time of the meeting.

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Signature of the Participant

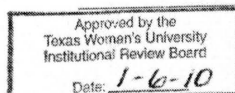
Date

- If you would like a copy of the results please indicate where you would like to results to be sent.

E-mail _____

or

Home address and telephone number:



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APPENDIX I

Educator Data Form

Educators Data Form

Please answer each of the following questions.

Gender: _____

Ethnicity:

Years of experience: _____

Years with the district _____

Grade(s) taught: _____

APPENDIX J

Parent Data Form

Parent Data Form

Please answer each of the following questions.

Ethnicity_____

Age(s) of children in school _____

Grade(s) of children in school _____