



# **The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin**

## **International Journal for Professional Educators**

2019 • Volume 85-3

**Community Education**

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## The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin

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Princeton, NJ

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Professor, Educational Leadership  
Concordia University  
Chicago, Illinois

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Judith Merz, EdD, Editor  
Doctoral Advisor, Educational Leadership  
Nova Southeastern University  
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

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The *Bulletin*, an official publication of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, promotes professional and personal growth of members through publication of their writings. Three online issues per year, subtitled *International Journal for Professional Educators*, focus on research-based and documented works—applied and data-based research, position papers, program descriptions, reviews of literature, and other articles on announced themes or other topics of interest to educators. Two print issues, subtitled *Collegial Exchange*, focus on articles based on practice and experience related to education, the Society, women, and children, as well as personal reflections and creative works. All five issues include book and technology reviews, letters to the editor, poetry, and graphic arts.

Submissions to the *Bulletin*, a refereed publication, are reviewed by the Editorial Board and the Society editorial staff. Selection is based on relevance of the topics addressed, accuracy and validity, contribution to the professional literature, originality, quality of writing, and adherence to Submission Guidelines (see page 71). Editorial Board members evaluate each submission's focus, organization, development, readability, and relevance to the general audience of *Bulletin* readers. Due to the diversity of the *Bulletin* audience, material that expresses a gender, religious, political, or patriotic bias is not suitable for publication.

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*The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* (ISSN 0011-8044; USPS 715-850; IPM 0302295) is published five times each year by The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, 416 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas. Subscription, U.S. \$31 per year; single copies, \$7 each (journal) or \$5 each (magazine). International dues include subscription to *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*. Views expressed do not necessarily agree with positions taken by The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*  
416 W. 12th St., Austin, TX, 78701-1817.

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## International Journal for Professional Educators

2019 • Volume 85-3

Published by The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International

*The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International  
promotes professional and personal growth of women  
educators and excellence in education.*

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## Call for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit manuscripts for consideration by the *Bulletin* Editorial Board. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin: Journal* accepts research-based articles including Action/Classroom Research, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Reviews of Literature, Program Descriptions, Position Papers, and Book/Technology Reviews. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin: Collegial Exchange* accepts articles of a more practical, personal nature, including Classroom and DKG Practices/Programs, Viewpoints on Current Issues, Personal Reflections or Anecdotes, Inspirational Pieces, Biographies and Interviews, Book and Technology Reviews, and Creative Writing.

Submissions should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for *Bulletin* readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable, and free from gender, political, patriotic, or religious bias. For more detailed information, please refer to the Submission Guidelines on page 71 and the Submission Grids on page 72.

Listed below are the deadlines and, where appropriate, themes. Although there is a suggested theme for each issue of the *Bulletin: Journal*, manuscripts on all topics are welcome. The *Bulletin: Collegial Exchange* is not theme-based.

### ***Journal: The Evolving Teacher (85-5; Online)***

*(Postmark deadline is March 1, 2019)*

Teacher Collaboration • Teachers in Learning Teams • PLCs • Mentoring • Retention • Training • Recruitment • Accountability • Roles and Responsibilities

### ***Journal: Democracy in Education (86-1; Online)***

*(Postmark deadline is May 15, 2019)*

Creating Independent Thinkers • Civic Education  
Generating Student Engagement and Leadership • Participatory Action Research (PAR)

### ***Collegial Exchange (86-2; Print)***

*(Postmark deadline is August 1, 2019)*

No designated theme

### ***Journal: The Ways We Learn (86-3; Online)***

*(Postmark deadline is October 1, 2019)*

Brain Research • How Individuals Think/Organize • Technology Impact • Storing and Processing Information • Models of Instructional Delivery  
Formal/Informal Learning • Experiential Learning

Submit all materials to:

***Bulletin* Editorial Staff**

**bulletin@dkg.org**

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## From the Editor

Seeing the ways authors interpret the suggested theme of an issue of the *Bulletin: Journal* is always fascinating as writers bring their unique understandings and professional experiences to the task. In the case of this issue's theme—community education—submissions focused on programs to educate all facets of the community, on ways to link various components of the community in educational efforts, and on the impact of community on learning capacity. As is so often the case, the varying approaches provide an intriguing exploration of the theme.

Editorial Board member Pálsdóttir's review of an anthology dealing with the evolving field of out-of-school time (OST) education leads the articles devoted to the theme. A member from Iceland, one of the Nordic countries that has pioneered in such informal education and in the leisure-pedagogue profession, she provides insight to this new field even as she explores the book's excellent overview of the evolution of OST in the United States. Akins and Jones expand OST's concern with the "when" of community education by considering the "who" of community education, suggesting that lifelong learning for all is the goal. While Akins focuses on ongoing learning opportunities for senior adults, Jones discusses a model for a health education program within a specific type of community setting.

Turning to a key component of community education—parental involvement—Kasper describes an action research project testing the use of commensality—i.e., eating together—as a way to develop relationships between and among parents and other stakeholders in a special education setting. Szabo similarly considers a special population by sharing research on the perceptions of Grade 7 middle-school students regarding parental involvement and concluding that, although students in this age group approve of such involvement, they also prefer to see it restricted to home-based rather than school-based activities!

Completing the articles on the theme, Boatwright and Midcalf discuss the impact of poverty on children's learning and argue that educators must understand this component of community life in order to meet the needs of their students. They discuss a university program that helps preservice and inservice teachers to develop such an understanding so they can help young people in impoverished communities become lifelong learners.

The issue concludes with an article of general interest by Nappi, who examines teaming in an educational setting. She argues that three corners, or central points, of engagement are essential: resources, focus, and structures. The three corners help to define and shape the relationships between and among leadership practices, administrator and teacher competencies, teaming, and student success when driven by the vision, beliefs, and goals established by stakeholders.

The articles in this issue underscore the fact that the relationships between community and education are complex and challenging. Far from being simply a geographical setting for education, a community exerts influence on and is influenced by education in myriad ways. Understanding the complexity of community education is important for all key women educators dedicated to professional and personal growth and excellence in education.

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Also included in this issue is a "special note" (pp. 6-10) regarding DKG's approach to and involvement with controversial issues. My hope is that this note will inspire more members to submit articles that explore such controversial issues in education, thereby increasing the relevance and usefulness of our publications. In the broader sense, however, I hope that this note will clear the way for members to communicate in many ways about the issues that are important to them as key women educators with a wealth of knowledge about and a depth of passion for education. Exploration of controversial issues is critical to realization of the Purposes of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society.

**Judith R. Merz, EdD**  
Editor

## Of Special Note

# Controversy about Controversies!

By Judith R. Merz

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*Some argue that DKG diminishes the Society's relevance by refraining from issuing position statements on controversial issues in education, particularly in light of Purpose 4: "To initiate, endorse and support desirable legislation or other suitable endeavors in the interests of education and of women educators." Editor Merz provides background on this controversy about controversies and suggestions for ways that the Society, through implementation of Purposes 5 and 6, can move toward fulfilling Purpose 4 at all levels.*

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### Background: The Stimulus for Thought

In early 2017, as a transition of power in the United States government was taking place, Society leaders fielded many questions about DKG's "taking a stand" on political appointments, policies, and legislation that some, if not many, found controversial. Concerned members argued that failure to address such issues damaged or, at minimum, greatly diminished DKG's credibility, relevance, and impact as an organization of key women educators. This controversy about dealing with controversial issues as an organization led to dissemination of the following Statement of Neutrality:

#### Statement of Neutrality

As individuals, DKG members cherish the personal right of free speech. As leading women educators, DKG members want to—and should—take a stand on important issues. Purpose 4 of the Society, in fact, encourages members "To initiate, endorse and support desirable legislation or other suitable endeavors in the interests of education and of women educators."

In contrast to speaking as an individual, however, "speaking" on behalf of an international, nonprofit organization is a complex endeavor. First, in the United States, the IRS restricts political and advocacy involvement of nonprofits; penalties can include revocation of nonprofit status. Second, the DKG *Constitution*, echoing Purpose 4, dictates in Article VIII, Section C., f. "that the committee (Educational Excellence Committee) shall study and recommend action on professional issues and shall urge the state organizations to initiate, endorse, and support desirable legislation or other suitable endeavors in the interest of education and women educators." The International Standing Rules further state in 8.102, c., "Legislative action shall be based on a thorough understanding of the issues involved in supporting excellence in education, equality for women, and a safe, peaceful educational environment." The Rule continues in d: "Legislative activity shall be concerned with educational issues, not with candidates or political parties."

Of course, the difference between issue advocacy and political intervention can be very difficult, which leads to the third point of complexity regarding

“speaking” on behalf of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International. Although united in a genuine spiritual fellowship, we are an organization of diversity—of various positions, experiences, opinions, passions, values and beliefs. The Society ultimately can only “speak” through formal consensus of members on legislative matters; without such formal consensus, neutrality must be the position for this nonprofit organization.

Thus, when issues or controversies arise, each member must follow her personal journey to act on her passions and beliefs, whether by contacting a legislator, writing an op-ed piece for a local paper, using social media under her own name, or organizing or participating in a march or demonstration. We support our love of DKG best, as well as represent our personal values, by acting with grace and supporting our organization as one that includes women with many different viewpoints—sometimes represented in the same chapter. (Feb. 2017)

### Background: Further Consideration

The issue of the organization’s **relevance** to its members and potential members—women who are passionate about education and involved in making a difference—continued to be a topic of conversation for the 2016-2018 Administrative Board. On the one hand, neutrality as a nonprofit organization is, as stated, imperative. But how, then, to position DKG members as knowledgeable and passionate advocates as each follows her “personal journey” in terms of controversial issues? In a summary of the Administrative Board’s deliberations, 2016-2018 International Second Vice President Becky Sadowski and 2017-2018 Northeast Regional Director Agnes Moynihan wrote:

“ ... given the need for neutrality,  
can the Society itself or any of its  
state organizations or chapters fulfill  
Purpose 4? ”

Although Delta Kappa Gamma refrains from making statements that may be interpreted as political, the Society does acknowledge the importance of encouraging its members to be informed on current issues. This belief is based on the Purposes of our organization:

Purpose 4. To initiate, endorse and support desirable legislation or other suitable endeavors in the interests of education and of women educators.

Purpose 6. To stimulate the personal and professional growth of members and to encourage their participation in appropriate programs of action.

Purpose 7. To inform the members of current economic, social, political and educational issues so that they may participate effectively in a world society.

... DKG strives to fulfill these Purposes by providing opportunities for members to participate in events such as the Canadian, European, Latin American, and United States Forums. International conventions and conferences often include speakers who address world issues.

As we are guided by the Society’s Purposes and Mission Statement, we will continue to lead by example in our efforts to impact education worldwide. (Sadowski & Moynihan, 2018)



Relative to **members'** dealing with controversial issues, the three Purposes noted by Sadowski and Moynihan actually work best considered in reverse order. That is, the Society must work to inform members (Purpose 7), which it does not only through its Forums but also through its publications—including, of course, the *Bulletin* in both formats—and numerous meetings, conferences, and conventions. These opportunities help to move members to action (Purpose 6), which in turn may lead to their involvement in sponsoring legislation or other suitable endeavors (Purpose 4).

### Neutrality, Relevance, and Purpose 4: Possible Directions

But, given the need for neutrality, can the **Society itself or any of its state organizations or chapters** fulfill Purpose 4? The 2016-2018 Administrative Board believed the answer lies essentially in stripping politics from policy and legislation and considering core issues. Politics involves authority and power and, operationally, involves the debate and/or conflict of those hoping to wield such power. Policy suggests what a governing entity hopes to achieve and the methods and principles it will use to achieve those goals. Legislation sets out standards, procedures, and principles that must be followed. DKG does not involve itself in political activities—i.e., those related to power or party—but the Society certainly has the opportunity (and, some would say, the obligation) to explore issues of policy—the methods and principles undergirding educational legislation and action. The Society's relevance thus relies in good part on informing educators and others on the **core issues** behind “endeavors in the interest of education and women educators” through research, analysis, and discussion.

Interestingly, the Educators Book Award recipient for 2018 was *Teaching Controversial Issues: The Case for Critical Thinking and Moral Commitment in the Classroom* (2017) by Nel Noddings and Laurie Brooks. The authors identified eight areas of controversy that educators should be prepared to help students consider thoughtfully:

- ♦ Religion
- ♦ Race
- ♦ Gender and Public Life
- ♦ Entertainment, Sports, and Media
- ♦ Capitalism and Socialism
- ♦ Money, Class, and Poverty
- ♦ Equality, Justice, and Freedom
- ♦ Patriotism

Online sources attempting to define controversial issues in education in general—i.e., those that *every* educational stakeholder should be considering—echo many of the broad categories suggested by Noddings and Brooks (2017):

- ♦ Prayer in Public Schools
- ♦ Sex Education
- ♦ Corporal Punishment

**Dr. Judith R. Merz**, editor of *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, served as interim executive director of the Society and subsequently as interim membership director in 2017-2018. A member and past president of Alpha Chapter in New Jersey State Organization, where she also served as president 2001-2003, Merz was appointed to the DKG Editorial Board in 2006 and was named editor in 2010 and communications and marketing consultant in 2015. A retired superintendent, she also works as an advisor to doctoral students at Nova Southeastern University. [jmerz@aol.com](mailto:jmerz@aol.com)





- ✦ Gun Control/Guns at School
- ✦ Alternate Delivery Systems: Flipped Schools, Homeschooling, Online Education
- ✦ Content of Textbooks
- ✦ Teachers' Assessment and Evaluation
- ✦ School Uniforms and Clothing, including Gender Dress Restrictions
- ✦ Common Core State Standards
- ✦ Students with Special Needs, including Bilingual Education
- ✦ Racial Discrimination
- ✦ Grading Systems
- ✦ High-stakes Testing (Medwin, 2017; Opinionfront.com, 2018)

**These lists beg the question: If a portion of DKG's relevance lies in its willingness to address controversial issues, what specific steps can be taken at each level of the Society to "operationalize" the very challenging Purpose 4?**

Clearly, publishing research and analysis of core issues in the Society's journal and magazine is a perfect way for a member to influence policy and legislation in whatever may be a reader's specific setting. This is particularly true now that members at the 2018 convention voted to make the *Bulletin* an open access publication available to all educators and interested educational stakeholders. However, publication of research does not have to be limited to individuals—or to the *Bulletin*. A chapter, state organization, or international committee can conduct research on a relevant topic and collate its work into a piece for publication via a chapter or state organization newsletter, social media groups, webpage, white paper, or.... the options are endless. Furthermore, programs at all Society levels can include speakers,

panels, debates, or simple discussions on key controversial topics...and programs open to the public can give voice to the thoughts of key women educators in their communities, thereby not only working to influence opinion on policy and legislation but also to raise the visibility of the Society as an educational force.

Some may wonder how (or if) such activities as noted above differ from "the Society" taking a stand on controversial issues, and the answer lies in the concept of consensus. To present a point of view as coming from "the Society," one needs the consensus of the membership as a whole—generally achieved by presentation, consideration, and vote at a convention. Needless to say, accomplishing such consensus involves extensive and sometimes daunting practicalities. In contrast, an individual key woman educator who writes or speaks on controversial issues "owns" her point of view, and a group that writes or speaks should do so based on consensus of the group, in effect developing—and owning—a group voice. These approaches to influencing policy and legislation are far less cumbersome and certainly within reach for those concerned about impacting educational issues.

*“DKG does not involve itself in political activities—i.e., those related to power or party—but the Society certainly has the opportunity (and, some would say, the obligation) to explore issues of policy—the methods and principles undergirding educational legislation and action.”*

## Conclusion

In their award-winning book, Noddings and Brooks (2017) argue:

A prime purpose of critical thinking in the public domain is to consider and evaluate the arguments made on controversial issues. This requires a continual search for meaning and understanding. The object is not necessarily to win a debate....The idea is to use critical thinking in contributing to healthy human relations and the maintenance of a strong participatory democracy. (p. 1)

The subtitle of their book—*The Case for Critical Thinking and Moral Commitment in the Classroom*—resonates as a challenge for members of a Society committed to promoting excellence in education. As key women educators with vast experience and knowledge, DKG members need to develop and share their voices in the public discussions of education by engaging in and promoting critical thinking about policy and legislation—i.e., about issues that truly matter. Although the work of initiating desirable legislation or other suitable endeavors in the interests of education and of women educators may fall primarily and most appropriately to the regional forums, members individually and collectively can contribute to endorsement and support of such endeavors through development of voice on controversial issues. Doing so will expand the relevance of DKG for members and educators in general.

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## On the Theme: Community Education

# Community Education: Considering the Out-of-School Time Field

By Kolbrún Þ. Pálsdóttir

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*This article continues a series initiated by members of the Bulletin's editorial board. The goal of the series is to provide insight on a topic or work related to the theme of the issue. Here, Editorial Board member Pálsdóttir reviews a current anthology dealing with an evolving facet of community education.*

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Malone, H. J., & Donahue, T. (Eds.). (2018). *The Growing Out-of-School Time Field: Past, Present and Future*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. 350 pages. ISBN 1641130288

Young people learn through participation in formal, nonformal, and informal settings. The educational discourse has for a long time centered on schools, where “learning” is often used more or less synonymously or in tandem with the term “teaching.” In order for children to deal with complex challenges in the near future, they need to be equipped with a variety of twenty-first-century skills such as problem solving, collaboration, literacy in a wide sense, creativity, and communication. These are skills that are developed and trained in a variety of settings, both within and outside of schools.

In this article, I draw the reader’s attention to the emergent field of out-of-school time (OST) by discussing *The Growing Out-of-School Time Field: Past, Present and Future*, an anthology edited by Helen Janc Malone and Tara Donahue (2018). OST is a vibrant and exciting educational field, and, increasingly, school teachers and youth educators are aligning forces to provide young people with high-quality education and opportunities. This is the first publication in a new book series called *Current Issues in Out-of-School Time* and provides readers with an excellent insight to the history of OST services in the United States, as well as to current issues and potential developments.

### Complexity of the OST field

The aim of the book is to explore the development within the OST field in the United States in the recent decades, and it certainly delivers with a well-balanced approach between research, practice, and professional standpoints. A total of 37 authors have contributed, representing researchers, practitioners, and professional leaders in the field. The editors have managed to frame a convincing and educational journey and lead the readers through the breadth of the OST field with a clear introduction, concise structure, and conclusive remarks at the end.

One of the challenges of the OST field is that it is vast, with a wide range of terminology and practices. In the introduction, editor Malone defines the spectrum of the OST field as encompassing of *place* (programs and activities that are school- or community-based, in libraries or museums, camps or parks and recreational programs, linked to businesses or universities, etc.), *time* (before and after school, on weekends,

holidays, and in the summer), *content* (academic, 21st-century skills, college/career readiness, sociocultural, STEM, kinetic, etc.), and *approaches* (formal, non-formal, informal). (p. 2; author's emphasis)

An increasing awareness exists that, in order to close the educational achievement gap, a holistic approach is needed that considers the opportunities and learning experiences to which children and young people have access in their out-of-school time. This is a global concern, and, therefore, this anthology is a much-needed contribution to the international extended-education sector.

### **Informal and Nonformal Learning Empowers Youth**

The first two sections of the book address the holistic-child approach that lies at the core of OST services and how they can be designed to empower all youth and address the diversity gap in education. Consider, for example, the profound impact that coaches can have on young people. In Chapter 3, contributing author Peter C. Scales outlines how coaches can promote developmental relationships with student-athletes by “expressing care, providing support, challenging them to grow, sharing power with them, and expanding young people’s possibilities” (Scales, 2018, p. 38). In the next chapter, contributing author Nickki Pearce Dawes makes a convincing argument on why OST programs can be particularly powerful settings for underserved youth. Educators must face that fact that barriers to access exist; for example, some parents lack knowledge of the opportunities that OST programs can offer, and language barriers and limited time may also hinder parental engagement and support. Dawes also points out that fees can limit participation of low-income students, as can the need for transportation and various other structures of programs. Dawes concludes that programs need to respond to different needs and allow diverse contributions as “youth from diverse backgrounds will have different lenses through which to look at the world, interpret information, and engage with others” (Dawes, 2018, p. 53). These are social justice issues that educators all around the world are facing and trying to tackle in a variety of ways. Also, an increasing awareness exists of the need to acknowledge the range of skills that young people bring with them. For some students who do not cope well in the formal academic setting, the OST program can be a place where their skills and capacities are recognized and valued. Such skills can, for example, include creativity, leadership, communication, and social skills.

### **Social and Emotional Learning**

Educators are beginning to realize the importance of supporting the social and emotional learning (SEL) of children and youth and that SEL has to be fostered and trained systematically within and outside of schools. Parents lay the foundation, but the dynamics of the peer group and the relationships children create and maintain in and out of schools are vital to their emotional well-being. Educators need to have SEL tools and knowledge. This is a field in which the nonformal educational settings, such as after-school

**Dr. Kolbrún Þ. Pálsdóttir** is Dean of the School of Education at the University of Iceland in Reykjavik. She is a member of Lambda Chapter in Iceland State Organization and has served her chapter as a secretary (2012-2014) and as president (2014-2015). Pálsdóttir is a member of the DKG Editorial Board (2016-2020). Before becoming a teacher and researcher, she worked as a professional and leader within leisure-time centers in Reykjavik. kolbrunp@hi.is



programs, summer activities, art and sport programs, and youth centers play a crucial role. OST professionals are generally trained to work with groups and individuals and to focus on social skills, relationships, communication, and collaboration. They often become specialists in enhancing the SEL of students. Contributing authors Elizabeth Devaney and Deborah Moroney (Chapter 17) point out that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) from 2015 urges states to focus on educating the whole child and to identify nonacademic measures to evaluate school quality and student engagement. In fact, what has happened, the authors point out, is that "... the formal education community has recognized that the OST processes we have been using for many years are a legitimate means to an end" (p. 257). This is one of the most important contributions of the OST field, and today there are a wide range of SEL standards across states that educators can seek out and apply in their daily practices. However, professional development is crucial to raising the quality of any educational program.

### Professional Development in the OST Field

One of the challenges has been that traditionally OST services have been provided by volunteers, youth workers, and after-school staff with varied backgrounds, but this book traces the development of the professional OST workforce in the United States. In Chapter 7, contributing authors Elizabeth Starr and Ellen S. Gannett argue that, although the OST field is made up of various sectors, at its core are "primarily school-age care, after-school, and youth work, but also summer learning programs, summer camps, and recreation programs" (Starr & Gannett, 2018, p. 89) in which OST personnel share a commitment to positive youth development, social-emotional learning, and enrichment activities. Establishment of 21st Century Community Learning Centers

(CCLC) was a governmental initiative started in 1994 to support the organization of community learning centers aimed at improving academic outcomes and providing enrichment opportunities during non-school hours. According to Starr and Gannett, although this initiative improved the accessibility of quality programming, it has been largely used for school-based programs, not community-based programs. This is very interesting from an international perspective—including, in particular, the Nordic perspective—for two reasons: First, this indicates the tension existing between the importance of formal academic learning and the informal nature of the OST field. Second, it shows the cultural differences between the United States and the Nordic countries, where the majority of the school-age care and after-school programs tend to be run by municipalities and to be publicly funded. The Nordic countries, specifically Sweden and Denmark, have been leading in the field of professional OST services, as a leisure-pedagogue profession has existed in those countries since the early 20th century.

One of the fundamental stepping stones in the professional development of the OST workforce in the United States is the definition of core competencies, which are discussed by contributing authors Gina Hilton Warner, Heidi Ham, and Melissa S. Pearman Fenton in Chapter 8 of the book. In 2011, the National Afterschool Association published the

*“ In order for children to deal with complex challenges in the near future, they need to be equipped with a variety of twenty-first-century skills such as problem solving, collaboration, literacy in a wide sense, creativity, and communication. ”*



second edition of the Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals (CKCs), which had been developed in wide collaboration with the OST professional community after an extensive pilot and review process. Warner, Ham, and Fenton examined how the CKCs had been used by those providing professional development in the field. One of the findings showed that development of a common language and competencies was considered key for enhanced professional practices. The chapter clearly shows many excellent opportunities exist for the OST workforce in the United States to seek professional education and professional development programs.

*“It is vital that parents, teachers, school administrators, and in- and out-of-school youth workers come together to empower young people today.”*

out-of-school youth workers come together to empower young people today. In fact, I believe that the holistic and collaborative approach that out-of-school professionals tend to have toward youth should filter into the formal school environment so that the schools of tomorrow are built on the active participation of students, their interests, and social environments, both to improve academic outcomes as well as their social and emotional well-being.

### Conclusion

I have only managed to touch on a few of the themes explored and discussed in this comprehensive anthology, which is ideal for educators who want to understand the role of OST services and why and how they can be aligned with schools to support the growth of youth. I agree with Donahue, the second editor of the book, who points out in the concluding section that OST services are uniquely situated to link “youth, school, family, and community and environmental contexts.” It is vital that parents, teachers, school administrators, and in- and

# Adult Learning Spices Up Life: SAGE and Beyond!

By Dorothy Akins

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*One key component of community education involves helping senior adults engage in lifelong learning. The author provides an overview of the phenomenon and details a program in her area as well as several other models.*

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The many benefits of lifelong learning are receiving increased attention in books and online. More and more, universities and colleges are offering programs for senior adults who want to continue learning and growing. An overview of one specific program in Louisiana and a brief summary of offerings in other states can help illustrate this phenomenon in community education.

## Benefits of Lifelong Learning

In an article entitled “Lifelong Learning for Seniors,” licensed Medicare insurance agent Jackson stated, “If you’re retired, that doesn’t mean you can’t still exercise your mind” (2018, para. 1). She noted that, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), lifelong learning can have great benefits for seniors. This organization reported that a study found learning “new and perhaps challenging skills might benefit the brain” and noted that “participants in the study generally did well learning new tasks and could still perform these tasks well even after several years had passed” (para. 6). The NIH concluded that learning might “help the brain adapt to compensate for age-related changes” (para. 7).

Jackson (2018) further noted a study by The Stanford Center on Longevity that reported seniors in the United States “are showing less cognitive (thinking, learning, and remembering) decline overall than past generations” (para. 2). She asked, “Could lifelong learning help you stay sharp?” Jackson also discussed a Huffington Post report on a Harvard study that found a possible relationship between thinking and reasoning abilities and how long a person went to school. The study found that “people who grew up in states where students have to go to school for the longest periods of time seemed to have the highest overall cognitive function, regardless of income level” (para. 8).

On its webpage, Walden University ([www.waldenu.edu](http://www.waldenu.edu), 2018) highlights “The Many Benefits of Lifelong Learning.” According to the posting, continuing to learn does good things for one’s brain, a point supported by other recent research. For example, a study at the University of California, Irvine, concluded that “learning keeps brain cells working at optimum levels, which can limit cognitive and memory decline as people age” (UCI, 2010, as cited in Walden University, 2018, para. 3).

Another benefit is that lifelong learning can help one stay connected. Walden University (2018) asserts that participating in continued education at colleges and universities, attending art classes, studying and debating important issues online and elsewhere, and



other forms of adult education allow participants to meet new people and connect with current thinking.

Of course, many people participate in lifelong learning simply because they enjoy it. Such enjoyment is no surprise; researchers such as Laal (2012) have shown that lifelong learning can lead to enrichment and self-fulfillment. When people take the time to learn new things, they “open their minds and gain wisdom that can help [them] make the world a better place through social change and other life-affirming endeavors” (as cited in Walden University, 2018, para. 5).

Such fulfillment can also improve an one’s emotional balance and help the individual avoid depression. Vitelli (2012) noted, “For older adults, this is particularly beneficial, as depression often comes with aging. While there is no cure for getting older, lifelong learning can help us stay happier as we progress through the stages of life” (as cited in Walden University, 2018, para. 6).

### **SAGE: An Example of University-Sponsored Lifelong Learning**

McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana, offers various means of lifelong learning. The Leisure Learning Department offers the Senior Academic Group Encounter (SAGE) program for adults age 50 and over. SAGE is a series of cultural programs on topics of Louisiana history, art, music, photography, and more. Five lectures are hosted on campus at McNeese State University during the fall and spring semesters for the participants’ enrichment, enjoyment, and self-improvement. The lectures and discussions are centered around a specific theme and are open to the public at a cost of \$59 for each series. The concepts behind the program are to provide mature adults informative and interesting presentations on a variety of topics, give older people a chance to meet new people and make friends with persons of similar interests, and offer participants the opportunity to visit places of interest and to enjoy one another’s company.

Illustrating the offerings, the theme of the 2018 fall series was *Rolling on the River* and included

- *Between the Levees: Adrift on America’s Untamable River*; Boyce Upholt, speaker.
- *Recipes and Memories from Louisiana’s German Coast*; Nancy Tregre Wilson, speaker.
- *Loyal Forces: The American Animals of World War II*; Toni Kiser, speaker.
- *Cajun and Creole Folktales, Deep Meanings in Small Places*; Barry Ancelet, speaker.
- *A Woman of Firsts Who Changed Dance in New Orleans—and America!*; Nina Bozak, speaker.
- *Native Flora of Louisiana*; Lowell Urbatsch, speaker.

Other themes since 1985 included

- *Evolution of City—Lake Charles from past to present*;
- *Louisiana History*;
- *Louisiana and Beyond*;
- *Louisiana, A Mélange*;
- *Louisiana Coast, Music & More*;
- *Louisiana Kaleidoscope*;
- *Celebrating Louisiana and the Year of Music*; and
- *Here We Go Again! Landslides and Cliffhangers: Memorable Presidential Elections*.

### **Finding Resources**

When May Gray, coordinator of the Leisure Learning Program and the SAGE

program and member of Alpha Gamma Chapter of Louisiana State Organization, was asked how she obtained speakers, she discussed several sources. A favorite is the Louisiana Book Festival held each year in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on the grounds of the state capitol building. There she is able to hear nationally known authors and other speakers. At the Barnes and Noble tent, she meets authors signing their latest books. When she returns home, she looks on Amazon to find more about the books and their authors. She then searches online for authors' contact information and invites them to speak at the SAGE program.

Another great source, according to Gray, is Dr. Michael Martin, Director of University of Louisiana at Lafayette, who has given her many names of possible speakers. She also garners suggestions from Louisiana State University Press ([lsupress.org](http://lsupress.org)) and from McNeese State University professors, especially Dr. Janet Allured. The Historical New Orleans Collection ([www.hnoc.org](http://www.hnoc.org)) sends her suggestions for topics and speakers. Other sources include previous speakers, magazine articles, and personal contacts from family and friends.

The opportunity for travel has long been a part of the program. In the earlier years, SAGE joined with the Elite Club of the Cameron State Bank on various trips. The Elite Club has been discontinued and now SAGE travels on its own. In recent years, trips have included

- ✦ a behind-the-scenes tour of the Historic New Orleans Collection led by HNOC curator Judith Bonner; the title was *Awash with Color: Seldom-Seen Watercolor Paintings by Louisiana Artists, 1789-1989*;
- ✦ *The Tabasco Story* at Avery Island and Jungle Gardens in Avery Island;
- ✦ St. Martinsville and Lake Martin; and
- ✦ New Orleans World War II Museum.

## Responses and Impact

As an informal evaluation, several participants were asked to answer the following three questions:

### 1. What is the best thing about SAGE?

- ✦ The best aspect of SAGE is how a group of mature adults comes together to enjoy interesting presentations on different topics.
- ✦ SAGE is important to keep lifetime learning in our lives.
- ✦ As a senior citizen and retired teacher, I love to continue learning without having to attend classes and take exams. SAGE invites speakers who have researched many subjects—cooking, geography, music, culture, and gardening. The speakers are dynamic, knowledgeable, and fun. In addition, excursions are offered to spots of interest in our own state, like Avery Island, New Orleans, and Lake Martin. These trips always include stopping at restaurants typical of the area. SAGE is fun, informative, and a great use of time on Monday afternoons.

### 2. What have you enjoyed the most?

- ✦ SAGE offers a variety of programs. I've enjoyed most of the programs. It is well-planned. It is a way of bringing people of an age to meet new people and enjoy many different speakers. It is obvious much planning goes into each program.
- ✦ I have learned so much about Louisiana that I did not know and probably would not have learned if not for SAGE.
- ✦ SAGE is a great way for retirees to keep up intellectually. Its speakers expose us to a wide range of topics, often on subjects I personally would not have explored

on my own initiative. I've learned not to skip lectures just because it "didn't look interesting."

- ✦ The lectures are so informative about a variety of topics. I grew up in north Louisiana, and I enjoy learning about the Louisiana coast.

### 3. What does SAGE mean to the community?

- ✦ SAGE is an opportunity for all in the community to have a wonderful shared experience.
- ✦ It is a continuation of learning for older people; you meet friends and other people, and we are in a learning process.
- ✦ I love the fact that it attracts so many retired people who continue to be interested in learning.
- ✦ [It provides] a great opportunity for the older generation of Lake Charles to continue learning.
- ✦ The SAGE program offers lectures to Lake Charles community on a wide range of subjects.

### Other Programs of Note

Nationally, many universities offer opportunities for members of the community to engage in lifelong learning. Models and approaches are unique to meet the needs of specific communities.

- ✦ The University of South Alabama holds an annual Distinguished Lecture Series composed of six lectures on topics of interest by recognized experts. Held October through March, these lectures are free and open to the public (University of Southern Alabama, 2018).
- ✦ Lectures from outstanding speakers are held the third Friday of the month at Lourdes University in Sylvania, Ohio (Lourdes University, 2018).
- ✦ Hofstra University in Long Island, New York, has a Personal Enrichment in Retirement (PEIR) program that "provides opportunities for intellectual stimulation, cultural enrichment, and personal growth for retirees or semiretired individuals, age 55+" (Hofstra University, 2018, para. 1). Participants share opinions and expertise with other like-minded individuals who "thirst for learning, meaningful social interaction, and stimulation in a lively, dynamic environment unique to a university setting" (para. 1).
- ✦ The Lifelong Learning Program at East Carolina University "serves the learning interests of individuals 50 and above in an affordable, relaxed atmosphere. [The purpose of the program] is to connect, engage, and inspire the eastern North Carolina community by providing educational opportunities that are stimulating and enriching (East Carolina University, 2018, para. 1).

Some universities belong to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), a national lifelong-learning network for seasoned adults. Found on the campuses of 122 colleges and

**Dr. Dorothy Akins** has been a member of Alpha Gamma Chapter of Louisiana State Organization for 57 years. A graduate of DKG's Leadership Management Seminar in Austin in 1987, Akins served her state organization as president (1985-1987) and as executive secretary (1988-1996). In 1998, she was the recipient of her state organization's achievement award. [dotakins1@suddenlink.net](mailto:dotakins1@suddenlink.net)



universities throughout the United States, each participating entity provides “a distinctive array of noncredit courses and activities specifically developed for seasoned adults age 50 or older who are interested in learning for the joy of learning” (Bernard Osher Foundation, 2018, para. 2). Among these participating universities are the following:

- The University of Montana offers an array of educational and social opportunities that promote the lifelong learning and personal growth of individuals age 50+ through a diverse collection of noncredit short courses, special member events, lectures, and community activities (University of Montana, 2018).
- The University of Washington at Seattle, Washington, has a Lunch & Learn program that includes noontime talks by experts on a wide range of subjects (University of Washington, 2018).
- West Virginia University offers “courses, lectures, seminars, and field trips in such areas as music, literature, art, science, politics, nature, history, health, medicine, and economics. Live drama, movies, and special interest groups add to the choices” (OLLI at WVU, 2018, para. 3).

## Conclusion

The SAGE program, in existence since 1985, has attracted much interest in the community. Many well-known authors, historians, researchers, humorists, and other dynamic speakers have contributed to the lifelong learning of citizens of Lake Charles and the surrounding area. Audiences of senior adults have been captivated by the presentations that light up their lives, and each year there is an increase in the number of participants. SAGE and other programs like it clearly impact education in and for the community.

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# A Blueprint for Health Education in the Community

By Katherine S. Jones

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*To illustrate one facet of community education, the author presents a plan developed by a health ministry team at a midsize church community in Hernando, Mississippi. The health team hoped to introduce and implement a program of activities that would educate community members regarding health promotion (primary prevention) and illness-prevention practices. The goal of health promotion should be to develop lifestyle habits that could prevent an illness. The work of the health team demonstrates how a community can function to educate its members.*

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Community is a social group with common interests and values that establishes trends and vision for the future. This group may be diverse but has a commonality that binds individuals together. The community provides an environment in which the needs of the individual, family, and groups can be met through involvement and interaction of the members. (Hinds Community College, p. 3)

This definition of community can be applied to any setting in which group members share common goals and interests. In this case, the community with an interest in promoting its members' health was a church community of 1,106 individuals with 373 active families, the majority Caucasian. Although this article discusses the work of this specific group, clearly interaction and involvement helped to seal the sense of community. The article details the several steps that were necessary to begin the process of assisting community members to understand the concepts of health promotion and illness prevention.

## Purpose and Objectives

The author, a retired professor of nursing at a community college, shared her expertise by serving as health team coordinator. She began by reviewing the health ministry objectives that were already in place. Unfortunately, no mission statement existed, and the objectives were vaguely written. The fact that these were already in place indicated that the need for health promotion and illness prevention was already recognized in this community. However, this educator believed that revisions were necessary to make the purpose and objectives more relevant for a new health-ministry endeavor. Discussion with the staff of the church and other health team members resulted in the following purpose and objectives.

The name of the health committee remained as before—PACES—thus helping to identify the purposes of the program:

**P.** Prevention   **A.** Awareness   **C.** Care   **E.** Education   **S.** Support

Of course, acronyms always help individuals to remember the basic ideas behind a mission and objectives.



### Mission Statement of PACES Health Committee

The first step in establishing the program was to develop a clear mission statement. That statement became

The purpose of the PACES health committee is to plan and implement a ministry that focuses on the physical, mental, and spiritual health of individuals in the community as a valid component of reaching people. This will be accomplished through educational programs and materials that focus on the prevention of illness and awareness of risk factors and signs of disease. Emotional care and support will be an integral part of this ministry. (Hernando United Methodist Church, 2018)

After formulating the mission statement, the health team members identified eight objectives to assist the church community in achieving a healthy lifestyle:

1. Assess the healthcare needs of the congregation (via survey).
2. Encourage the members to be active participants in their own healthcare.
3. Collaborate with the staff and leaders to align the health ministry with the mission and ministry of the church (via conference or consultation).
4. Consult with other organizations in the community and surrounding area to determine how the church team could best assist in promoting healthcare for all (work with local health department, local community college health career programs, food pantry, social services).
5. Instruct the church community about caring for health, educational, and spiritual needs of people (via newsletter and cancer support groups).
6. Encourage the church community to be aware of the health needs of others in the community and share with staff in an appropriate and private manner (consider physically and mentally challenged, mobility challenged, limited resources, living alone).
7. Collaborate with the Safety and Care Teams of the church to integrate care for the members (via accessibility mini-audit, care team sharing of health concerns of members).
8. Offer programs, activities, and literature that encourage wellness (such as health fair, flu shots, CPR class, healthy cooking). (Hernando United Methodist Church, 2018)

The survey to assess the healthcare needs of the church community (Appendix) was then designed and distributed by the health team coordinator. The population of the adult Sunday school classes in the community was chosen as respondents because all ages were represented. The health team coordinator assumed responsibility for distributing the survey at adult classes and tallied the results. In an effort to recognize and focus only on the immediate need of discovering health concerns of this population, the design of the survey presented some challenges. These revolved around style and placement of the questions.

**Katherine S. Jones, RN, MS**, a long-time member of Tau Chapter, is now a member of Alpha Delta Chapter in Mississippi State Organization. She is a retired Professor Emeritus-Nursing from Hinds Community College and was published in the *Bulletin* in 2005. [ksjones@bellsouth.net](mailto:ksjones@bellsouth.net)



### Results of the Survey

Two consecutive survey periods were necessary to retrieve enough data (Figure) to utilize and plan the program content. Ultimately, 111 responses were received. The health concerns of high blood pressure (49 reports), high cholesterol (33 reports), and weight gain/loss (27 reports) were tallied as the three highest concerns on the survey. Eighty-six individuals reported that they sought immediate healthcare with a private physician, and 22 were followed by a nurse practitioner.

Race	Gender	Marital Status	Health Challenges	Seek Healthcare	Classes Required
White: 110	M: 32	Married: 69	High blood pressure: 49	Private Physician: 86	Weight gain/loss
Black: 1	F: 50	Divorced: 6	High cholesterol: 33	Nurse Practitioner: 22	CPR
		Single: 3			Aerobic/walking
		Widowed: 6			Ear/eye concerns
					Helping troubled adult children

*Figure.* Data from survey.

*Note.* Participants ranged from 36-93 years of age.

The survey results also assisted in planning special health-promotion classes for the community. Classes requested were CPR, aerobic and walking classes, ear and eye concerns, and ways to help adult children in trouble. The planning team found it interesting that no classes were requested that directly involved the previously noted health concerns. The majority of the respondents requested a short-term emergency CPR course, and 16 individuals reported that they would attend a support group. The survey also asked for preference in times for classes. The majority preferred evening for class time.

After reviewing the survey results, the author suggested that the survey form be redesigned using a clearer format. Many participants had not completed the back page of the survey, which contained demographic data information.

### Other Objectives Achieved

Other objectives were also achieved. As of this writing, the health team has submitted a health-promotion article each month in the community newsletter. The team was fortunate to receive the use of an entire display case for health-promotion materials. These remain available at all times, and community members are encouraged to take items as needed. The health team sponsored a blood drive in July and received some 20 units. In September, the team sponsored a mini health fair that included flu shots, blood pressure screenings, and mammograms. The results were 40 flu shots, 10 blood pressure screenings, and 7 mammograms. With these activities already presented and plans derived from survey results, the health team members believe they are bringing education on health promotion and illness prevention to the community.

### Another Important Community to Consider

“Education is a continuous, interactive learning process that results in a change in behavior, beliefs, or awareness. Learning is dynamic, multi-dimensional, and dependent on the individual’s ability, behavior, needs and motivations” (Hinds Community College, 2018, p. 3). Chronic diseases are becoming common in school children, who will have to



cope with lower achievement in many areas of life. Furthermore, absenteeism may cause a decrease in learning time. Educators have an opportunity and responsibility to introduce health education to their students that will focus on preventing a chronic disease (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2016).

A curriculum of materials about making good food choices and the importance of exercise would further students' understanding of how to avoid chronic conditions. A partnership of all persons directly involved with children's education should work as a team to develop a health-promotion and illness-prevention curriculum (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2016). When it comes to health promotion in the classroom and in many different communities, educators must look for ways to keep students engaged in interactive methods, such as allowing students to come up with their own acronyms as a way to remember facts about health promotion.

### Conclusion

Hinds Community College Associate Degree Nursing Program was chosen as a reference for definitions of community and education because this educator was employed at this college and used her expertise to assist in this community-education effort. The church health team ministry believed that bringing health-promotion and illness-prevention education to the church community could assist in closing a health-education gap and continue into the broader community. Although the specific setting for this work was a church community, the strategies can be applied for any community interested in providing health-promotion and illness-prevention education to impact the welfare of its members. We all live and work in communities. Let us continue on a journey of wellness together!

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### Appendix

#### P.A.C.E.S. Health Ministry Survey

1. a. Which of the following presents a challenge to my family?

- |                                |                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| _____ Alzheimer's/Dementia     | _____ Kidney Disease         |
| _____ Arthritis                | _____ Osteoporosis           |
| _____ Cancer      Type _____   | _____ Stroke                 |
| _____ Diabetes      Type _____ | _____ Anemia      Type _____ |
| _____ Eye/Ear Diseases         | _____ Asthma                 |
| _____ High Blood Pressure      | _____ Dental Issues          |

<input type="checkbox"/> Emphysema	<input type="checkbox"/> Tuberculosis
<input type="checkbox"/> Heart Disease	<input type="checkbox"/> Weight Loss/Gain
<input type="checkbox"/> High Cholesterol	<input type="checkbox"/> Ulcers
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Issues	<input type="checkbox"/> None
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Skin Issues	

1. b. What health promotion and information classes would you like to see at the church?

☐ Evenings or ☐ Saturdays

Comments

2. Identify any other conditions that may present a challenge to your family?

Ex. addiction, time management

3. Where do you seek immediate healthcare?

☐ Private Physician  
☐ Community Clinic  
☐ Hospital ER  
☐ Nurse Practitioner  
☐ Walk-in Clinic  
☐ Other

4. a. If a class in CPR was offered, would you prefer an all-day training for certification or Emergency CPR in a shorter period of time with no certification?

☐ Evenings or ☐ Saturdays

4. b. Would you attend a support group, such as for cancer, grief?

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Evenings or ☐ Saturdays

☐ Age      ☐ Gender      ☐ Race      ☐ Ethnic Background

☐ Married      ☐ Widowed      ☐ Single      ☐ Divorced

# If You Feed Them, They Will Come: Increasing Parental Involvement in a Special Education Setting through Commensality

By Mollie Kasper

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*A cooperative relationship between teachers and parents of elementary special education students is critical to student success; however, developing this relationship can be difficult. Often the only contact between these two groups is at the annual Admit, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meeting. This research focused on the impact of a monthly dinner (Supper@School) hosted by the school for special education students and their families on student, teacher, and parent relationships. The benefits of commensality among these groups are described. Supper@School is proposed as a potential model for outreach in other schools.*

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The importance of involving families in children's education is well-documented in research. In *Engaging Stakeholders*, Paine and McCann (2009) wrote, "Parents and community members must have a strong vested interest in the success of the schools and must co-own the outcomes produced" (p. 14). Family involvement is especially critical for students who receive special education services. Frew, Zhou, Duran, Kwok, and Benz (2012) noted, "Parent involvement is a cornerstone of special education policy and best practice" (p. 27). It can be difficult, however, to establish and maintain the most basic contact with the families of special education students, much less get them actively involved in school events or homework. In my own experience as a special education teacher, parents did not visit my classroom during Meet the Teacher Night and rarely returned my phone calls or e-mails. I wondered if they realized exactly how much influence I had over their child's reading and math instruction. Did they know that their children came to me for 45–60 minutes a day for reading? That I was responsible for their grades? The only time I had any contact with the family members of my students was at the annual Admit, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings, and some parents did not even attend those. Based on my own experience and discussions with other special education teachers, I began to see that lack of parental involvement was a systemic problem in special education. Students who most desperately needed a cooperative support system of parents and teachers seemed the least likely to get it.

Knowing the importance of family involvement to student success, I needed to find a way to make and sustain a relationship with my students' families...but how? I decided to try inviting my students and their families for regular dinners at the school. Through these dinners, I hoped to establish and maintain the support system my students needed.

## Literature Review

That family involvement in children's educational life has a positive impact on academic

and social success is hardly a novel concept in educational research. In their review of 51 studies on parent and community involvement in schools, Henderson and Mapp (2002) concluded,

Taken as a whole, these studies found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds for students at all ages. (p. 25)

These benefits include better grades, higher test scores, stronger attendance, increased promotion, improved behavior and social skills, higher graduation rates, and higher levels of postsecondary education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Furthermore, the benefits of family involvement are not limited to the general education population of students. Szumski and Karwowski (2012) reported a link between parental engagement and academic success of intellectually disabled students.

“Based on my own experience and discussions with other special education teachers, I began to see that lack of parental involvement was a systemic problem in special education. Students who most desperately needed a cooperative support system of parents and teachers seemed the least likely to get it.”

However, nuances regarding family involvement exist that bear more intense scrutiny. Of course it matters that family involvement occurs, but research by Gutman and Midgley (2000), Marcon (1999), Henderson and Mapp (2000), Mapp (2003), and Payne and Kaba (2007) suggests how it occurs matters as well.

### Multiple Variables

Multiple variables impact the effect of family involvement on academic success. In their study of low SES African American students, Gutman and Midgley (2000) found academic achievement unrelated to family involvement alone. However,

when the variable of family involvement was combined with that of teacher support or of a feeling of belonging at school, significant academic achievement was noted. These results indicated that “the combination of both family and school factors may be most effective in supporting the academic achievement of poor African American students during the transition to middle level schools” (p. 242).

It appears that the quality of family involvement makes a difference as well. In her study of 62 preschool classrooms, Marcon (1999) observed two types of involvement: active and passive. Active involvement was defined as volunteering or attending a class event, while passive involvement was communicating, such as participating in a parent conference. Marcon concluded that “more active parent involvement was positively related to young children’s academic performance as well as their development” (p. 407).

Another variable with the potential to augment family involvement is whether or not the interaction is related to the student’s instruction. According to Henderson and Mapp (2000),

Parent and community involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement. To be effective,

the involvement should be focused on improving achievement and be designed to engage families and students in developing specific knowledge and skills. (p. 38) Examples of involvement related to instruction include sending home reading and math packets (as well as providing training in their use), meetings regarding the child's progress, and training on various topics of interest to parents, such as "discipline strategies, and increasing your child's vocabulary" (p. 38).

Finally, critical to effective family involvement is building relationships among the stakeholders: teachers, parents, students, and community. Henderson and Mapp (2002) noted, "When programs and initiatives focus on building respectful and trusting relationships among school staff, families, and community members, they are effective in creating and sustaining family and community connections with schools" (p. 43). Payne and Kaba's (2007) study of barriers to reform in urban schools found that the amount of social trust—both teacher to parent and teacher to teacher—was indicative of school quality: "In our worst schools, the basic web of social relationships is likely to be severely damaged" (pp. 30–31). Mapp (2003) added support for the importance of trusting relationships between school staff and parents:

“ Key factors affecting the potency of family involvement include student support from teachers, a sense of belonging in school, active rather than passive participation, relating the interaction to student instruction, and a sense of social trust. ”

An important finding that emerged from the parents' stories was how school factors, especially how the school community engages with families, influence why and how parents participate in their children's education. When school staff engaged in caring and trustful relationships with parents, recognizing parents as partners in the educational development of children, these relationships enhanced parents' desire to be involved and influenced how they participated in their children's educational development. (p. 55)

In summary, family involvement is a critical component of educational success for general education pupils and is especially so for special education students. But family involvement alone is not enough to ensure success. Key factors affecting the potency of family involvement include student support from teachers, a sense of belonging in school, active rather than passive participation, relating the interaction to student instruction, and a sense of social trust. The more of these variables that can be increased, the higher the return. Can sharing a meal increase all of these variables concurrently?

### **Creating Social Bonds through Commensality**

The power of commensality, or eating together, in supporting social bonds has a basis in research. In her seminal work, *Deciphering a Meal*, Mary Douglas (1972) sought to understand the social importance of eating together, explaining that "[t]he meal expresses close friendship" (p. 66). Fischler (2011) agreed: "[C]ommensality preserves, revitalizes, builds up kinship or creates artificial kinship" (p. 533). But does commensality actually create social bonds where none previously existed?

Kniffen, Wansink, Devine, and Sobal (2015) studied commensality within a large

metropolitan fire department. They surveyed numerous firefighters about their practices of eating at the firehouse—did they eat together or separately?—as well as their beliefs about how well their particular team worked together. Not surprisingly, they discovered that eating together had a positive correlation to team performance: “[W]e find that commensality among coworkers can be a strong and important practice that is positively associated with enhanced work-group performance” (p. 298).

If one views students, teachers, and parents as a team and educating the student as the job or task to be accomplished, might the benefits of commensality be achieved through hosting shared meals at the school for students, teachers, and families in the special education program? In other words, would eating together help teachers and parents work together to educate the students? Would sharing a meal help build the needed relationships among students, teachers, and parents?

### **Background**

With the permission of the principal, I hosted eight monthly dinners, called Supper@School, throughout the school year for elementary special education students and their families. Because many students lived in single-parent homes or with grandparents or cousins, the definition of “family” was purposefully left very broad: anyone who lives in one’s house is family; of course, parents who lived outside the home of the student were included as well. This definition made it easier to include anyone who might be a support for the students. In addition, to encourage participation of lower SES families, there was no charge for the dinners. The first dinner was provided entirely by the school. Due to both budget constraints and parents’ request, for subsequent dinners the main dish was provided by the school, and parents volunteered through SignUpGenius to bring drinks, side dishes, and paper goods. Bringing a contribution was voluntary; nothing was ever required for admittance to the dinners.

The full-time special education staff at this school at the time of the study included one special education teacher (the author) and one aide. I attended all events, and the aide attended six. The principal of the school attended twice. Other administrative guests included the dean of students for the school, the district chief learning officer, the district director of special populations, and the district coordinator of special education, who each attended one dinner.

Paper invitations were given to all special education students, regardless of whether they received inclusion or resource services, and e-mail invitations were sent to parents. Students who received only speech services were not invited because the special education teacher had no daily interactions with them.

Small door prizes (a gently used book or puzzle or a \$10 gift card provided by the speaker) were given away at each event. The first and last events (September and May) were dinner-only events, but all other Supper@School events included a short presentation of potential interest to the parents, such as explanation of how to interpret progress reports or a speech by the local poison control representative. Finally, a short e-mail was sent to parents after most of the events, recapping the evening and thanking them for attending.

### **Methodology**

This research was based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The special education roster, sign-in sheets, pictures taken at the events, and surveys sent to parents supplied quantitative data. Qualitative data were gathered through anecdotal notes, open-ended survey questions, and a parent interview.



Anecdotal notes, kept throughout the school year, were used to capture impressions of the impact of the program as the year progressed. The notes were very brief but provided insight into my thoughts as the events occurred.

A roster of special education students provided information on special education enrollment data. Due to students being newly identified to receive services or moving in or out of the school, the monthly number of students receiving services fluctuated slightly.

Supper@School attendees were asked to sign in upon entering. Signing in was voluntary; because insufficient personnel attended to ensure that everyone signed, some people attended but did not sign in. Pictures were taken at most but not all events. To ensure that the maximum number of families were counted, any pictures taken were reviewed, and any families who had not signed in but were noted in the pictures were added to the total number of families attending that month. The roster and sign-in and picture data were used to determine a percentage of families attending each event.

In November 2017, after the second Supper@School, a brief survey was created, using Google Forms, to determine whether parents saw value in the events and to gauge support for continuing. After a colleague reviewed the content, the link to the online survey was sent to all parents of students receiving special education services, regardless of whether they had attended Supper@School. Thirty-three surveys were sent, and 10 participants responded, a response rate of 30.3%. For some families, both the mother's and the father's e-mail addresses were available, and for others only one was available. In situations where the survey was sent to both parents, it was assumed that only one parent completed the survey. Survey 1 questions and response data are in Appendix A.

Most of the questions in the first survey were multiple-choice and related to the logistics of Supper@School, such as determining the best schedule and whether parents would be willing to help. Question 7, however, was open-ended: "Give us your thoughts on Supper@School. What are we doing right? What could we do better?"

In June 2018, a similar survey was created, again using Google Forms. The second survey began with the same "housekeeping" questions as the first to confirm that the meeting time was still convenient for the majority of parents. Because a group of parents who would volunteer to help or bring dishes had been identified, it was not necessary to ask those questions again, so they were removed from the survey. The remainder of the survey focused on parents' perceptions of the events. Which presentations did they like? What relationships were forged? Most of the relationship questions were open-ended and optional; participants who did not answer them could still complete the multiple-choice questions and submit the survey. A colleague reviewed the survey questions prior to distribution. Survey 2 questions and response data are in Appendix B.

Survey 2 was sent to 35 participants and received 8 responses, a 22.9% response rate.

*“ If one views students, teachers, and parents as a team and educating the student as the job or task to be accomplished, might the benefits of commensality be achieved through hosting shared meals at the school for students, teachers, and families in the special education program? ”*



As before, for some families, both the mother's and the father's e-mail addresses were available, and for others, only one was available. Again, in situations where a survey was sent to both parents, it was assumed that only one completed the survey.

Finally, an interview was conducted with Natalie (all participants have been given pseudonyms to protect privacy), one of the parents who frequently attended Supper@School with her family. Natalie's son, Emil, is enrolled in special education. He is autistic and also suffers from health issues that impede his fine motor skills. Due to her work schedule, Natalie and I were unable to meet in person, but she agreed to be interviewed using the ZOOM online meeting app. With her permission, the interview was recorded and transcribed afterward.

Natalie had given positive feedback regarding Supper@School in the past, even hugging me at times, so it was expected that she would provide a positive perspective during the interview. I had some concern that she might not give any constructive criticism.

The interview was semi-structured (Appendix C). Some questions were prepared, but the conversation was allowed to flow beyond those questions. Natalie answered all questions adequately and with candor. In addition to the positive feedback anticipated, she also provided specific ideas about how to improve relationships among the students, teachers, and parents attending Supper@School.

### Data Findings

**Anecdotal data findings.** After the first two suppers, my notes indicated that I observed the parents seemed to be more trusting. They were more forthcoming during ARD meetings about their student's disabilities and other aspects of family life. At one November ARD, the mom hugged me. Another parent, whose child was doing well enough to be dismissed from special education, became emotional and asked if her family could still come to the dinners.

Communication improved as well. Parents began responding to e-mails, and notes sent home for signatures actually came back. None of these things had happened consistently before the program. In addition, I noted I was understanding better what both students and parents needed. Finally, as communication improved, I learned from parents about community programs, such as the Angel League, which sponsors sports teams for students with disabilities. I was able to distribute this information to other parents.

**Attendance data findings.** The total percentages of families attending each month are displayed in Table 1. Given the data-collection methods, these percentages represent the minimum number of families attending. Actual attendance could have been slightly higher.

Attendance at the events ranged from a high of 58.3% of families in September to a low of 20.0% in April. Attendance percentages in January and March—23.8% and 26.1% respectively—were relatively low compared to other months. The mean attendance for all of the events was 36.6%, considered extremely good for this setting. As the chief learning officer of the district commented at the November dinner, "You have more people here than [we have] at our district-wide events!"

**Survey data findings.** The responses from Question 7 of Survey 1 (*Please give us your thoughts on Supper@School. What are we doing right? What can we do better?*) showed that parents valued the experience of meeting other parents and that the beginnings of relationships were forming. "I love having super [sic] at school and getting to meet other parents," said one. Two others shared that the dinners were "a good opportunity to meet other parents." These answers indicated that the parents were desirous of forming a community and welcomed the opportunity that Supper@School provided. Although

none of the parents specifically mentioned meeting other special education parents, it appeared to be an implied descriptor in all the comments. Parental desire for belonging was also evident from the responses to Question 6, regarding participating in a non-school-sponsored group events. Of the 10 respondents, 8 said they would be interested, 2 said they might be interested, and none expressed no interest.

Table 1

*Attendance Data*

Month	Presentation	Students on Roster	Families Signing Roster	Additional Families Identified in Pictures	Total Families	Percent Attending
September	none	24	14	0	14	58.3%
October	Skyward	26	11	1	12	46.2%
November	Progress Reports	24	9	1	10	41.7%
January	Reading with your Child	21	5	0	5	23.8%
February	Children's Health	22	7	2	9	40.9%
March	Poison Control	23	6	0	6	26.1%
April	Summer Library Programs	25	5	0	5	20.0%
May	none	25	8	1	9	36.0%

Responses to Question 7 also yielded information about the parents' positive perceptions of their children's social interactions at the dinners. "I love that it provides a social setting for my son to interact with other children," wrote one parent. Another parent indicated that the dinners created a sense of belonging, "giving the students a chance to feel special because they get gonna be [sic] supper at school."

Data from Survey 2 confirmed that Supper@School was having a positive impact on relationships. Specifically, Question 5 addressed whether the respondent noticed improved relationships. As Figure 1 shows, 62.5% of respondents saw improved student-to-student relationships, and the same number reported improved student-to-teacher relationships. Improved parent-to-parent relationships were noted by 37.5% of respondents, and 100% of respondents reported improved parent-to-teacher relationships. New relationships were formed among parents and among students. More than half of the respondents (57.1%) reported making new friends at the Supper@School events. In addition, 42.9% of respondents reported that their child made one or two new friends, and 28.6% reported that their child made three or more new friends.

Questions 6–8 asked about changes in student-teacher, parent-teacher, and parent-parent relationships. The responses indicated that relationships were growing in all three areas. Two respondents indicated that students were "more comfortable" with the special education teacher, with one claiming, "She enjoyed reading more with her special education teacher." Parents were clearly more comfortable with the teachers as well, stating, "I know

who they are now” and they “felt more connected.” Although there were fewer comments regarding parent-parent relationships, one parent noted, “Our children now have play dates together,” suggesting greater parent interaction.

**5. Our goal in creating Supper@School was to improve relationships. Did you see improvement in the following areas? Check all that apply.**

8 responses

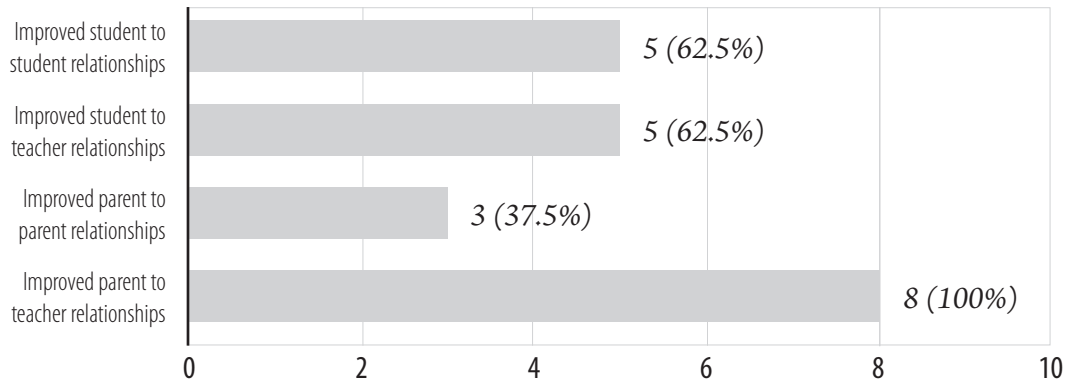


Figure 1. Responses for question 5

Responses to Question 11 (*Please give us your thoughts on Supper@School. What are we doing right? What can we do better?*) were varied. Some respondents were enthusiastic: “Keep doing what you are doing; I love it” and “I believe this dinner was a fantastic idea.” Others gave suggestions for improvement. One proposed “more parent/teacher interaction,” while another wrote, “I would like to see the kids bonding more maybe games (sic) with buddy system.” A third parent commented, “I think it’s a little harder for older children but could be very helpful for younger children to make friends. Maybe have activities to bring the older children together more.”

**Interview data findings.** The themes that emerged during the interview echoed the findings in the anecdotal notes and the survey. Natalie indicated that she enjoyed forming relationships with other parents, saying, “I actually did like to get to know people.” She also noted that her son was growing socially as a result of spending time with a new friend he made at Supper@School, stating, “He’s not just set on his stuff; he’s kinda opened up to what somebody else has showed him.”

Natalie also expressed that attending Supper@School created a deeper level of trust between us, which contributed to a higher level of support for her son.

I feel like I can trust you so much more... I feel like you’re my teacher, you’re Emil’s teacher. I just feel like you’re part of the family, like I can trust you. I can let you know, “Hey, I have a concern about something,” and you can guide me the right way.

When asked about her least favorite parts of Supper@School and how to improve them, Natalie’s answers focused on the relationships among students. Her least favorite thing about Supper@School was “the kids not interacting more with each other,” and she noted that “the older ones don’t mingle.” To get both students and parents to interact more, she suggested activities such as trust exercises and having different groups serve the meal. She also indicated that she would like me to make more efforts to introduce parents to each other. Because I had knowledge of both parents and students, she saw me as a person who could facilitate those relationships.

Finally, regarding the benefits of Supper@School, Natalie's comments reflected that she believed Supper@School was creating a sense of belonging, as if the students were part of an elite group. "I think that the kids feel just a little bit more special than the other kids," she said. "It makes them feel good that they get to come and have supper at school with their teacher."

## Discussion

This study investigated the variables of effective parent involvement in a simple, practical, real-world context. It provided an example of how commensality assists in creating relationships between and among students, teachers, and parents.

As mentioned previously, Gutman and Midgley (2000) found that when students feel supported by teachers and their parents have high levels of participation, academic success is bolstered. According to the survey data, Supper@School increased parents' perceptions of student support from teachers, with 62.5% of respondents noting improved student-teacher relationships. Comments from the open-ended questions supported this conclusion, with two parents reporting that their child was "more comfortable" and one stating, "She enjoyed reading more with her special education teacher." These data provided evidence that the students felt a higher level of support from their teacher through attending Supper@School. It should be noted here that the surveys were given only to parents and thus reflect only the parents' perceptions of their child's feeling of support. It would be interesting to talk with the children directly and understand their perceptions firsthand.

Supper@School also helped foster a sense of belonging in school. In both the survey and the interview, parents noted that the students felt special because they were invited to this special event. This gave the students a group, a place where they fit in. As noted by Gutman and Midgley (2000), a sense of belonging is a key variable in the success of family involvement.

Marcon (1999) defined active participation as "volunteering: class visit, helped with class activity" (p. 405) and found that active participation provided more benefits than passive participation. Based on this definition, attendance at Supper@School qualified as active participation. Attendance records indicated that a mean of 36.6% of the families attended each event, with many bringing food, drinks, and tableware. In addition, the comment by the chief learning officer ("You have more people here than [we have] at our district-wide events!") indicated that the amount of active participation was high. Fluctuations in month-to-month attendance may be explained by cold weather on the night of the January event; by competing obligations, such as sports, in the spring; or by the topic not being of interest to the parents.

The programs at the dinners were designed to focus on topics of interest to parents. Most were directly related to academics: a tutorial on understanding progress reports, a presentation on using Skyward (the program utilized by the district to report grades), videos on reading with one's child, and information on summer programs at the public

**Mollie Kasper** is an elementary special education teacher in Forney ISD, Forney, Texas. Initiated to Alpha Tau Chapter in Texas State Organization in 2015, she served as first vice president (2016-2018) and currently serves as president of the chapter. Kasper is pursuing a master's degree in reading and is a member of the International Literacy Association and the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. molliemc24@gmail.com



library. The other two programs, while not academic in nature, were of high interest to parents and directly related to raising children: a presentation by a poison control expert and one by a representative from Children's Health. It is important to note that the first dinner was strictly a social event. Just as with students, laying the relational foundation with parents before beginning instruction is key. Once this foundation was established, parents were receptive, even enthusiastic, about the programs.

Finally, as Henderson and Mapp (2002), Payne and Kaba (2007), and Mapp (2003) all indicated, trust is a critical component in building school-family relationships. Multiple comments were observed in the anecdotal, survey, and interview data that indicated a sense of social trust was fostered during the Supper@School events. That parents were more forthcoming with information during the ARDs was a sign of trust. Additionally, in Survey 2, one parent indicated feeling "more connected" to the special education teacher, another sign of trust. Finally, the interviewee stated directly, "I feel like I can trust you so much more... like you're part of the family, like I can trust you." These data showed that social trust grew as a result of the Supper@School events.

Taken together, these results indicated that commensality, specifically as implemented through the Supper@School program, was successful in building student, teacher, and parent relationships and might be an effective model for building such relationships at other schools. Sharing meals contributed to five key factors of effective family involvement: growing perception of teacher support, increased sense of belonging by students, active participation by families, instructionally related topics, and enhanced social trust.

Building a community such as this requires that the special education teacher be thoughtful and intentional in how she designs her outreach. She must broaden her vision from that of a teacher to that of a program coordinator and multidirectional-relationship builder, whether she holds those titles or not.

### **Limitations**

Some limitations existed for this study. First, although the percentage of families responding to the surveys was high, the actual sample size was small. Only approximately 25 students were enrolled in special education at any given time at the school where the research was conducted. Second, no student input resulted from the surveys or interviews, which were all directed to parents. Therefore, any information about the students' relationships was filtered through the perceptions of the parents, as well as that of the researcher. Future studies might include student surveys and interviews as well. Furthermore, the viewpoint of the interviewee, who was also a survey respondent, may have been overrepresented in the data. Additional interviews would mitigate this issue. Another limitation is that the month-to-month fluctuation in attendance was not investigated. This fluctuation could be related to weather, other obligations, or interest in the topic. Future studies should question parents as to why they did or did not attend a specific event. Finally, the teacher who hosted the dinners was also the same researcher who conducted the surveys and the interview and who interpreted the results, creating the possibility of researcher bias in the results.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the effects of a monthly dinner at school for special education students and their families. Results indicated Supper@School had a positive effect on student, teacher, and parent relationships through the interaction of multiple variables: teacher support of students, creation of a sense of belonging, active participation by



families, provision of information related to academics, and fostering of trust among all participants. Based on these results, Supper@School may be used as a model for outreach programs at elementary schools.

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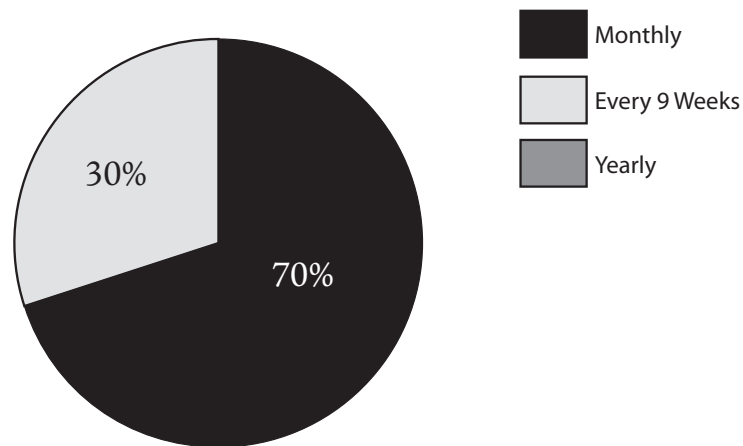
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## Appendix A

### Survey 1 Questions and Results

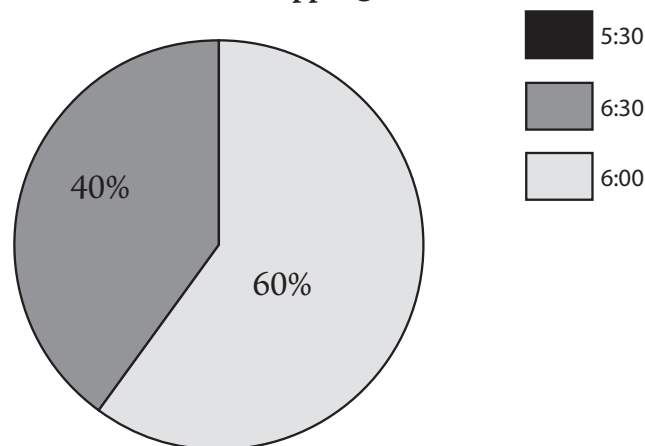
#### 1. How often would you like to have Supper@School?

10 responses



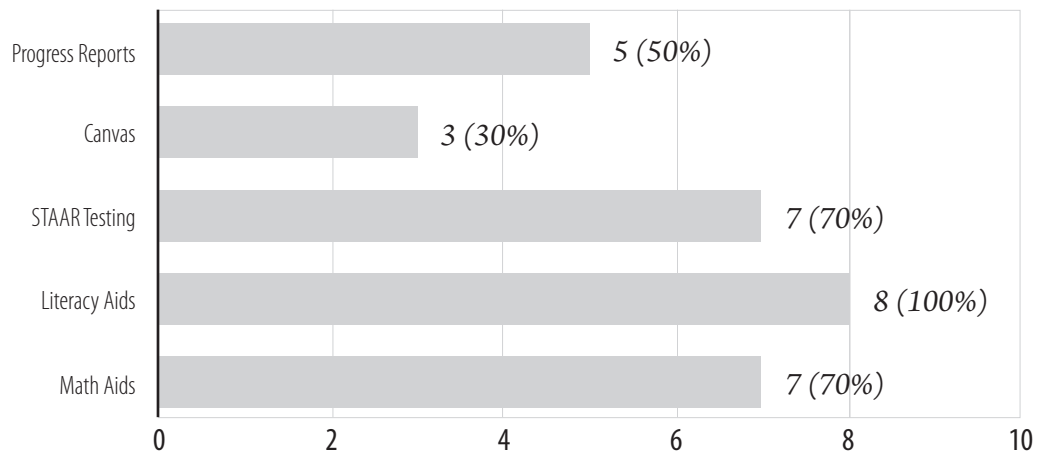
#### 2. What time is the best time for Supper@School?

10 responses



#### 3. What topics would you like us to discuss? (check all that apply)

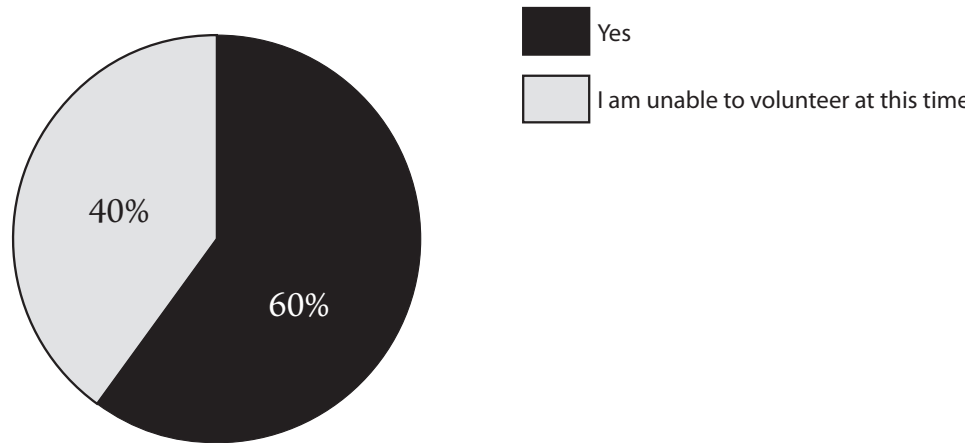
10 responses



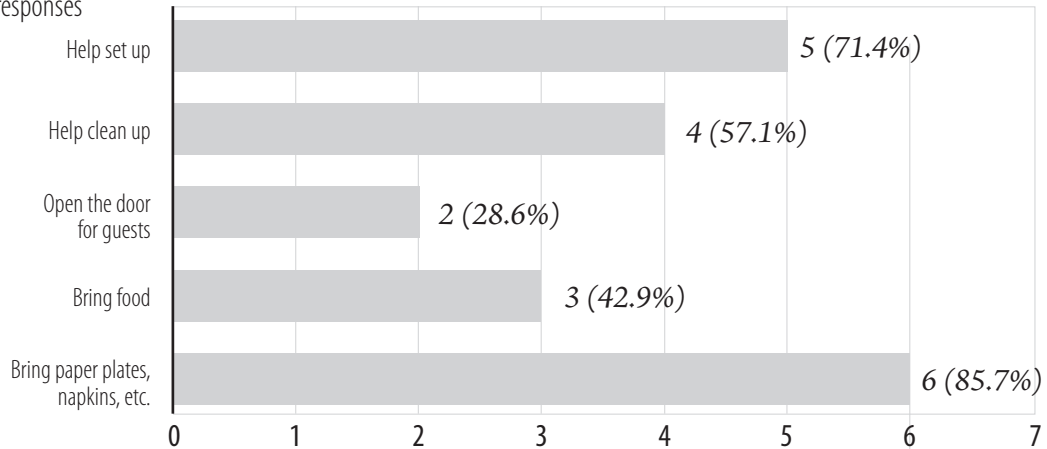


**4. Would you like to help with Supper@School?**

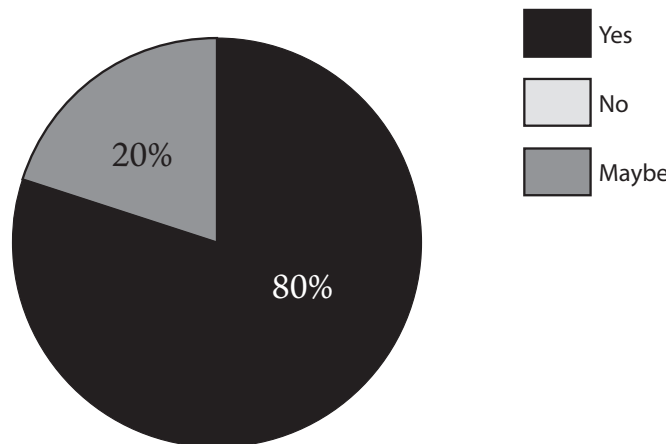
10 responses

**5. How would you like to help? (check all that apply)**

7 responses

**6. Would you be interested in group outings (to a movie, theme park, or some other activity)? This would NOT be school-sponsored.**

10 responses



### 7. Please give us your thoughts on Supper@School. What are we doing right? What can we do better?

7 responses

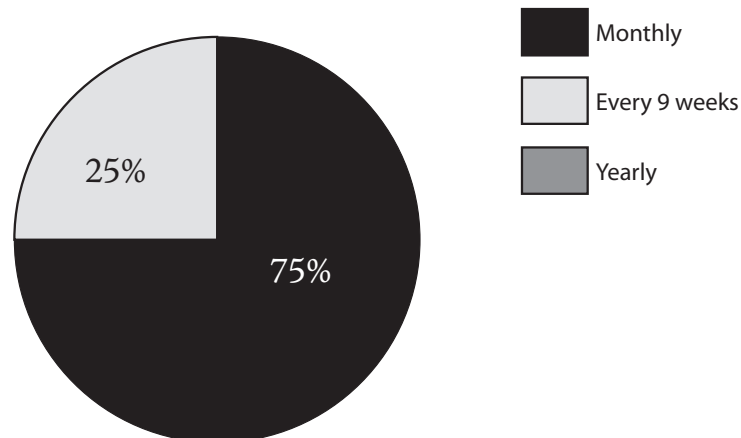
- This is a great idea. My son looks forward to going. The last dinner was very informative, and I learned about a great tool. The timing for the dinner and of the dinners is perfect. The idea of the dinners for this population of students is fantastic. Ideas of helping our students be more successful by means of math tips or reading tips would be great.
- I love having supper at school and getting to meet other parents.
- Everything is GREAT; enjoy every minute of it.
- I love that it provides a social setting for my son to interact with other children!
- I love to be able to get together with other students and their parents. I would like to see more information on how we can help our child and understand the programs they are doing to help them during class time.
- These meetings are a good opportunity to meet other parents and learn about what our children are working on and how to better help them at home.
- Giving the students a chance to feel special because they get supper at school. Giving us the chance to ask questions in a different environment.

*Note: Responses to question 8 were removed to protect participant privacy.*

## Appendix B Survey 2 Questions and Results

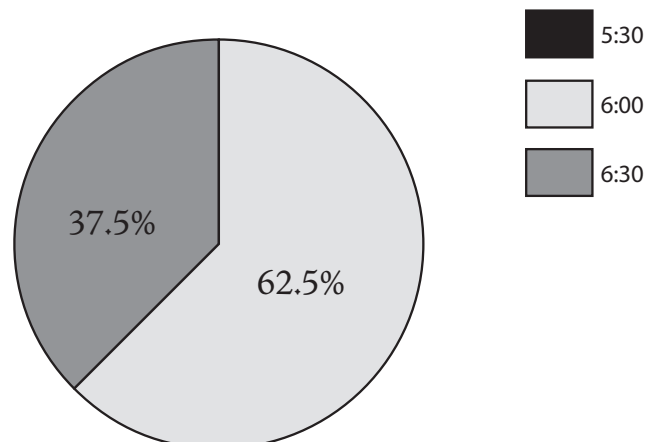
### 1. How often would you like to have Supper@School?

8 responses



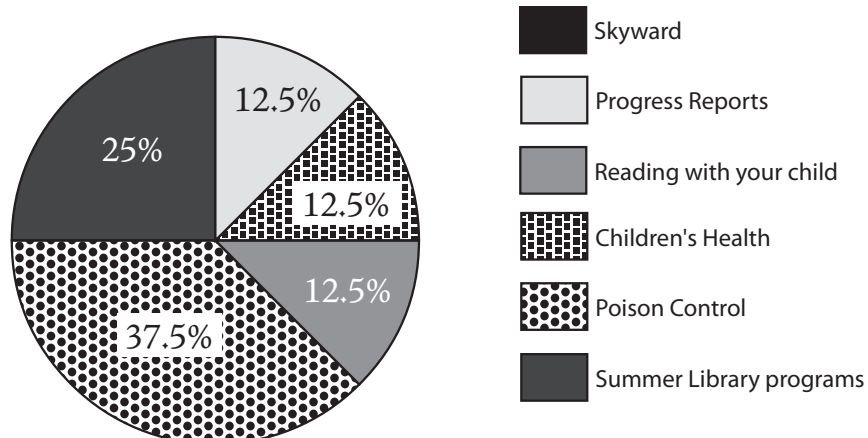
### 2. What time is the best time for Supper@School?

8 responses



### 3. What was your favorite presentation?

8 responses



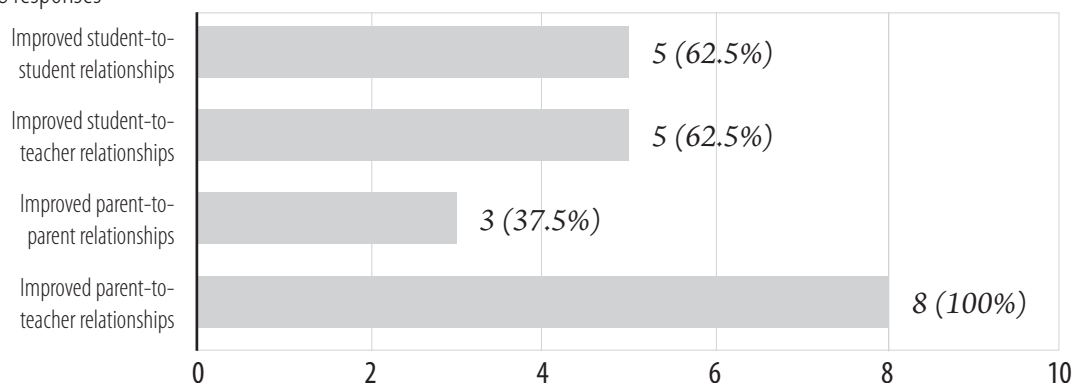
### 4. What topics would you like presented in the future?

5 responses

- At-home activities to help child's reading, math, comprehension, etc.
- Creative ways to engage child to learn.
- More knowledge about different disabilities.
- How to help students with math and reading skills at home.
- Support groups.

### 5. Our goal in creating Supper@School was to improve relationships. Did you see improvement in the following areas? Check all that apply.

8 responses



### 6. Please share how your child's relationship with the Special Education teachers changed as a result of Supper@School.

5 responses

- More comfortable as if they were an aunt they see at holidays.
- N/A
- It provided a more frequent way of visiting and engaging.
- She enjoyed reading more with her special education teacher.
- More comfortable communicating with teachers.

**7. Please share how your relationship with the Special Education teachers changed as a result of Supper@School.**

6 responses

- I have a better understanding of what they do.
- Any type of questions I had were answered.
- I know who they are now.
- Easy to talk to and felt natural.
- It was easy to communicate with her and I felt she really cared.
- Felt more connected.

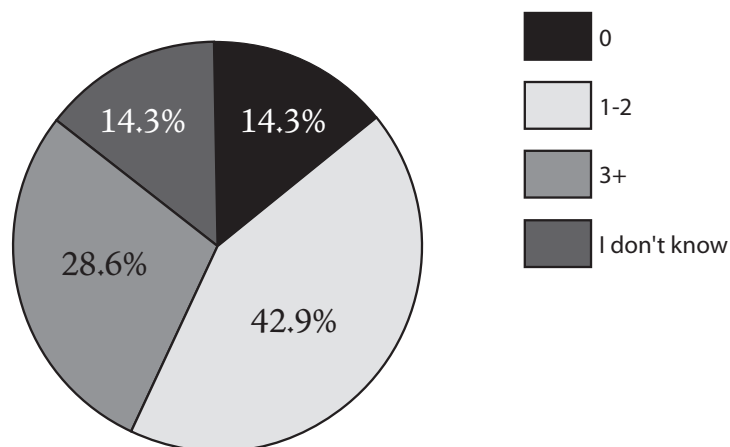
**8. Please share how your relationship with other parents of Special Education students changed as a result of Supper@School.**

4 responses

- Our children now have play dates together; soon a 4th of July bbq.
- N/A
- I enjoyed meeting the other children my child interacted with.
- No change.

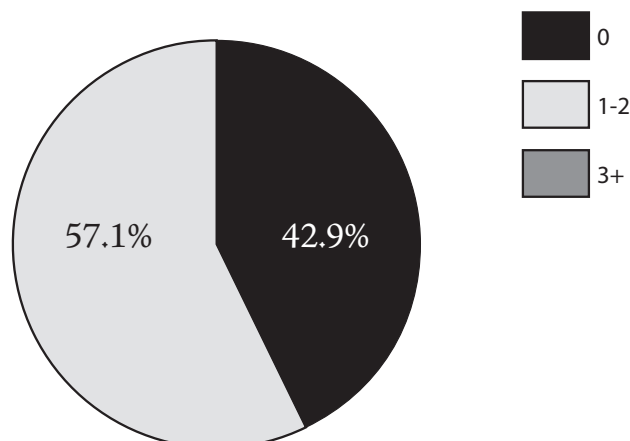
**9. How many new friends did your child make by attending Supper@School?**

7 responses



**10. How many new friends did you make by attending Supper@School?**

7 responses



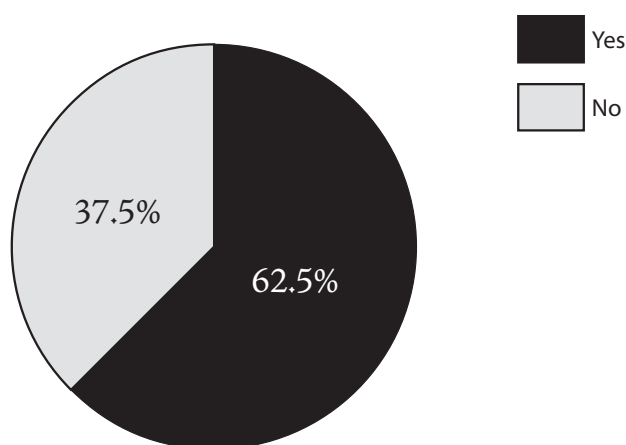
### 11. Please give me your thoughts on Supper@School. What are we doing right? What can we do better?

5 responses

- These meetings are a way for parents and teachers to communicate; we're not in a time crunch like we are when we have to set up meetings during class time. I would like to see the kids bonding more--maybe games with buddy system.
- More parent/ teacher interaction.
- I believe this dinner was a fantastic idea. The presentations were always informative. The lengths of the dinners were perfect.
- Keep doing what you are doing, I love it.
- I think it's a little harder for older children but could be very helpful for younger children to make friends. Maybe have activities to bring the older children together more.

### 12. Would you be willing to participate in an interview with Mollie Kasper regarding your experience with Supper@School?

8 responses



### 13. Please leave your name (optional).

4 responses

*Note: Responses to question 13 were removed to protect participant privacy.*

## Appendix C

### Semi-structured Interview Protocol

- What was your favorite part of Supper@School?
- What was your least favorite part of Supper@School?
- What do you see as the benefits of Supper@School?
  - » Can you tell me about the relationships that your child formed with other students?
  - » How do you feel your relationship with me changed?
  - » Tell me a little more about relationships that you formed with other parents.
  - » Do you think that the relationships that you've formed and that your child has formed have had an impact on his success, in or out of school?
- What else can the Special Ed department do to be more effective in forming relationships between students, parents, and teachers?
- Were the presentation topics helpful?
- What topics would you like to hear about in the future?
- Do you have any more ideas to build relationships between students, teachers, and parents that we haven't already talked about?
- Is there anything else that you can tell me about the Supper@School or relationships with Special Ed in general that you'd like to change or make better?
  - » Indicates an important subtopic that evolved during the semi-structured interview.

# Parental Involvement: It Looks Different for Middle-School Students

By Susan Szabo

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*The main purpose of this study was to examine the views of Grade 7 students regarding parental involvement and to determine how their attitudes were expressed in their actions toward their parents. The differences between the stances of Grade 7 females and Grade 7 males toward parental involvement were also examined. One hundred and fifty-five Grade 7 students completed a Likert-scale survey instrument designed to determine their attitudes and actions related to parental involvement. The results revealed no difference between the stances of females and males and suggested that, although these Grade 7 students supported and had positive attitudes toward parental involvement, they believed such involvement should occur in the home rather than in their school or classroom.*

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## Family Involvement

The importance of parental involvement in the educational process cannot be ignored nor overstated as extensive literature supports the positive relationship found between parental involvement and a child's learning and school performance (Adunyarittigun, 1997; Amundson, 1988; Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2015; Burns, 1993; Cavazos, 1989; Epstein, 1995; Epstein, 1996; Epstein et al., 2009; Fuller, 2002; Garcia & Thornton, 2014; Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Oakes & Lipton, 1990; Olson & Fuller, 2007; Simmons-Morton & Crump, 2003; Vaden-Kiernan, 1996). This research shows that parents' attitudes and behaviors toward learning and school make the difference between a student who excels and one who does not perform in school at all as parents are influential in molding a child's development.

Before a child even sets foot in a classroom, parents begin to lay the groundwork for learning by creating a warm, loving, nurturing environment in which the child can feel safe to explore his or her surroundings (Amundson, 1988; Buchen, 2004). This family experience is important because the home provides the most permanent environment and point of reference for the child (Kellaghan et al., 1993). Therefore, active parental involvement is critical. Parents must set priorities, communicate values, and consistently show interest and give words of praise and encouragement in the academic success of their child (Garcia & Thornton, 2014).

The research on parental involvement shows that schools and "school quality" bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement independent of the child's background (Coleman, 1991; Kellaghan et al., 1993). Also, a study completed with students in Grades 6–8 by Simmons-Morton and Crump (2003) found that parental involvement was a better predictor of school adjustment and engagement. Another study found that 90% of the differences in students' test scores could be attributed to three factors over which parents assert tremendous control: absenteeism, variety of reading materials found in the



home, and the amount time spent viewing television (Curtis, 2015). Therefore, schools and families need to be united in their efforts to help each child achieve success, because when parents are involved in their education, children not only take a more active interest in their own learning, thus becoming successful learners, but they also develop a higher interest in learning that promotes higher academic success (Adumyarittagun, 1997; Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2015; Buchen, 2004; Burns, 1993; Epstein, 1995; Kellaghan et al., 1993).

### **The Adolescent**

With the onset of adolescence, rapid change is occurring, and during this time the adolescent is not only attempting to adjust to profound physical and emotional changes brought on by puberty but to changes in his or her relationships with both parents and peers (Curtis, 2015; Stevenson, 2001). Peers and social relationships are extremely important as they allow adolescents to compare families, contrast values, and take risks. Peers' reactions to one's dress, to one's jokes, to one's athletic ability, and to one's appearance allow adolescents to measure their abilities in these areas (Irvin, 1998). Adolescence is a time for trying out different roles and ideas and serves as a time for validation of a student's value within a social unit beyond that of the family. Peer groups usually reinforce rather than contradict the values of the parents because young adolescents tend to form friendships similar to the relationships they have had with their families (Irvin, 1998).

Even though adolescence is a time for major realignments in relationships with adults and adolescents want to begin to assert their independence by rejecting adults' perspectives, this is not the time for adults to alienate themselves (Irvin, 1998). The new attachment that must occur with peers does not occur at the expense of, but rather in addition to, parental affection (Hillman, 1991; Irvin, 1998). The need for positive social interaction with both their peers, parents, and other adults is important because adolescents need overwhelming approval from all of these individuals in constructing their own self-image.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The need for parental involvement in a child's education is acknowledged and supported by very extensive research (Adumyarittagun, 1997; Amundson, 1988; Barber & Patin, 1997; Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2015; Burns, 1993; Cavazos, 1989; Epstein, 1995; Epstein, 1996; Fuller, 2002; Garcia & Thornton, 2014; Kellaghan et al., 1993; Oakes & Lipton, 1990; Olson & Fuller, 2007; Simmons-Morton & Crump, 2003; Vaden-Kiernan, 1996). However, the research also has shown that school efforts to involve parents decrease as a child becomes an adolescent and enters middle school (Barber & Patin, 1997; Berger, 1991; Epstein, 1996; Vaden-Kiernan, 1996). Three explanations have been given for this decline. The first possible reason for the decline in school practices to involve parents could be teachers' beliefs about child development (Lareau, 1989; Patel & Stevens, 2010). The second possible reason for the decline in parental involvement is that parents do not feel welcome at middle school (Barber & Patin, 1997; Lawson, 2003). The third possible reason for this decline is that older children do not want their parents to be involved (Barber & Patin, 1997; Hill & Chaco, 2009; Vaden-Kiernan, 1996).

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to examine the third hypothesis more closely by exploring the attitudes and actions of Grade 7 students toward parental involvement in the learning process to clarify how the students themselves perceived such involvement. Also of interest was discovering potential differences between Grade 7 girls and boys with respect to their attitudes and actions toward parental involvement.

Grade 7 was chosen for this study because this is the first grade in which the students

leave their local elementary school and travel to a middle-school environment for the community being studied. Three research questions were created to help listen to and try to understand the “student voices” about parental involvement for older children.

1. Do Grade 7 students have a positive attitude toward parental involvement?
2. Do Grade 7 students actively seek parental involvement?
3. Do Grade 7 females and Grade 7 males differ in their attitudes and actions toward parental involvement?

### **Setting**

The school district in which this study was conducted is located in northern Oklahoma and has approximately 5,000 students who attend 10 different schools ranging from preschool to high school. The study was conducted specifically at the middle school because it captures the first time students move away from their neighborhood elementary schools.

### **Participants**

All the participants in this study were Grade 7 students. All 469 students in the middle-school building were given a 20-question Likert-scale survey during their 30-minute homeroom time. Even though all 469 students gave their written permission agreeing to participate and do their best while filling out the survey, only 155 (33%) parental written permission forms were returned. Therefore, the 155 students used in this study were students who had agreed to participate and whose parents had given permission for their participation.

The 155 Grade 7 students who formally participated in this study included 86 females and 69 males. The mean age for these Grade 7 students was 12.8, and all reported that they had received good grades (ranging from A to C) the prior semester, which shows that these participants were doing relatively well in school. The ethnic makeup of the group included American Indian, 13 (8%); Black, 3 (2%); Caucasian, 124 (80%); Hispanic, 7 (5%); and other, 8 (5%).

### **Description of the Instruments**

The design of this study was quantitative in nature. All the participants completed a 20-question Likert-scale survey that was adapted from Berger (1991, 2003) specifically for this study and contained two parts.

Part I asked demographic information about the students, such as their age, gender, ethnicity, and grades received. Part II contained 20 statements designed to solicit information about the students’ attitudes and actions regarding parental involvement. The students were asked to read the 10 statements pertaining to attitudes (*Attitudinal Statements*) and select an appropriate “answer choice” using a Likert-scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). They were then asked to read the 10 statements pertaining to action taken (*Action Statements*) and select an appropriate “answer choice” using a Likert-scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

### **Results**

Upon participants’ completion of the Likert-scale survey, the researcher conducted an internal consistency reliability analysis to estimate the degree of consistency among responses to the various items of the survey. The results showed a reasonably high internal consistency coefficient for these students ( $\alpha = .85$ ). This suggested that the students’ responses across items were fairly consistent and reliable.

For the purposes of analysis and interpretation of the data obtained in this study, the participants' mean responses were categorized into three levels of performance on each of the statements. An attempt was made to establish a clear difference between a high or positive and a low or negative rating of attitudes and actions toward parental involvement. Thus, for attitudinal statements, a mean score of 3.50 or higher indicated that the subjects had a high or positive attitude towards parental involvement. Similarly, for statements regarding actions toward parental involvement, a mean score of 3.50 or higher indicated that the subject demonstrated active involvement in parental involvement. On the other hand, a score of 2.50 or below indicated that the subjects displayed a low or negative attitude and actions towards parental involvement. Finally, scores ranging from 2.51 and 3.49 indicated an average or neutral attitude and level of activity towards parental involvement. Thus, a full point was left between the high (3.5) and the low (2.5) so that distinction could be established, and, because of this neutral range, the conclusions reached are more reliable and easier to support.

Next, the researcher tallied each section (*attitudes* and *actions*) to determine which mean scores fell into which defined ranges in order to decide if the attitudes and actions of the subjects were positive, negative, or neutral. The category with the most tally marks determined if the subjects were positive, negative, or neutral in their stance toward parental involvement.

### **Research Question #1: Do Grade 7 students have a positive attitude toward parental involvement?**

The results, presented in Table 1 below, showed that, overall, these Grade 7 students displayed a positive attitude toward parental involvement, as 7 out of the 10 statements were ranked on the high end. A closer look at the data showed that the mean scores ranged from a high of 4.66 (Statement #8: "I feel that my parents love me and want me to do well in school") to a low of 2.25 (Statement #2: "I feel that my parents compare what I am doing to what my classmates are doing").

In general, these Grade 7 students had a high or positive attitude toward parental involvement. They believed their parents wanted them to do well in school, giving encouragement and the support to be successful when needed. They also believed that their parents did not compare their achievement to others.

Table 1

*Students' Attitudes Toward Parental Involvement (in descending order from highest scores to lowest scores)*

Item	Attitude Statement	M	SD
8	I feel that my parents love me and want me to do well in school.	4.66	.94
10	I feel that my parents really want me to succeed.	4.63	.94
9	I feel my parents give me encouragement to do my best in everything I try.	4.34	1.07
5	I feel my parents should help me only when I ask for help with my homework.	4.10	1.23
4	I feel that I am old enough to be responsible for my own learning.	3.86	1.18
1	I feel it is important for my parents to be involved in my education.	3.84	1.08
6	I feel that it is important to share with my parents the good things and the bad things that happen in my day at school.	3.62	1.19
7	I feel glad to see my parent(s) at school.	2.60	1.37
3	I feel happy that my parent helps in the classroom.	2.55	1.35
2	I feel that my parents compare what I am doing to what my classmates are doing.	2.25	1.25

### Research Question #2: Do Grade 7 students actively seek parental involvement?

Table 2 presents the data illustrating these Grade 7 students' actions toward parental involvement. The data showed that these students had more of a neutral response toward engaging in activities that called for their parents' involvement, as three statement items scored high, four statement items scored neutral, and three statement items scored low. Considering the statements as a group, the mean scores ranged from a high of 4.18 (Statement #19: "I care what my parents think") to a low of 1.83 (Statement #14: "I invite my parents to come to school").

Table 2

*Students' Actions Toward Parental Involvement (in descending order from high to low)*

Item	Attitude Statement	M	SD
19	I care what my parents think.	4.18	1.07
16	I receive words of encouragement from home.	4.16	1.13
11	I ask my parents for help with homework I do not understand.	3.94	1.14
18	I want my parents to attend back-to-school night so they can see my classroom.	3.46	1.25
17	I want my parents to attend parent/teacher conferences to meet my teachers and see my work.	3.18	1.34
15	I share all my school papers with my parents.	3.06	1.34
20	I want my parents to talk with my teachers regularly so they know how I am doing and can help me with things I do not understand.	3.02	1.35
13	I want my parents to help at school.	2.50	1.22
12	I want my parents to visit my classroom.	2.06	1.10
14	I invite my parents to come to school.	1.83	1.06

In general, these Grade 7 students did very much care what their parents thought and valued their involvement in their schoolwork. However, these students had a neutral stance when it came to active encouragement of parental involvement in various school activities such as back-to-school night, parent-teacher conferences, and periodic visits with the teacher for progress reports (Statements 18, 17, 15, and 20). Additionally, these students had a negative reaction to having their parents help in the school or visit the classroom, as students did not invite their parents to come to school (Statement 14).

### Research Question #3: Do Grade 7 females and Grade 7 males differ in their attitudes and actions toward parental involvement?

A series of t-test analyses, presented in Tables 3 and 4, revealed no statistically significant differences between female and male students with respect to any of the attitudinal or action statements in the survey. An examination of the mean scores obtained for female and male students indicated that these Grade 7 students' feelings and actions toward parental involvement were generally positive regardless of gender. A closer look at these data showed that the mean scores ranged from a high for females of 4.73 and males of 4.57 (Statement #8: "I feel that my parents love me and want what is best for me") to a low mean of 2.29 for females and 2.22 for males (Statement #2: "I feel that my parents compare what I am doing to what my classmates are doing").

Table 3

*Students' Attitudes Toward Parental Involvement by Gender*

Attitude Statements	Female		Male		t-Test	df	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD			
1. I feel it is important for my parents to be involved in my education.	3.87	1.0	3.81	1.12	.360	152	.719
2. I feel that my parents compare what I am doing to what my classmates are doing.	2.29	1.25	2.22	1.25	.327	151	.744
3. I feel happy that my parent helps in the classroom.	2.50	1.31	2.63	1.40	-.590	149	.556
4. I feel glad to see my parent(s) at school.	2.62	1.37	2.61	1.38	.019	151	.985
5. I feel that I am old enough to be responsible for my own learning.	3.79	1.22	3.96	1.13	-.854	151	.394
6. I feel my parents should help me when I ask for help with my homework.	4.07	1.23	4.13	1.24	-.313	152	.755
7. I feel that it is important to share with my parents the good things and the bad things that happen in my day at school.	3.64	1.19	3.63	1.19	.015	151	.988
8. I feel that my parents love me and want what is best for me.	4.73	.76	4.57	1.12	1.02	151	.310
9. I feel my parents give me encouragement to do my best in everything I try.	4.47	.91	4.16	1.24	1.78	151	.078
10. I feel that my parents really want me to succeed.	4.73	.81	4.50	1.07	1.51	151	.133

However, it is important to note that although these students felt positively about their parental involvement at home (Statement #6 [Female:  $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ; Male:  $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ]: “I feel my parents should help me when I ask for help with my homework”), they were not as enthusiastic about their parents helping out in the classroom (Statement #3 [Female:  $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ; Male:  $M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ]: “I feel happy that my parent helps in the classroom”). These results were consistent for both female and male students throughout the survey.

### Limitations and Discussion

In this study, the author studied the attitudes and actions toward parental involvement of 155 Grade 7 students in a northern Oklahoma middle school. Also of interest was whether statistically significant differences existed between Grade 7 female and male students with respect to their attitudes and actions toward parental involvement. Although this study is informative, several limitations exist. First, the students who participated already had parents who were active in their education, as these parents signed the consent form. Second, the study included a small sample number, thus limiting conclusions that can be drawn.

Several interesting findings emerged from this study. First, the results appeared to be consistent for all students regardless of gender. Second, the Grade 7 students surveyed showed a positive attitude toward parental involvement and believed it was important for



Table 4

*Students' Attitudes Toward Parental Involvement by Gender*

Attitude Statements	Female		Male		t-Test	df	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD			
11. I ask my parents for help with homework I do not understand.	3.92	1.15	3.94	1.13	-.127	151	.899
12. I want my parents to visit my classrooms.	2.11	1.01	2.01	1.21	.504	150	.615
13. I want my parents to help at school.	2.51	1.21	2.51	1.25	-.008	150	.944
14. I invite my parents to come to school.	1.89	1.04	1.76	1.09	.764	150	.446
15. I share all my school papers with my parents.	3.07	1.45	3.04	1.19	.383	151	.702
16. I receive words of encouragement from home.	4.19	1.09	4.12	1.19	.383	151	.702
17. I want my parents to attend parent/teacher conferences to meet my teachers and see my work.	3.09	1.38	3.26	1.31	-.778	151	.438
18. I want my parents to attend back-to-school night so they can see my classroom.	3.35	1.23	3.63	1.18	-1.39	151	.165
19. I care what my parents think.	4.27	1.07	4.08	1.18	.999	151	.320
20. I want my parents to stay home.	2.94	1.36	3.12	1.34	-.803	151	.423

their parents to be involved in their education (Statement #1,  $M = 3.84$ ). They also believed their parents were already doing an adequate job of helping them to become successful students because their parents really wanted them to succeed (Statement #10,  $M = 4.63$ ). Responses also indicated that their parents helped them with homework and studying for tests, gave them words of encouragement and praise to do their best in everything they try (Statement #9,  $M = 4.34$ ), and were generally supportive in their educational efforts.

Third, these students were not overly enthusiastic about actively seeking parental involvement in their schoolwork. Perhaps they already believed that their parents were sufficiently supportive, as stated above. Alternatively, these students may have wanted their parents to know that they wanted parental involvement (Statement #1,  $M = 3.84$ ) but that they also wanted to become more independent and believed they are old enough to be responsible for their own learning (Statement #5,  $M = 3.86$ ). For example, the students' responses suggested they thought their parents should help them with homework only when asked to do so (Statement # 6,  $M = 4.10$ ) because the students did want to succeed and would seek help with homework when needed (Statement # 11,  $M = 3.94$ ).

These Grade 7 students still cared very much about what their parents thought (Statement #19,  $M = 4.18$ ). Responses to the open-ended, qualitative questions suggested they very much wanted their parents' approval, love, trust, and respect but also wished their parents would recognize they were growing up and needed to start making some decisions for themselves. They expressed their desire to try and "stand on their own two feet" and learn from their own mistakes while someone is there to help them work through these mistakes. Thus, they wanted their parents to be involved on their terms, only when they needed help and only in the home environment.

These findings are supported by a study done by Keith, Reimers, Fehremenn, Pottebaum, and Aubey (1986) that found, at the secondary level, what parents do at



home seems to have the greatest impact on student learning. They determined that the key strategies to follow at the secondary level were limiting recreational TV viewing and emphasizing the completion of homework assignments.

### Instructional Implications

Parental involvement was indeed important to these Grade 7 students. Adolescents do care what their parents think, and they need to know that their parents think that learning and school activities are important. This supports the premise that parents need to stay involved and enthusiastic about their children's learning, even as they get older (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Oakes & Lipton, 1991; Simmons-Morton & Crump, 2003). Therefore, parents and teachers need to work together so they can help each other provide a successful learning experience for each child.

However, this study also suggests that teachers in the middle school may need to approach parental involvement differently for older students, as these middle-school students wanted their parents to be involved in the home but not at the school. The idea of parental involvement in the home is supported by another study conducted by Anderson and Minke (2007) that found parents helped their child(ren) at home but not necessarily at school. Therefore, educators at the middle-school level need to explore more effective ways to encourage parental involvement in academic activities in the home as it is important that students believe that all of the adults around them care about their learning as well as the effort they put into learning. Additionally, this positive behavior toward learning will enhance the students' perceptions of their learning ability.

In summary, middle-school educators can take steps to meet the special needs of their students. First, teachers and schools may need to provide, when necessary, programs and workshops to help all parents develop parenting skills that promote good behavior, positive attitude, excitement for learning, and a strong work ethic in their children. Second, teachers should be encouraged to develop a classroom newsletter in which classroom happenings and discoveries are discussed and activities are provided for parents and students to do at home in order to enrich the learning that is occurring in the classroom. Third, teachers

*“ They expressed their desire to try and “stand on their own two feet” and learn from their own mistakes while someone is there to help them work through these mistakes. Thus, they wanted their parents to be involved on their terms, only when they needed help and only in the home environment. ”*

**Dr. Susan Szabo** is a professor in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction, Texas A&M University-Commerce. She teaches master's level online students who are current teachers in the K-12 classroom and are working on either their reading degree or curriculum and instruction degree. Szabo is a member of Beta Lambda Chapter in Texas State Organization. [Susan.Szabo@tamuc.edu](mailto:Susan.Szabo@tamuc.edu)



need to encourage parents to establish a homework routine and provide a special space for homework to be completed as this will show the student that learning and achievement are valued and allow parents, when necessary, to provide help. Fourth, because adolescents are social beings, educators should encourage study groups both in the classroom and at home. Fifth, parents should also limit “screen time,” whether it be TV viewing, participating in social chat time on their phones, or playing computer games.

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# The Effects of Poverty on Lifelong Learning: Important Lessons for Educators

By Patricia Boatwright and Lisa Midcalf

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*P*overty is a critical issue in education, and preservice and inservice teachers must understand its impact on a child's learning. The authors highlight Francis Marion University Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty, which partners with district teachers as well as the university's education majors to broaden their knowledge of what poverty is and what effect it has on learning. This knowledge can then guide educators into helping children of poverty to become lifelong learners.

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According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, in 2016, 41% of children in the United States under the age of 18 lived in low-income households. Of those children, the greatest number were age five or under. Educators may not have the solution to the poverty crisis, but they do have an obligation to understand the implications of poverty on students' learning.

## Poverty and Learning

Research has made it clear that a correlation exists between socioeconomic status and school achievement (Engle & Black, 2008; Jensen, 2009; Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Moore, Redd, Burkhauser, Mbwana, & Collins, 2009). Children of poverty are at significant risk for academic failure (Belfiore, Auld, & Lee, 2005; Espinosa, 2005). They enter school with lower reading skills than their peers (Espinosa, 2005), and they are at a greater risk for negative reading outcomes compared to children with a higher socioeconomic status (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Educators see less reading and math proficiency from those students coming from poverty situations (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Lee & Reeves, 2012). Even high-achieving low-income students lose ground as they progress through school. Only 28% of high-achieving first-graders come from low-income families—and by fifth grade, only 56% of those students remain in the top quartile compared to 69% of higher-income peers (Wyner, Bridgeland, & DiIulio, 2007).

## Hopeless to Hopeful

It seems that the future is quite dim for children who are living in poverty. According to Jensen (2009), these children attend school less frequently and drop out more often than their peers who do not live in poverty. Their attention and concentration are impaired. They have less motivation and determination to learn. Research has shown that poverty negatively impacts brain development among children before they reach kindergarten (Luby et al., 2013). Hair et al. (2015) examined the scores on "cognitive and academic achievement" as well as "the gray matter of the entire brain, frontal lobe, temporal lobe, and hippocampus" (p. 827) of children in poverty and found that these children performed

poorly in school relative to children not exposed to similar life conditions. The study warned that the longer children are exposed to poverty, the more they will be academically deficient.

Even with all the research supporting the negative effects of poverty on a child's education, educators must believe that all is not lost. According to a 2012 report by the Brookings Institution, "children with higher levels of school readiness at age five are generally more successful in grade school, less likely to drop out of high school, and earn more as adults, even after adjusting for differences in family background" (p. 2). Thus, it seems that the key to winning educationally with children living in poverty is to develop school readiness skills. However, how can teachers educate parents regarding the importance of such readiness if they themselves lack knowledge of the true nature of poverty?

### Deepening Educators' Knowledge of Poverty

The first understanding that educators must embrace is that poverty is not just about the lack of money in one's family, although money is one of the defining factors. Instead, poverty is the extent to which an individual does without resources. According to Payne (1995), these resources include the following: (a) financial—having the money to purchase goods and services; (b) emotional—being able to choose and control emotional responses, especially to negative situations, without being self-destructive; (c) mental—having the mental abilities and skills to deal with daily life; (d) spiritual—believing in divine purpose and guidance; (e) physical—having physical health and mobility; (f) support systems—having friends, family, and backup resources available to access in times of need; (g) role models—having frequent access to adults who are appropriate and nurturing to the child; and (h) knowledge of hidden rules—knowing the unspoken cues and habits of a group. Children of poverty lack many and, at times, perhaps all these resources that, when taken as a whole, shape each student for school readiness. A lack of these resources puts a child at risk right from the beginning of his or her education.

Accordingly, teacher educators need to add a poverty focus to their programs. Historically, teacher education programs have given little training to preservice teachers to prepare them for their work with under-resourced children. Preservice teachers in poverty areas complete the same teacher preparation programs as those who teach in schools that enroll primarily more affluent students. However, one can believe that teachers who possess

**Dr. Patricia Boatwright** is Assistant Professor of Education at Francis Marion University in Florence, SC. Boatwright is a member of the Xi Chapter of the South Carolina Organization. PBoatwright@fmarion.edu



**Dr. Lisa Midcalf** is Assistant Professor of Education-Literacy at Francis Marion University in Florence, SC. LMidcalf@fmarion.edu





the knowledge and skills needed to teach children of poverty, and teach them well, have the greatest potential for breaking the poverty cycle that has been going on for generations.

*“...one can believe that teachers who possess the knowledge and skills needed to teach children of poverty, and teach them well, have the greatest potential for breaking the poverty cycle that has been going on for generations.”*

### **The Program**

One such program can be found at Francis Marion University in Florence, South Carolina. The mission of FMU's Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty is “to increase the achievement of children of poverty by improving the quality of undergraduate teacher preparation, graduate teacher preparation, and the professional development of in-service teachers” (para. 1). Grounded in neuroscience and the science of learning, the Center's practices are focused equally on the importance of building strong relationships and promoting socioemotional development, coupled with brain-based instructional strategies that, together, yield

highest returns in terms of revealing the often-hidden potential of all students.

Wanting to broaden the understanding of teachers regarding the issues of poverty, the Center developed standards for teaching children in poverty (Appendix) that are incorporated into many of the education courses at FMU. The Center provides resources to teachers through its in-house library and its website. Conferences, as well as hands-on workshops regarding poverty, are held throughout the state, providing opportunities for preservice and inservice teachers to broaden their teaching skills in poverty situations. Many FMU preservice teachers are members of the Teachers of Children of Poverty Scholars, meeting monthly on campus to network and study the connection between neuroscience and a child's ability to learn while growing up in poverty. The Center supports inservice teachers by providing grants that are used throughout the many school districts in South Carolina.

The Center's research regarding its effectiveness on teachers' beliefs and attitudes on poverty has been positive (Pawloski, 2018). Education students have reported that their awareness of the effect of poverty on children's learning has increased over their years of study at FMU. These positive results are due to the partnership between the Center, FMU, and the surrounding school districts.

### **What the Future Holds**

Once educators understand that poverty is not just a financial issue but one of a lack of resources, they can begin to see where they fit into the educational puzzle of learning for these under-resourced children. Teachers—both preservice and inservice—no doubt believe that they may not have the skills or the background themselves to help these children. If educators are to create an equal educational experience for all children to learn, they must take the necessary steps: first, to understand poverty and its effects on a child mentally, physically, and emotionally; and second, to seek educational support systems such as FMU's Center of Excellence that will provide resources to educators regarding children of poverty. With the correct knowledge and resources, educators will be better equipped to change children of poverty from students who start off disadvantaged to students who are successful lifelong learners.



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## Appendix

### FMU's Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty Standards for Teaching Children in Poverty

#### Standard 1: Life in Poverty

##### ELEMENT 1.1

Apply current research to interpret the impact of limited resources on school and life success.

*ELEMENT 1.2 (Clinical)*

Apply current research-based knowledge, skills, and dispositions to generate and implement classroom strategies designed to support the unique needs of under-resourced learners.

**Standard 2: Language and Literacy***ELEMENT 2.1*

Apply current research to explain the nature of language differences frequently registered by children in or of poverty.

*ELEMENT 2.2 (Clinical)*

Apply current research-based knowledge, skills, and dispositions to create effective instructional environments that support the growth of language skills necessary for success in school.

**Standard 3: Family and Community Partnerships***ELEMENT 3.1*

Apply current research to explain ways that familial access to resources can impact home, school, and community partnerships and engagement.

*ELEMENT 3.2 (Clinical)*

Apply current research-based knowledge, skills, and dispositions to a) generate and implement a plan for partnerships and engagement between home, school, and community stakeholders; and b) participate in related service learning experiences.

**Standard 4: Classroom Community***ELEMENT 4.1*

Apply current research to explore the impact of limited resources on a learner's social, emotional, and cognitive development, experiences, and abilities.

*ELEMENT 4.2 (Clinical)*

Apply current research-based knowledge, skills, and dispositions to develop and implement positive classroom community strategies that recognize children in or of poverty as capable learners.

**Standard 5: Curriculum Design, Instructional Strategies, Assessment***ELEMENT 5.1*

Apply current research to a) explain how alignment of state mandated curriculum with instruction and assessment impacts achievement of under-resourced learners; and b) analyze (align) state content standards with planned instruction and assessment.

*ELEMENT 5.2*

Apply current research to identify best practices for assessment of under-resourced learners.

*ELEMENT 5.3*

Apply current research to identify appropriate instructional strategies for use with under-resourced learners.

*ELEMENT 5.4 (Clinical)*

Apply research-based knowledge, skills, and dispositions to create and implement results-driven instructional strategies and assessments for under-resourced learners.

**Standard 6. Teachers as Leaders, Learners, and Advocates***ELEMENT 6.1*

Apply current research to a) generate a plan for life-long learning that includes self-reflection and self-evaluation related to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions, necessary for success as a teacher of under-resourced learners; and b) exemplify professional leadership through participation in a variety of professional activities that focus on issues that impact children in or of poverty.

*ELEMENT 6.2 (Clinical)*

Apply current research-based knowledge, skills, and dispositions to create and execute advocacy activities designed to illuminate the needs and improve academic success of under-resourced learners.

Francis Marion University Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty. (2018)  
Retrieved from <https://www.fmucenterofexcellence.org/courses/standards/>

## General Interest

# Leaders Building Effective Teams: Three Corners of Engagement

By Judith Stegmaier Nappi

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*This article examines the relationship between and among leadership practices, administrator and teacher competencies, teaming, and student success through a structure referred to as the three corners of engagement. Studies have found that teacher quality has the most impact on student incentive and success; however, a domino effect occurs as a leader's attributes influence the teacher motivation and teaching quality related to student performance (Fullan, 2001; Fullan, 2006; Marzano et al., 2005). Employing a team approach is a way to guarantee that the various leadership responsibilities required for school success are performed in a competent manner. Examining teaming in an educational setting, the author considers three corners, or central points: resources, both human capital and physical; the focus of education for students; and the structures through which required tasks are completed. Each corner is dependent on the others and is driven by the vision, beliefs, and goals established by stakeholders.*

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Studies have found that teacher quality has the most impact on student incentive and success; however, a domino effect occurs as a leader's attributes influence teacher motivation and teaching quality, which ultimately have an impact on student performance (Fullan, 2001; Fullan, 2006; Marzano et al., 2005). Skilled leadership is thus a critical component of school and student success, but, in today's educational and financial climate, even the most skilled administrator cannot go solo. Educational success is more likely to occur when distributed or shared leadership is practiced (Nappi, 2014). Employing a team approach is a way to guarantee that the various leadership responsibilities required for school success are fulfilled in a competent manner. Examining teaming in an educational setting involves consideration of three corners, or central points: resources, both human capital and physical; the focus of education for students; and the structures through which required tasks are completed. Each corner is dependent on the others and driven by the vision, beliefs, and goals established by stakeholders

### School Leadership

Public schooling in the United States is complicated and has undergone sizeable modifications in the past few decades related to changes in legislation that regulate schooling, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001; and Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015. Raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps have become the foci in education. Although the legislation that led the educational challenges designed to raise student achievement did not specifically target leadership as a key factor in achieving these goals, leadership has been identified as

a variable. With the nation's pledge to have every student meet success, the need for high quality administrators is greater than ever. The obligation to expand student achievement while attending to a more diverse student population is compelling school administrators to implement practices that are grounded in research.

**Wallace Foundation Report: Four core practices.** The Wallace Foundation Report (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010) collected 6 years of quantitative data and concluded that student achievement can be linked to effective leadership skills. The report examined prior research to identify four categories of core leadership practices: (a) setting directions, (b) developing people, (c) redesigning the organization, and (d) managing the instructional program (p. 67). Within the categories of core leadership skills are specific practices (Table 1).

Table 1

*Core Leadership Practices and Related Practices*

<b>Core Leadership Practices</b>	<b>Subcategories (Specific Practices)</b>
Setting Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Building a shared vision</li> <li>✦ Fostering the acceptance of group goals</li> <li>✦ Creating high performance expectations</li> <li>✦ Communicating the direction</li> </ul>
Developing People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Providing individualized support and consideration</li> <li>✦ Offering intellectual stimulation</li> <li>✦ Modeling appropriate values and practices</li> </ul>
Redesigning the Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Building collaborative cultures</li> <li>✦ Restructuring the organization to support collaboration</li> <li>✦ Building productive relationships with families and communities</li> <li>✦ Connecting the school to the wider community</li> </ul>
Managing the Instructional Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Staffing the program</li> <li>✦ Providing instructional support</li> <li>✦ Monitoring school activity</li> <li>✦ Buffering staff from distractions to their work</li> <li>✦ Aligning resources</li> </ul>

*Note.* Content from Louis et al., 2010, pp. 68-69.

**2015 Professional Standards.** Efficacious school leadership is crucial to the improvement of educational productivity and cultural awareness. As a response to the shift in educational issues—poverty, family situations, technology, student attitudes and behaviors (including bullying), accountability, student health, reduced funding, and community involvement—the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015) drafted

*“Raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps have become the foci in education. Although the legislation that led the educational challenges designed to raise student achievement did not specifically target leadership as a key factor in achieving these goals, leadership has been identified as a variable.”*

and adopted the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Ten evidence-based standards focus school leaders on effective practices related to communication, teacher and staff competencies, the school community at large, school climate, and the day-to-day operations of the school.

The framework of the Professional Standards thus provides educational leaders with the direction required for the key areas of accountability. Designed after a comprehensive examination of the research on the relationship between educational leadership and student learning and seeking the input of researchers and of school and district leaders through

surveys and focus groups to identify gaps between the 2008 Standards and the needs of leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), the 2015 Standards are reliant upon one another and focused on student success. They are as follows:

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values
2. Ethics and Professional Norms
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
4. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
5. Community of Care and Support for Students
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
9. Operations and Management
10. School Improvement (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015 p. 3)

The 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders can be connected to the Core Leadership Practices as noted in the crosswalk (Table 2).

**Judith S. Nappi, EdD**, is currently Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Rider University in New Jersey. Previously, she was Assistant Superintendent/Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Manchester Township School District in Ocean County, New Jersey. Nappi also held positions as a principal, grade level administrator, and teacher. She has degrees in psychology, social sciences, educational administration, and administrative policy and urban education. Nappi currently serves as vice president and legislative committee chair of Omicron Chapter in New Jersey State Organization. [jstegmaier@rider.edu](mailto:jstegmaier@rider.edu)





Table 2

*Crosswalk of Core Leadership Practices and Professional Standards for Educational Leaders*

Core Leadership Practices	Subcategories (Specific Practices)	Professional Standard for Educational Leaders 2015
Setting Direction	Building a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, creating high performance expectations, communicating the direction	<i>Standard 1</i> Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.
Developing People	Providing individualized support and consideration, offering intellectual stimulation, modeling appropriate values and practices	<i>Standard 2</i> Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
Redesigning the Organization	Building collaborative cultures, restructuring the organization to support collaboration, building productive relationships with families and communities, connecting the school to the wider community	<i>Standard 3</i> Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being. <i>Standard 5</i> Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student. <i>Standard 6</i> Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being. <i>Standard 7</i> Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being. <i>Standard 8</i> Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
Managing the Instructional Program	Staffing the program, providing instructional support, monitoring school activity, buffering staff from distractions to their work, aligning resources	<i>Standard 4</i> Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being. <i>Standard 9</i> Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being. <i>Standard 10</i> Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

*Note.* Content from Louis et al., 2010, pp. 68-69; and National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, pp. 9-18.

**Leaders and student learning.** At the core of educational leadership is improved student learning. A mounting body of knowledge based on research and practice indicates that educational leaders have an impact on student achievement (Danielson, 2006; Lambert, 2006; Levine, 2005). A study conducted by Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2013) found that successful principals increase the achievement of an average pupil in their schools by between 2 and 7 months of learning in an academic year while unproductive principals lower achievement by the same amount. Specifically, successful leaders create challenging but caring and supportive settings conducive to student learning and support teachers by creating a positive work environment through the practices and procedures they put into effect. Thus, the Core Leadership Practices (Louis et al., 2010) and Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) set the guidelines for practices that will be the most productive and beneficial to students and teachers.

**Leadership competencies.** Competencies are patterns of thinking or acting that result in an individual's becoming successful in a particular occupation or position. Frey and Ruppert (2013) classified competencies as being either personal or organizational. According to Frey and Ruppert (2013), personal competencies include the knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, and personality that an individual acquires; organizational competencies, on the other hand, are the processes and structures that are entrenched in an organization.

*“ School leaders who promote a positive school culture where collaboration is valued and teachers are given a voice are more likely to have greater teacher retention. ”*

In most cases, the identification of competencies has primarily been based on in-depth studies of highly successful individuals in leadership roles outside of education (e.g., business managers). Sanghi (2016) grouped

leadership competencies into four clusters: thinking capabilities, people effectiveness, self-management, and social awareness (p. 253). Within each cluster are a number of different behaviors that are job specific. Due to changing global conditions, Torrington and Taylor (2002) proposed that organizations must define competencies by anticipating what will be needed in the future to achieve goals rather than looking at what competencies were successful in the past. In line with this thinking, Vakola, Socerquist, and Prastacos (2007) conducted a longitudinal study on developing competencies to meet strategic planning goals based on the needs of stakeholders. According to Bryson, Ackermann, and Eden (2007), the essential piece of an organization's success is the talent to recognize and develop skills in order to generate the greatest benefit for key stakeholders at a moderate cost.

In education, cost is not only measured in monetary amounts but also in student achievement, creating unique competencies for educational leaders. An early study conducted by Green (1997) identified 13 core competencies observed in successful schools. Later studies conducted by Green (2010, 2012) condensed the 13 identified characteristics into four themes:

1. Understanding Self and Others
2. Understanding the Complexity of Organizational Life,
3. Building Bridges through Relationships, and
4. Engaging in Leadership Best Practices. (p. 60-61)

Principals who promoted research-based best practices in instruction (Fullan, 2006; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) and demonstrated the competencies defined by Green (2010) were able to demonstrate a positive correlation to school culture and student achievement. Walstrom and Louis (2008) found the competencies identified by Green (1997) to be the foundation of positive changes in leadership.

**Leadership and teacher retention.** “People don’t quit companies. They quit managers” (National Education Policy Brief, 2008, p. 2). Principals and other school leaders create the environment in which teachers spend a large portion of their day. School leaders who promote a positive school culture where collaboration is valued and teachers are given a voice are more likely to have greater teacher retention. Reflecting on the competencies identified for successful school leaders will assist school leaders as they work toward developing a constructive school culture in which teachers are respected and supported.

### Leadership and Student Success through Building Effective Teams.

*“Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.” —Andrew Carnegie*

The expanded charges and responsibilities of school leaders have increased the need for distributed leadership. Middle management in the form of assistant principals, supervisors, coaches, and so forth is recognized by many practitioners as being vital to the effectiveness of the organization. However, these positions are not always evident, and oftentimes the responsibilities placed on individuals in these roles are not made clear. Accordingly, one approach to improving practices is to fashion a team that will organize and guide initiatives that are intended to improve the educational process. Friend and Cook (2007) found that “teaming is the most frequently advocated structure for implementing school reform initiatives” (p. 58). Employing a team approach is a way to guarantee that the various leadership responsibilities required for school success are performed in a competent manner.

School administrators can create the type of environment in which teachers work collaboratively to perfect their craft and impact student achievement. In this type of supportive environment, teachers learn from one another to build upon their core skills. It is the role of school administrators to provide the means, supports, and educational climate that will allow teachers to further their skills. According to Sparks (2013), schools will progress only when all administrators and teachers belong to one or more effective teams where distributed leadership is practiced.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) identified more than 20 responsibilities effective school leaders master. The identified responsibilities include keeping updated on the research in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and using data to evaluate and implement changes to improve school practices. “It would be rare, indeed, to find a single individual who has the capacity or



Figure 1. Lencioni's Model of Team Dysfunction. Retrieved from <https://www.tablegroup.com/>

will to master such a complex array of skills” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 99); therefore, a school team that is designed to share leadership tasks and responsibilities can assist in improvement efforts. Leadership teams can provide coaching (both formal and informal), determine professional development needs, design professional development, problem solve, assist with communication, and be a resource to both teachers and administrators.

By counterpoint, Lencioni’s model of team dysfunction (2005; Figure 1) helps define the key characteristics of effective teams. Successful teams trust one another, have a purpose based on the school’s mission and vision, hold one another accountable, and operate within a structure based on procedures and responsibilities for each member. Sparks (2013) similarly identified four phases of effective teaming:

1. Starting out: Members collect information and begin to implement ideas from the information acquired.
2. Developing: Members test various approaches and strengthen belief in the process.
3. Deepening: Members have met with some success and recognize achievements.
4. Sustaining: Implementing current research-based strategies and revisiting value of initiatives have become second nature.

“When solutions are designed collaboratively, a greater chance exists of reform being sustained, as once goals and strategies become part of the fabric of the school, even if there is a change in leadership, teacher-designed initiatives are more likely to remain.”

Of course, effective teaming does not occur automatically. Creating an effective team initially takes time and effort but can assist with the many leadership responsibilities essential for a school’s success. Administrators must understand that they are dealing with professionals who bring different background experiences, needs, and ideas to the table. The perceptions that group members exhibit when working as a team impact other team members and the team as a whole (Lewin, 1952). Therefore, it is important for leaders to develop group norms that will allow for productive team meetings. This might require professional

development prior to the team’s working on school-related issues. Professional development may focus on communication skills, setting priorities, working with adult learners, using data, and problem solving.

Once a team is established, it is vital that the school leaders give it the authority to make decisions within the scope of its work (Cotton, 2003). Tracey (2001) argued that when leaders enable those they supervise to make decisions, they increase the likelihood for success. Establishing productive teams also generally leads to the staff’s implementation of initiatives with fidelity because teachers have been given a voice in the process. When solutions are designed collaboratively, a greater chance exists of reform being sustained, as once goals and strategies become part of the fabric of the school, even if there is a change in leadership, teacher-designed initiatives are more likely to remain.

### **Leadership Competencies and Teaming: Three Corners of Engagement**

When examining engagement in an educational setting, three corners, or central points, should be considered: resources, the focus, and the structure. In an educational setting, the resources are human capital as well as physical resources, with human capital

being the greatest expenditure that K-12 districts make (Myung, Martinez, & Nordstrum, 2013). The focus is education of students, and the structure involves how required tasks are completed. Each corner is dependent on the others and is driven by the vision, beliefs, and goals established by stakeholders (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Three corners of engagement (Nappi, 2017).

**Resources.** Resources in education are vital to realizing educational goals and objectives because they are an important factor in offering students equal opportunities by reducing the impact of socioeconomic influences on student achievement. Adeogun and Osifila (2008) observed a positive correlation between the academic success of students and physical, economic, and material resources. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2012) identified the resources invested in education as

1. spending—the salaries of teachers, administrators, and support staff; upkeep or production costs of buildings, utilities, transportation, meals
2. human resources—teacher training, student teacher ratio, teacher availability
3. material resources—physical space, school grounds, heating, cooling, ventilation, lighting, and educational resources such as computers, texts, and Internet access
4. time resources—student's time in school, class size, and co-curricular activities.

Many variables must be considered regarding educational resources, such as student characteristics, family backgrounds, school location (rural vs. suburban or urban), type of institution (public or private), and expenditure per student. A review of economic research across the United States regarding school resources and student achievement conducted by Hanushek and Woessmann (2017) found that expenditures and class size played a small role when looking at differences in student achievement. However, differences in teacher quality and instructional time did have an impact on student achievement (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2017). The conclusion was that the amount of resources to which a school has access was not as important as how the resources were utilized.



In an earlier analysis of the literature, Hedges, Laine, and Greenwald (1994) found that most studies indicated a positive relationship between amount of resources and student achievement. Demir (2009) studied the influence of class size on student achievement and suggested student-teacher ratio as the most important predictor of academic achievement. Although debate exists as to whether resources, on their own, have a positive impact on student achievement, a connection clearly exists. as funding is needed to provide programs that have been identified as effective.

Developing a leadership team by linking individual competencies within an organization (Huxham & Vangen, 2005), school administrators can make the most of resources available. Growing evidence exists that administrators who foster a community of learners among teachers can achieve improved teaching and learning (Lomos, Hofman, & Bosker, 2011). Social capital, or the manner in which teachers interact to share and access the knowledge of one another, has been recognized as an important characteristic of school reform (Carmichael, Fox, McCormick, Procter, & Honour, 2006) and has been linked to student achievement (Pil & Leana, 2009). The key point is that teachers' and administrators' competencies are themselves a resource for best decisions about use of all resources to meet established goals.

**Focus.** The quality of a student's learning experiences is ascertained through the development of curricular objectives. Therefore, teachers must have a solid understanding of the standards, develop student learning goals that are measurable and directly related to the standards, and communicate expectations to students. Beyond the development of objectives, teachers need to implement ongoing assessments to monitor progress and make instructional changes as required to meet the needs of all learners. These measures require teachers to be actively engaged in the curriculum-writing process in order to foster a community of learning and improvement.

Leaders who communicate a clear vision and consistently convey high expectations for

all students will have the greatest impact. Research indicates that school leaders identified as successful articulate a vision for a collective institutional purpose and shared responsibility and that principals who can find new and innovative means to convey this message are key (Cotton, 2003; Portin et al., 2009). Developing a shared interpretation of the school's goals will help teachers to identify the significance of the work in which they engage with colleagues and with students. Coburn (2003) conducted an analysis on school reform and found that perspicacity, sustainability, and faculty collaboration are necessary to improve practice. Teachers who are asked to participate in open communication with school

*“ Leaders who communicate a clear vision and consistently convey high expectations for all students will have the greatest impact. ”*

leaders and with one another are more likely to “buy into” school reform efforts or new initiatives.

**Structure.** The structure of an educational institution is the framework within which all parts work together to promote the success of all students. The school's structure or processes need to be aligned with goals, objectives, and established initiatives rather than being “another thing” that has to be addressed. Some of the structures important in school success are a safe environment, classroom setups, a coherent schedule with few



interruptions, analysis of data to reveal instructional needs, provision of professional development based on teacher and student needs, peer coaching, a collegial environment, and clear communication.

Of course, one of the most important charges of an educational leader is to deliver a safe and well-organized educational environment that allows for effective instruction and learning to take place. Certain paramount factors for a safe and well-organized educational environment have been identified, including setting and communicating standards of behavior as well as establishing procedures that allow for consistent application of behavior policies (Cotton, 2003). When institutional procedures are in place, teachers can then set up classrooms in which students feel safe asking questions and contributing to discussions. No single correct way to set up a classroom exists, but all classrooms should foster an atmosphere of security and respect. The classroom design should be planned in a manner that will allow for the best possible way for students to learn the subject under study and for all students to be active participants in the learning process.

The master schedule of a school is the framework for everything that will take place within the school year, including cocurricular activities. Developing a coherent schedule has been identified as one of the most important exercises in which administrators engage. The school schedule “gives practical expression to the curricular philosophy of the school; it sets, maintains and regulates the teaching and learning pulse of the school and ensures the delivery of quality education for all students” (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2006). The schedule establishes the assignment of subjects or classes, teachers, and students to the time periods allotted within a week, considering all state, district, and union rules imposed upon the school system. Research has found that extending time in school can be a helpful means for supporting student learning, particularly when taking into consideration how time is utilized (Patall, Cooper, & Allen, 2010).

School administrators can revise organizational structures to allow for collaborative practices to take place. Cotton (2003) found that the most effective school leaders planned schedules around fundamental instructional needs with minimal interferences of instructional time. For example, schedules can be designed to secure common planning time for teachers. When common planning time is arranged, the time must be utilized for analyzing student work to drive instruction. Camburn (2010) found that collaborative planning time resulted in a greater frequency of reflective practice among teachers. Given adequate time, the proper professional development, and constant communication regarding the significance of collaboration, teachers will begin to have faith in the process of sharing best practices and challenges. Throughout this process, school leaders need to recognize and capitalize on individual competencies that teachers bring to the table and both model and encourage collaboration.

Monitoring of school and student progress by both school leaders and teachers is an important factor when examining student success. Participating in collaborative meetings and paying close attention to student performance has been linked to improved

“...one of the most important charges of an educational leader is to deliver a safe and well-organized educational environment that allows for effective instruction and learning to take place.”

student performance (Elmore, 2000; Fink & Resnick, 2001). Deno (2003) found that when teachers monitor student progress, students learn at a higher rate, teachers make quality instructional decisions, and students become more reflective. Gathering and using data to make decisions is essential when focusing on student improvement. Data can be measured and used on many levels, such as state, district, school, classroom, and individual student levels. Collecting and analyzing data sets allow school leaders and teachers to make decisions based on goals and objectives with greater clarity. Educational leaders need to assist teachers in learning what types of data to collect and how to analyze the data to improve student learning and meet achievement targets. Creating a culture in which data are viewed as helpful to the teaching and learning process is critical to continuous school improvement.

## Conclusion

Leadership has a strong albeit indirect influence on student achievement. By focusing on the three corners of engagement—resources, focus, and structure—school leaders and the teams they create can impact student achievement by developing the three key areas designed to support vision, goals, and objectives.

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Submissions from members will be accepted for review provided that:

- ✦ The submission is not being considered concurrently in whole or substantial part by another publisher.
- ✦ The *Bulletin* has exclusive option of possible publication for a period of 6 months following receipt of the submission.
- ✦ The author assumes responsibility for publication clearance in the event the submission was presented at a professional meeting or is the direct product of a project financed by a funding agency.
- ✦ Authors are responsible for accurately citing all quoted and bibliographic materials and for obtaining permission from the original source for quotations in excess of 150 words or for tables or figures reproduced from published works.
- ✦ Co-authors are permitted. At least one author must be a Delta Kappa Gamma member.

## Manuscript Preparation

- ✦ Although there is a suggested theme for each issue of the *Journal*, manuscripts on all topics are welcome. The *Collegial Exchange* is not theme-based.
- ✦ Manuscripts should be focused, well organized, effectively developed, concise, and appropriate for *Bulletin* readers. The style should be direct, clear, readable, and free from gender, political, patriotic, or religious bias. Topic headings should be inserted where appropriate.
- ✦ Please see Submission Grid on the following page for specific requirements for the types of manuscripts appropriate for publication.
- ✦ Use *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, current edition, for manuscript preparation. Visit the APA Style website at [www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org).
- ✦ Double space the entire manuscript, including quotations, references, and tables. Print should be clear, dark, and legible. Pages must be numbered.
- ✦ References should refer only to materials cited within the text. Nonretrievable material such as papers, reports of limited circulation, unpublished works, and personal communications should be restricted to works absolutely essential to the manuscript.
- ✦ Abbreviations should be explained at their first appearance in the text. Educational jargon (e.g., preservice, K–10, etc.) should be defined as it occurs in the text.
- ✦ Place tables and figures on separate pages at the end of the manuscript. Use Arabic numerals and indicate approximate placement in the text.
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## Bulletin Submission Grid

Publication	Submission Type and Description	Word Length	Requirements
<i>Journal</i>	Action/Classroom Research: Organized, systematic, and reflective analysis of classroom practice with implications for future practice in teaching and learning.	1,500-4,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Qualitative/Quantitative/Mixed Methods Research: Essentially narrative with nonstatistical approaches and a focus on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meanings from their experiences (Qual)/Gathers and analyzes measurable data to support or refute a hypothesis or theory through numbers and statistics (Quan)/Utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data to explore a research question (Mixed).	1,500-4,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Position Paper/Viewpoint: Defines an issue; asserts clear and unequivocal position on that issue, provides data and references that inform that position, and argues directly in its favor.	1,000-1,500	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Review of Literature: Presents supporting and nonsupporting evidence to clarify a topic and/or problem of interest and value to educators; synthesizes and critiques the literature; draws conclusions; mentions procedures for selecting and reviewing literature; may include narrative review, best evidence synthesis, or meta-analysis.	1,500-3,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Program Description: Provides an overview and details of a single program in an educational setting. Goals, resources, and outcomes are included. No marketing or promotion of a program is allowed.	1,500-2,000	Abstract; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Journal</i>	Book/Technology Review: Combines summary and personal critique of a book, Web site, or app on an educational topic or with educational relevance.	400-700	Introduction; documentation; bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Classroom Practice/Program: Describes practice or initiative used in a classroom to advance educational excellence	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	DKG Chapter/State Organization Practice/Program: Describes a practice or initiative used by a chapter or state organization to advance the purposes of DKG	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Viewpoint on Current Issue: Defines and addresses an issue related to education, women, children, or DKG	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Personal Reflection or Anecdote: Shares a personal experience that provides insight to the human condition, particularly related to educators and women	500-700	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Inspirational Piece: Provides transcript of speech delivered at chapter, state, regional, or international events	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Bio and/or Interview: Shares the story or thoughts of a key woman educator or leader in education, women's issues, or children's issues	700-1,200	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Book Review: Combines a summary and personal critique of a textbook, resource, or book (fiction or nonfiction) related to education or to women and children	400-700	Bio; photo
<i>Collegial Exchange</i>	Technology Review: Combines a summary and personal critique of an educational application, program, or piece of hardware that is useful in the classroom or that is useful in the life of an educator	400-700	Bio; photo
<i>Journal or Collegial Exchange</i>	Letter to the Editor: Responds to items previously published in the <i>Bulletin</i>	200-300	Author's name; chapter/state
<i>Journal or Collegial Exchange</i>	Poetry/Creative Work: Original expressions in any creative format	NA	Bio; photo