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## How Important is Parental Involvement and Engagement in Preschool

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Emilee M. Dixon, Student

Dr. Jennifer Grisham, Major Professor

Dr. Channon Horn, Director of Graduate Studies

HOW IMPORTANT IS PARENTAL  
INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT IN PRESCHOOL

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education in  
the College of Education  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Emilee Dixon

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Jennifer Grisham, Professor of Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education

Lexington, Kentucky

2024

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate preschool classrooms' parental engagement throughout the school year. Specifically, the study aims to assess if parents felt they received information to support their child's development, if the school offered engagement opportunities, and if the parents believed that engagement impacted their child. Research studies have shown or indicated that parental engagement is a key component to a child's success. This study highlights the importance of parental involvement and engagement for children in preschool. The study involves reviewing a survey to gain a better understanding of when, how, and why parental involvement and engagement were occurring in preschool programs. A key outcome of this study includes gaining a greater understanding of the differences between family engagement and involvement. This study's analysis utilizes a quantitative design based on the Methods Branch.

*Keywords:* parental engagement, parental involvement, preschool, early childhood

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04/18/2024

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Date

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## **Introduction**

According to Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018; Wilder 2014; Epstein, 1991; Fan & Chen (2001), education researchers assert that parental involvement was a principal factor in the education, learning, and academic achievement of children and adolescents. Parental involvement and engagement are factors that impact the educational success of children. Given that preschool is a child's first year in the education system, the presence of a familiar person, such as a family member, was essential in providing the necessary comfort and safety to the child as they adjusted to this change.

“The theory of ecological systems emphasizes that children's relationships and interactions with people or objects in their immediate environment, as well as the activities of parents with their children such as learning, reading, collective research, play a significant role in socioemotional, cognitive and academic development of children (Sengonul, 2022, p.1).”

Literature on parental involvement and engagement has been growing rapidly over the years because the level of importance that families play in their child's development is critical. While every child is different, children can feel comfortable in a new school within a few weeks, while others may take several months to adjust. According to Gordon (2022), the adjustment period depends on your child's personality and temperament as well as the support that they receive” (para. 10). Therefore, recommended practices suggest that parents collaborate with their child's academic team to create a solid foundation during this adaptation period. It is beyond dispute that family engagement and involvement are key to success in school and, further, in life.

Both family engagement and involvement are vital to a child's success. However, there are distinctions between the two that require explanation. Often, there is confusion

between engagement and involvement as the terms are used interchangeably in the literature, but there are differences between them.

**Parental Involvement** refers to actions or activities that parents do to support their child's learning, such as attending conferences or volunteering at school events. Helping with homework and reading to your child are also examples of being involved. This involvement occurs in the home instead of directly with the school. It is often seen as a more passive role, where parents are involved in their child's education but may not participate in daily activities for their child's academics. Becoming more involved in children's learning can create a positive and supportive learning environment. Parental involvement can include conferences, meetings, social events, and volunteering occasionally. There are benefits for parents to be in the schools and communicate with their child's teachers. According to Ferlazzo (2011) the study found the following:

Parent involvement has been perceived as being present in the school building or school-centric involvement. This was based on the idea that schools and teachers should direct parental involvement. Moreover, there was an emphasis on telling families how they can be involved in the school, rather than listening to parents and asking for their suggestions on improving students' academic achievement and behavior. (p.4)

**Parental Engagement** goes beyond involvement and includes more direct collaboration with teachers to support children's learning. This could include participating in school committees or school and district level decision making. Parent engagement is seen as a more active and ongoing partnership between parents and educators to promote student success. Family engagement is seen as both parents having an active voice and presence in their child's education. Reiman (2021) noted the following:

Parent voice refers to two-way communication that includes both a willingness from families to share and an openness from educators to listen to parents' ideas, opinions, and goals for their child. Parent presence refers to parents being actively involved in their child's education through formal structured school activities or opportunities parents have created themselves. This means parents can be engaged in their child's education by creating and supporting opportunities for learning in their home environment. (p. 5)

Family engagement is more complex and demands more involvement in school decisions and daily activities. Specifically, in preschool, while there may not be assigned homework for the students, there are still activities that parents can do at home with their child. If parents spend quality time with their child in a meaningful way, it can foster academic success. Students in the early years of their academics need their parents to establish a support system and engage in activities. Parental engagement does not demand that a parent be a successful college graduate or career-driven member of society. It simply means that any parent, no matter their background, can be involved and engaged in their child's education and success.

According to Epstein (1992), there are six key components to engagement and involvement.

1. Parenting to support children's education.
2. Communicating with the schools
3. Volunteering in children's schools and extracurricular activities
4. Assisting with homework and learning opportunities in the home
5. Participating in decision-making within the schools

## 6. Collaboration and exchange with community organizations

### **Academic Benefits**

Family engagement is a key component to academic success for children. Parental engagement was linked to positive outcomes for students. “Strong family engagement in early childhood systems and programs was central – not supplemental – to promoting children’s healthy intellectual, physical, and social-emotional development; preparing children for school; and supporting academic achievement in elementary school and beyond” (Reiman, 2021, p. 7).

According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), research has shown that when parents are engaged in their child’s learning and enter a partnership with their child’s school, children are more likely to have higher academic success.

Parental involvement can lead to positive outcomes in school, motivating students to succeed and achieve higher academic success. Parental involvement and engagement can make children feel more motivated to accomplish the hard tasks presented in life. According to Sengonul (2022), the study found the following:

When parents expected higher educational consequences for their children, they were highly motivated to involve and engage in education of their children, they were able to ensure learning prospects and opportunities to improve academic performance of their children, and they were able to continue positive communication and interaction with their school. (p. 17)

According to Jhang and Lee (2018), the findings regarding parental involvement and the impact that it had on a child’s academic success, they could state that it was true, parental involvement plays a huge part in a child’s success. Their findings also indicated that parents who have higher expectations and consequences for their children tend to have children who work harder in school, leading to high achievements and academics.

Results of the study indicated regardless of socioeconomic status, if parents expected higher standards, then the child delivered. Sengonul (2022) stated the following:

Parents were able to positively affect their children's academic outcomes to the extent that they set high academic expectations for the education of their children, refrain from interfering or controlling, and encourage, motivate, and support their children for learning and academic achievement by creating opportunities for them. (p. 17)

### **Parent-Educator Communication**

Parent and educator communication was a vital part of a child's success in school. The partnership and collaboration between parents and educators help build a mutual trust and understanding that both are there to support the child's learning. According to Lin, Litkowski, Schmerold, Elicker, Schmitt, and Purpura (2019) understanding the nature of parent-educator communication during the preschool period and how it relates to children's home learning environments was essential for designing early interventions aimed at improving children's cognitive outcomes. Given that intervening early on has the greatest benefits for children, and those from families with low incomes stand to benefit the most, focusing on this early academic period may be especially beneficial for young children from low-income backgrounds.

According to Lin, et al (2019), research shows that communication between parents and educators was higher in preschool compared to later academic years. A key component of having parents involved or engaged in their child's education was keeping parents informed on what they can do in the home to help their child succeed. There are numerous studies that describe a variety of strategies for how parents can be involved in their school-aged children's learning. These studies suggest different at-home activities that families can do to promote language and learning. "Parent-educator communication

regarding children's learning and development, specifically, has the potential to help parents provide a home learning environment that better supports children's development" (Lin et al, 2019, p. 13).

According to Lin, et al (2019), the parent-educator communication study had one specific outcome. Families that were in a low-socioeconomic status required more parent-educator communication which increased the practices of their child's learning and development in Home Literacy Environment (HLE) and Home Numeracy Environment (HNE). (p. 10) Results indicated that greater perceived parent-educator communication was related to more frequent HLE and HNE activities.

### **Family Engagement Strategies**

According to Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) here are three strategies that can be used to create the greatest success in engaging families in the schools. These include home visits, a family engagement liaison and physical proximity to the school or programs. First, let's talk about home visits and what those mean and how important they can be to a teacher and families relationships and communication. Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) found the following:

Home visits by school staff can strengthen relationships with children through activities that reinforce the parent-child bond and promote positive child development. While home visiting programs are most often known for taking place during early childhood years and support families as leaders for their children's education before kindergarten, home visiting programs are increasingly incorporated in elementary and secondary school, specifically supporting children who are struggling in core academic areas or who have chronic absenteeism. (p. 2-3)

Home visits are vital in schools and occur in preschool programs where you have teachers going into families' homes for a visit to meet them and gain a better understanding of their family dynamics. Home visits occur so that families can ask

questions and learn more about the preschool program and the expectations for the year. Some counties complete home visits twice a year while the child was enrolled in a preschool program. Home visits can inform teachers on how a student's home life may affect their school life. Home visits are also important to parents because they show that the teacher was committed to helping their child and interested in the family.

Another strategy that Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) discuss was the use of a family engagement liaison. A family engagement liaison can help families with different cultures and backgrounds feel included and engaged in their child's school. Family engagement liaisons are more popular in the U.S. and used to promote families outlook on schools. Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) found the following:

Family engagement liaisons enact cultural brokering roles between families and the school community. Some activities cultural brokers in schools might incorporate include developing welcoming school climates, fostering parent-parent relationships, developing a social network within the school, and embedding family engagement outside the school environment and into the community. (p. 3)

The final strategy that Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) discussed was to be in physical proximity of the school or program. The article states that relationship between parents and teachers can be positively impacted by just being together. Stopping by the classroom to say hello during drop off, volunteering in the room, and going on field trips are examples of physical proximity to the school or program. Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) found the following:

A fundamental requirement for relationship building was actual physical proximity of families to the school or program. In one study, when physical interactions did occur, they were often routinized (e.g., the parent-teacher conference or back-to-school nights) and interactions were less frequent at the secondary level. When parents did interact with teachers at the secondary level, it was mostly negative regarding behavioral or academic performance. (p. 3)

Families may only get called into the school because their child was doing something wrong or not performing as they should. Families could have had negative experiences with schools, preventing them from wanting to be involved or engaged in their child's program or classroom.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which parental involvement and engagement are occurring in preschool classrooms. Using literature as support to show how relevant and important parental involvement and engagement was, parents were surveyed to determine their perspective. The following research questions were addressed from the survey:

1. To what extent do families have information to become involved and engaged in their child's learning?
2. To what extent are parental involvement or engagement opportunities available?
3. To what extent do parents believe that their involvement or engagement impacts their children's progress or behavior in school?
4. What are characteristics of parents who are most likely to volunteer (stay at home parent, full time career, part time)?

These questions guided the development of the Likert Rating Scale Questionnaire.

### **Methods**

**Survey Development.** Families were given a survey with 21 questions pertaining to their involvement and engagement in their child's preschool class. Consent forms were sent with the surveys. The surveys were sent home on March 19, 2024, and collected



March 21, 2024. The primary investigator picked up the surveys in an envelope from each classroom, making sure that parents/children's identities are unknown since the survey was anonymous. The first four questions of the survey pertain to the "demographics" of the families participating, asking about their job status and level of education. The research approach that was chosen was the Likert rating scale, which gave parents multiple choices to choose from: ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The use of a Likert rating scale to collect data was to provide appropriate and valid data to answer the research questions. After the surveys were collected, the primary investigator ranked the responses from 1-5 to be able to share the data in a numeric form. The questions focused primarily on the parent's point of view. The survey was to be completely anonymous with the intent to give parents the opportunity to answer honestly/truthfully.

**Table 1***Research Question Linked to Survey Questions*

Research Questions	Survey Questions
Do families have information to become involved and engaged in their child's learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I receive information on what I can do at home to help my child improve or extend his/her learning.</li> <li>• I receive information on what my child should be learning and be able to do in the grade he/she was in.</li> <li>• The teacher provides us with resources that can be used at home.</li> <li>• I work with my student at home on age-appropriate activities that correlate with the work being done in the preschool.</li> <li>• I receive regular updates from teacher(s) on my child's progress.</li> <li>• I work with my child often (2-3 times a week) on preschool level material.</li> </ul>
To what extent are parental involvement or engagement opportunities available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am given options on when and how to volunteer.</li> <li>• I am invited to meetings so I can learn about what was going on in the school.</li> <li>• I receive information on activities/events going on in the school so I can participate or volunteer.</li> <li>• The school encourages families to be involved (assist in classroom, lead talks or activities)</li> <li>• I help with in-class activities.</li> <li>• I receive information on how to sign up for events going on at the school.</li> <li>• The school has an annual survey that identifies who was willing and able to volunteer.</li> <li>• The school provides flexible volunteer opportunities giving opportunities to parents who are employed.</li> </ul>
To what extent do parents believe that their involvement impacts their children's progress in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My child's behavior has improved since being involved with their education.</li> <li>• My child has shown more growth since I have worked with them at home.</li> <li>• I feel that my involvement has made my child feel more comfortable in their preschool setting.</li> </ul>
What are characteristics of parents who are most likely to volunteer (stay at home parent, full time career, part time)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I work full time.</li> <li>• I work part-time.</li> <li>• I am a stay-at-home parent.</li> <li>• Education level</li> </ul>

## **Sample**

### **Classroom**

This study was conducted in the Early Childhood Lab at the University of Kentucky. There were three preschool classrooms in the ECL. The ages of the classes range from 2.5-5 years old. Classroom A had eleven students, ages 2.5-3 years old, one lead teacher, and depending on the day it could have 2-3 assistants in the classroom. Classroom A had one student with a diagnosed disability, while the remaining students were typically developing. Classroom B had sixteen students, ages 3-5 years old, one lead teacher, and depending on the day could have 3-4 assistants in the classroom. Classroom B had no students with diagnosed disabilities. Classroom C had fifteen students, ages 3-5 years old, one lead teacher, and depending on the day, 3-4 assistants in the classroom. Classroom C had one child with a diagnosed disability, and the remaining fourteen students were typically developing.

### **Researchers**

The data collection team included one graduate research assistant who developed the survey, sent the surveys to families, and collected the data. The survey was sent to families who were all English speaking. Families with two parent households could answer the survey questions together while families with two households could turn in two separate responses allowing both parents/guardians the opportunities to participate.

### **Procedures**

The primary research investigator, Emilee Dixon, placed three folders with the designated number of surveys and consent forms in each of the classrooms. Consent forms were sent home as a waiver of signature from parents/guardians, meaning if

parents completed the survey that was their “signature” to participate. Parents were given prior knowledge from the director of the ECL, Charlotte Manno, that a survey would be sent home regarding a research thesis being conducted by a graduate student, Emilee Dixon. The teachers at the ECL placed the surveys and consent forms into each student’s backpacks. Families sent back the surveys and the ECL teachers placed them back into the folders for the primary investigator. This method of data collection was to ensure confidentiality from families and the primary investigator. On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the primary investigator picked up the completed surveys from each classroom.

### **Data Collection**

The survey sent to families at the ECL consisted of 21 questions. The survey was only accessible via hardcopies, and no online options were available. The first four questions were related to the demographics and the parents/guardian’s level of education. All responses were based off the Likert Rating Scale. The first three responses were yes/no questions pertaining to work life (stay-at-home parents, part-time, full-time), and the fourth question required a specific response (high school, some college, bachelor’s degree, or advanced degree). The survey should have taken families no more than 15 minutes to complete, since the questions were rating scale or yes/no questions. All survey responses were analyzed and put into an excel sheet to find percentages, mean, median, and the standard deviation. This analysis was based on a quantitative design.

### **Analysis**

The primary investigator, Emilee Dixon, collected the surveys and created visual summaries of the data, based on the demographics given. Descriptive statistics were used

to summarize and analyze the findings. The mean, median, and standard deviations were calculated for each of the questions in the survey.

The findings were divided into three sections: information to support child's development, involvement/engagement opportunities, and the impact of parental involvement/engagement. The primary investigator devised a table to show each section and the findings based on a 1-5 rating scale. Calculations were made for the mean, median, and standard deviation based on the questions responses out of five. The scale was defined as follows: Strongly Agreed -5, Agree -4, Neither Disagree or Agree -3, Disagree -2, and Strongly Disagree -1. If eleven responses were "Strongly Agree" and three were "Disagree," the data entered would look like this: (2,2,2,5,5,5,5,5,5, 5,5,5,5). The averages (mean) were given to show how parents responded. The median was given to show the middle value in the data set. Lastly, the standard deviation was given to show how much the responses deviated from the mean. Based on the findings, conclusions were made for each of the following research questions:

1. To what extent do families have information to become involved and engaged in their child's learning?
2. To what extent are parental involvement or engagement opportunities available?
3. To what extent do parents believe that their involvement or engagement impacts their children's progress or behavior in school?
4. What are characteristics of parents who are most likely to volunteer (stay at home parent, full time career, part time)?

Along with the tables showing the responses and the correlating answers of each section, a pie chart was developed to show the percentages of parents who are stay-at-home, work full-time or part-time. Table 5 shows the parents' level of education and the corresponding demographics as well.

## **Results**

### **Survey Completion**

Table 5 indicates the number of participants and their corresponding demographics and level of education. A total of 42 surveys were sent out to families at the ECL amongst the three classrooms. Twenty-one surveys were returned resulting in a return rate of 50%.

### **Research Question One**

The results for research question one can be found in Table 2. Parents/guardians were asked six questions pertaining to receiving information from their child's preschool on how to become involved or engaged in their child's learning. Ninety-five percent of parents/guardians stated they either strongly agreed or agreed that they receive information from their child's teacher on what they could do at home to improve and/or extend their child's learning. Ninety-five percent of parents/guardians stated they either strongly agreed or agreed that they receive information on what their child should be learning and should be able to do at each developmental stage. Seventy-six percent of parents/guardians either strongly agreed or agreed that their child's teacher provides them with resources they can use at home. Eighty-six percent of parents/guardians either strongly agreed or agreed that they worked with their child at home on age-appropriate activities that correlate with the work being done in the preschool. Seventy-one percent of

parents/guardians either strongly agreed or agreed that they worked with their child 2-3 times a week on preschool level materials, while 29% of parents/guardians responded as neither agreeing or disagreeing that they work with their child at home. Ninety percent of parents/guardians either strongly agreed or agreed that they received regular updates from their child’s teacher on their progress. Overall, based on the responses, most families strongly agreed or agreed that they receive information to support their child’s development.

**Table 2**  
*Information to Support Child Development*

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Median	STDEV
I receive information from my child’s teacher on what I can do at home to help my child improve or extend his/her learning.	9	11			1	4.3	4	0.9
I receive information on what my child should be learning and should be able to do at each developmental stage.	9	11	1			4.3	4	0.6
The teacher provides us with resources that can be used at home.	6	10	3	1	1	3.9	4	1.04
I work with my student at home on age-appropriate activities that correlate with the work being done in the preschool.	9	9		3		4.3	4	0.7
I work with my child often (2-3 times a week) on preschool level materials.	7	8	4	2		4.0	4	1.0
I receive regular updates from teacher(s) on my child’s progress.	10	9	1	1		4.3	4	0.8

*Note.* STDEV: Standard Deviation

## **Research Question Two**

Table 3 shows the results of research question two. The questions focused on asking families what engagement opportunities were offered in the preschool. 100% of parents/guardians strongly agreed or agreed that they receive information on how to sign up for events going on in the school. Eighty-six percent of parents/guardians strongly agreed or agreed that they receive information on activities and events going on in the school so they could participate or volunteer. Ninety percent of parents/guardians either strongly agreed or agreed that they were given options on when and how to volunteer in the school. Eighty-six percent of parents/guardians strongly agreed or agreed that the school encourages families to be involved. This item represented the highest percentage of strongly agreed responses in the survey. Forty-eight percent of parents/guardians strongly agreed or agreed that they helped with in-class activities, while 52% either strongly disagreed, disagreed, or neither disagreed nor agreed that they helped with in-class activities. Eighty-one percent of parents/guardians strongly agreed or agreed they were invited to meetings to learn about their child's classroom. Twenty-nine percent of parents/guardians either strongly agreed or agreed that the ECL sent out an annual survey identifying who was willing and/or able to volunteer, while 71% of families either disagreed or neither disagreed nor agreed that an annual survey was sent out. Fifty-seven percent of parents/guardians strongly agreed or agreed that the school provided flexible opportunities to volunteer for families who were employed. Based on the findings, most parents indicated that they were given opportunities to be engaged in their child's preschool. However, there were two questions that the average response from parents indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed on engagement opportunities.



**Table 3***Engagement Opportunities*

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Median	STDEV
I receive information on how to sign up for events going on at school.	11	10				4.5	5	0.5
I receive information on activities/events going on in the school so I can participate or volunteer.	11	7	3			4.4	5	0.7
I am given options on when and how to volunteer.	8	11	2			4.3	4	0.6
The school encourages families to be involved (assist in classroom, lead talks or activities)	12	6		3		4.3	5	1.06
I help with in-class activities.	3	7	6	4	1	3.3	3	1.1
I am invited to meetings so I can learn about what was going on in my child's preschool classroom.	8	9	3		1	4.1	4	0.9
The school has an annual survey that identifies who was able and willing to volunteer throughout the school year.	1	5	8	7		3	3	0.9
The school provides flexible volunteer options giving opportunities to parents who are employed.	3	9	8	1		3.7	4	0.8

*Note.* STDEV: Standard Deviation

**Research Question Three**

Table 4 shows the results of research question three. Fifty-two percent of families neither agreed nor disagreed with the idea that their child's behavior has improved since they became involved in their child's education. Additionally, 29% of families strongly agreed that their child's behavior has improved since being involved in their education. Seventy-one percent of parents/guardians strongly agreed or agreed that their involvement made their child feel more comfortable in school. Fifty-two percent of parents/guardians neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that their child had

shown more growth since the parent became engaged in their preschool program. Based on the findings, parents did not know whether their involvement or engagement made a difference in their child’s academic growth and/or behavior.

**Table 4**

*Impact of Engagement*

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Median	STDEV
My child’s behavior has improved since I have been involved with their preschool education.	6	2	11	1	1	3.5	3	1.1
I feel that my involvement has made my child feel more comfortable in their preschool setting.	9	6	5	1		4.1	4	0.9
My child has shown more growth since I started being involved or engaged in their preschool program.	6	3	11	1		3.7	3	1.0

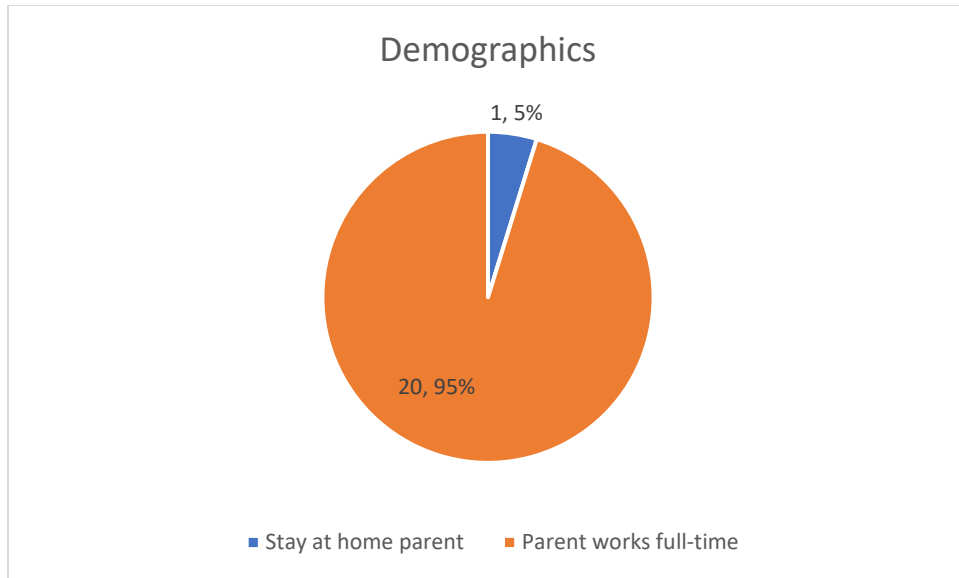
*Note.* STDEV: Standard Deviation

**Research Question Four**

Figure 1 displays the results of the demographics (employment) data collected for the study. Ninety-five percent of families have a parent or parents that work full-time. There was only one stay-at-home parent in the sample. Table 5 shows the results for parents’ level of education. Based on the responses, 81% of families had advanced degrees (master’s degree or higher). The population that completed the survey consists of individuals with advanced degrees and high levels of education.

**Figure 1**

*Demographics of Parents/Guardians*



**Table 5**

*Education Level of Parents*

	Total Participants	High School	Some College	Bachelor's	Advanced Degree
Stay-at-home	1				1
Part time	0				
Full time	20		1	3	16

**Discussion**

The results of the study show three emergent findings. In the first section of the survey, which focused on information to support child development, the median score was a four. This means that families agreed they received information on how to support their child in school and at home. The only two questions that had a lower response were “I work with my child often (2-3 times a week) on preschool level materials” and “the teacher provides us with resources that can be used at home.”

The second portion of the survey showed the most variation in responses, even if it was minimal. While most families either strongly agreed or agreed (based on the

median) that they were given engagement opportunities in the school, there were two questions that had a lower score. The two questions that scored a three (based on the median) were “I help with in-class activities” and “the school has an annual survey that identifies who was able and willing to volunteer throughout the school year.” Sending out a survey to parents could help the school see who would be willing and able to help with activities and events the school may have throughout the year. This could give parents the opportunity to be involved/engaged in their child’s school. Sending a survey to families could also help with more engagement with in-class activities throughout the day. If parents were made aware of opportunities of engagement and involvement with enough notice, they may be more likely to participate.

In the last section of the survey, most families neither agreed nor disagreed that they noticed growth in their child and/or improved behavior after becoming involved or engaged in their child’s education. This was a surprising result since research shows that parental involvement promotes a child’s success (Epstein 1992). Seventy-one percent of families stated they strongly agreed or agreed that they worked with their child 2-3 times a week; however, the last section of the survey, focusing on the impact of parent’s engagement, reveals that most families did not notice a difference or were unsure if there was a notable difference in their child’s growth or behavior. Eighty-one percent of parents’ education level was an advanced degree; yet these families indicated not knowing if their involvement was beneficial. It would be interesting to see responses from parents if additional questions were added to the last portion, focusing on the impact. This would reveal if parents felt they were impactful in their child’s learning and development. A reason families may not know if their engagement is impactful could be

because in preschool children are not given grades, homework, or tests to show their knowledge. This could make it harder for parents to physically see if there is a notable difference.

Lastly, based on the results of the survey, 95% of the responding families were full-time working parents, along with 81% of participants having advanced degrees. This indicated that parents working full-time still wanted to support their child's development, have engagement opportunities, and be impactful with their engagement. It would have been interesting to compare the responses of families with a stay-at-home parent to those with full-time working parents. The results could have been much different if they were taken from families who had a stay-at-home parent or from those of a low-socioeconomic status. The results also could have varied if parents did not have a college degree.

The results of this survey align with past literature review findings, which indicated similar assumptions. For instance, Lin et al. (2019) found that parent-educator communication played a crucial role in low-socioeconomic status families. The results indicated that greater perceived parent-educator communication was related to more frequent HLE and HNE activities. This shows that parent-education communication can encourage learning and development, which is similar to the benefits of being engaged with your child's school.

According to Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020), their study supported an ecologically oriented systems theory, emphasizing how connections between the child, home, school, peers, and neighborhood factors can create a network of iterative relationships that collaboratively influence a child's academic outcomes. This highlights the significance of collaboration between home and school for parents to make a

meaningful impact on their child. Using resources from the school and integrating them into the home can promote learning and development.

Floyd and Vernon-Dotson's (2009) study on the use of Home Learning Tool Kits states that through the establishment of effective family–school partnerships, teachers can foster family participation in a manner that reflects student achievement as a clear priority. Presenting engagement opportunities and information to support your child's development can promote parental engagement not only in the school but in the home as well.

### **Implications for Practitioners**

Based on the results, there were three questions in which the average score was a three. The three questions were: the teacher provides us with resources that can be used at home, the school has an annual survey that identifies who was able and willing to volunteer throughout the school year, and the school provides flexible volunteer options giving opportunities to parents who are employed. Some possible ways to increase the average score for these questions could be teachers in the beginning of each month/week send home a schedule showing what they will be focusing on in the classroom. Teachers could provide a few online resources that parents could use at home or even provide a few examples of ways to work with their child that correlate with what they will be doing that month/week. The ECL could add questions to their annual survey that ask parents about volunteer availability or interest, which could also help teachers in planning events/activities throughout the year. Holding both the ECL and parents accountable for engagement opportunities. Lastly, based on the results from the annual survey, the ECL

could attempt to plan events that include all families wanting to participate and be involved or engaged in their child's preschool program.

### **Limitations**

Due to the amount of time allowed from January to mid-April to complete the study, the primary investigator felt it was best to limit the demographics to collect responses that were anonymous. The IRB process was timely, and the primary investigator went with an exempt route, saving time on the approval process, but limiting the types of questions that could have been asked. With a survey return rate of 50%, these results may not be representative of what all families at the ECL may think. This would imply whether administering a larger sample size would yield comparable results to those found in the current study. The responses to the survey were from families that had their children enrolled in a NAEYC accredited 5 STARS program, which could have had an impact on the results. Sending the survey out to a lower quality program could alter the results.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate preschool classrooms' parental engagement throughout the school year. Specifically, the study aims to assess if parents felt they received information to support their child's development, if the school offered engagement opportunities, and if the parents believed that their engagement was impactful. Based on the results, three assumptions were made: firstly, families felt they received information on how to support their child's development; secondly, engagement opportunities were presented to families; and thirdly, parents felt their impact was uncertain or not prominent. The findings of this study could be added to the current

literature that has been collected for parental involvement and engagement, focusing on the parents' perspectives. Continuing to engage and involve parents in their child's education will in turn promote success and development for their child.





I receive information on activities/events going on in the school so I can participate or volunteer.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

I am given options on when and how to volunteer.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

The school encourages families to be involved (assist in classroom, lead talks or activities)

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

I help with in-class activities.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

I am invited to meetings so I can learn about what was going on in my child's preschool classroom.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

The school has an annual survey that identifies who was able and willing to volunteer throughout the school year.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

The school provides flexible volunteer options giving opportunities to parents who are employed.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

### **Impact of Engagement**

My child's behavior has improved since I have been involved with their preschool education.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

I feel that my involvement has made my child feel more comfortable in their preschool setting.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

My child has shown more growth since I started being involved or engaged in their preschool program.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neither Agree or Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

## Appendix B

Consent to Participate in a Research Study



### **SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT IN PRESCHOOL**

We are asking that you complete a survey to provide a better understanding of how involved or engaged parents/guardians are in their child's preschool program. This document will give you all the information to help you decide if you would like to participate in the study. We greatly appreciate your participation and the information obtained by the survey. If you have questions, feel free to reach out to the primary research investigator, Emilee Dixon, her information will be at the bottom on this document.

#### **WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

The purpose of this study is to determine the degree to which parental involvement and engagement are occurring in preschool classrooms. Using literature as support to show how relevant and important parental involvement and engagement are, this study will survey parents to determine their perspectives. Your participation in this study can vary, the survey questionnaire has 21 total questions, each using a Likert rating scale. There are no short answers or written responses. You will have one week to complete the survey. You do not need to complete it in one setting as it is a paper form.

#### **WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?**

You may choose to participate in this study to learn more about how important parental involvement and engagement is in your child's early education years (preschool specifically). The study responses will come from the parents' perspective.

#### **WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?**

You may not be interested in participating in the survey due to the questions and time it could take to complete.

#### **WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS OR CONCERNS?**

If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or you want to withdraw from the study contact the primary research investigator, Emilee Dixon, [emwi228@uky.edu](mailto:emwi228@uky.edu). She will be able to answer any questions or concerns you may have. The Faculty Advisor from the University of Kentucky who is overseeing the study is Dr. Jennifer Grisham, [jgleat00@uky.edu](mailto:jgleat00@uky.edu).

If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact staff in the University of Kentucky (UK) Office of Research Integrity (ORI) between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Monday-Friday at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-4009428.

## **DETAILED CONSENT:**

### **ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU WOULD NOT QUALIFY FOR THIS STUDY?**

The survey questions are meant to be filled out by parents/guardians of preschool aged students. Students who are enrolled at the ECL. You do not qualify to answer these questions if you do not meet that requirement.

### **WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND WHAT IS THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF TIME INVOLVED?**

The procedures for this study will go as follows; students will have the paper survey in their backpacks for families to gain access to, families will be given two copies both can be filled out if there is a two family household, families will have a week to complete the survey then they will send it back to the ECL in their child's backpack and the classroom teacher will collect the survey and place them in an envelope. The primary investigator, Emilee Dixon, will then collect the surveys and analyze the data.

### **WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?**

The survey will go over these main categories, opportunities for involvement and engagement in your child's preschool, how you are involved or engaged in your child's classroom and academics, and the impact of your involvement and engagement in your child's academics. You will be asked questions that correspond with those sections.

### **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

There are no risks or discomforts that should occur from this study.

### **IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?**

If you do not want to complete the survey, there are no other choices except not to complete the survey.

### **WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?**

There are no costs associated with taking part in this study.

### **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO FILL OUR THE SURVEY?**

The survey consists of 21 questions, none of which are short answers. The survey could take up to 15 minutes to complete. You do not need to complete it in one setting. You are given a week to fill out the survey and turn it back into the classroom teacher.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING?**

The benefit to participating is to get you thinking about your child's preschool program and the benefits that they may provide for parental engagement. The benefit you may gain from this study is on an individual basis since some families may gain more than others.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?**

No names will be put in the findings or results. All information will remain private. The information from the surveys will be put into the thesis.

**CAN YOU CHOOSE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY EARLY?**

You can choose not to take the survey and therefore not participate in the study. There are no negative repercussions for not participating.

**WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

No.

**WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?**

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be among a maximum of 75 people. By completing the survey you are agreeing to participate.

Completing the survey is completely voluntary and has no impact on your status or relationship with the ECL.

This study will NOT be used in the future for other studies.

The main graduate student, primary investigator, for this study is Emilee Dixon. For any information you will be able to contact her.

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