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AUTHOR(S): Christina Sanchez

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Dr. Elisabeth Kannenberg  
COMMITTEE CHAIR

DocuSigned by:  
*Dr. Elisabeth Kannenberg*  
-8176439A/32222437  
SIGNATURE

6/12/2018  
DATE

Megan Jennings  
COMMITTEE MEMBER

DocuSigned by:  
*Megan Jennings*  
-186364113491538  
SIGNATURE

6/12/2018  
DATE

COMMITTEE MEMBER

SIGNATURE

DATE

COMMITTEE MEMBER

SIGNATURE

DATE

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Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

**Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a  
Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study**

Christina Sanchez

California State University, San Marcos

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

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Jon, I could not have done this without you. Thank you for your patience, your expertise, and your unwavering support. I know it was NOT easy to deal with me this past year. I love you so much.

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Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

### **Abstract**

City View Elementary, which is a pseudonym, is a Title 1 low income school with a high English Language Learner population. Students in high need areas, particularly Latinos and ELL students are underperforming in both Math and ELA. The students at City View lack the opportunity to succeed due to numerous factors, including a lack of parent involvement. Research on parental involvement identifies its benefits, factors that deter parents from being involved, and ways to improve parental involvement. This case study aimed to increase parental involvement through the implementation of a new communication system. Quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods were used to find a correlation between this new system and parental involvement.

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

## Table of Contents

<b><i>Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Table of Contents</i></b>	<b>5</b>
<b><i>Chapter 1: Definition of Problem</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Purpose of Study</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Preview Literature</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Preview Methodology</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Significance of Study</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Definitions</b>	<b>11</b>
<b><i>Chapter 2: Review of Literature</i></b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Importance of Parental Involvement</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Deterrents to Parental Involvement</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Bringing Parents In</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>25</b>
<b><i>Chapter Three: Methodology</i></b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Design</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Participants</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Setting</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Instruments</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Procedure</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Analysis</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>35</b>
<b><i>Chapter Four: Data Analysis</i></b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Data Presentation</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>47</b>

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

<b><i>Chapter 5: Recommendations and Discussion</i></b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Finding Summary</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Finding Interpretation</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Findings in Context</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Limitations</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Future Direction</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>51</b>
<b><i>Appendix A</i></b>	<b>53</b>
<b><i>References</i></b>	<b>55</b>

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

## **Chapter 1: Definition of Problem**

Education cannot possibly be confined to the four walls of a classroom. A teacher cannot be solely responsible for the academic and social successes of a child. Despite the unyielding efforts of a dedicated teacher, students need the support of their parents; educators only have about ten short months to inspire and educate their students, while parents have a lifetime.

In the field of education, the achievement gap is the historic disproportion of academic achievement between two groups of students, with one group continuously achieving academic success, and one group consistently performing below grade level. The achievement gap affects a variety of students and is often due to a lack of opportunity to achieve, not because these students are incapable of success. Schools with large Latino and African American populations, and families of low socioeconomic status (SES) are more disposed to low parent participation and are most affected by the achievement gap (Malone, 2017; White, 2016).

### **Purpose of Study**

This study aims to find a correlation between the implementation of effective communication practices and parental involvement in a low-income, high English Language Learner populated school. Research on this topic has shown that parents need to feel informed and accommodated in order to feel welcomed at their child's school. Therefore, this study will use a school wide communication system and provide language accommodations to parents to produce a sense of inclusion.

Research Questions:

1. How does changing the communication practices between school staff and parents affect parental involvement?

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

2. What communication practices can improve parental involvement in a low income, high English Language Learner populated school in California?

### **Preview Literature**

The review of literature outlines three important areas of parental involvement and cites relevant research on the topic. These areas include the importance of parental involvement, deterrents to parental involvement, and ways to improve parental involvement. The most definitive research already conducted on this topic includes *Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement* and the *Hoover, Dempsey, Sandler Model*. This research identifies ways parental involvement helps students make academic gains, and conversely determines the variety of factors that inhibit parents from being active participants in their child's education. This chapter concludes with research on ways administrators and school staff can create organizational change to provide the best school-to-home communication practices.

### **Preview Methodology**

This study's methodology is comprised of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The data collected identified whether or not parental involvement would increase after a school wide communication system was implemented, and measured the degree to which parents felt satisfied with the school's communication practices.

Prior to the data collection process, a school wide communication system needed to be agreed upon by school staff and then universally implemented among all classrooms. ClassDojo was previously used by 10 of 15 teachers at the school, so this communication platform was selected. City View Elementary School subsequently used ClassDojo to communicate school-wide announcements and send individual messages to parents. These messages can be translated



Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

to the parents preferred language. ClassDojo also employs a feature that allows educators to see how many and which parents have viewed their posts.

This study used ClassDojo to communicate information about school events in conjunction with hard copy fliers in both Spanish and English. Before collecting data, a participation tracker was created on Excel to collect quantitative data on parent participation at five school events throughout the school year. All 332 Kindergarten through fifth grade students were listed within their appropriate classrooms. At each event, parents needed to check-in with a family night committee member. The committee member then used the Excel sheet to document the families in attendance.

The qualitative portion of this study included both face-to-face interviews with active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) parents and an anonymous Likert Scale survey presented to all parents via ClassDojo. PTA parents were chosen based on their regular participation in school events. These parents were be asked open-ended questions about their thoughts on City View's parental involvement and the communication practices of the school. The methodology used in this study provided insight into how utilizing effective communication practices can affect parental involvement.

### **Significance of Study**

Parental involvement is linked to academic and social success in children (Dotterer, 2015). City View Elementary has been afflicted with drastically low parent participation for many years. City View's state testing scores also fall below the state average (CA School Dashboard, 2018). Continuous research on parental involvement finds a distinct correlation

between a lack of parental involvement and low academic performance in children (McNeal, 2014).

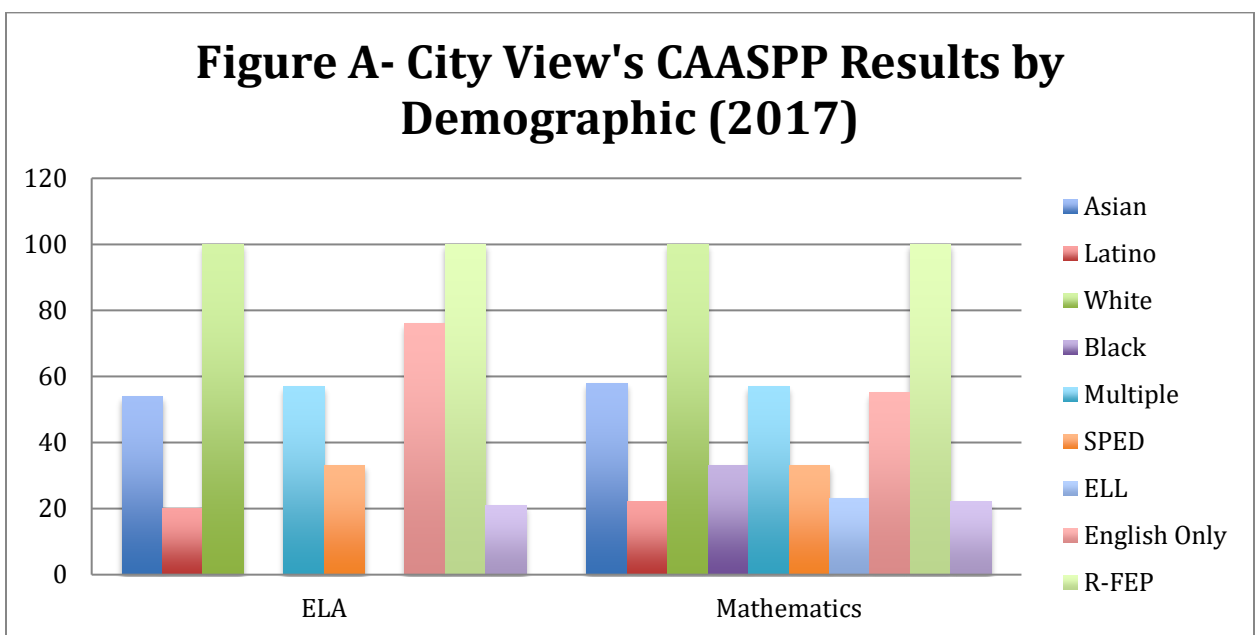


Figure A breaks down City View’s 2017 CAASPP proficiency scores to show how students performed according to ethnicity, language proficiency, and SPED participation. The results proved that students in these high need areas are struggling in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. Only about 20 percent of Latino students passed the CAASPP in both ELA and Mathematics in 2017 (Datazones, 2018). Figure A also shows that none of the 32 English Language Learners passed the ELA section of CAASPP. However, 23% of these students were proficient in Mathematics. Of the three SPED students eligible to take the CAASPP in 2017, one student was proficient in both Math and ELA (2018).

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

### **Conclusion**

This study will attempt to find a significant correlation between school to home communication and parental involvement. The review of literature will explore the importance of parent involvement in a child's education, the factors that deter parents from being involved, and effective strategies to increase parent involvement.

### **Definitions**

Below are the definitions of words in relation to how they will be used throughout this thesis.

**Achievement Gap-** refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as white students and minorities, or students from higher-income and lower-income households (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2018).

**ClassDojo-** classroom communication app used to share reports between parents and teachers, as well as provide school-wide updates to all connected parents.

**Parental Involvement-** the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring—

- that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
- that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

- that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
- that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Parental Involvement). [*Section 9101(32), ESEA.*] (Department of Education, 2004)

### **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

Parental involvement can be classified as a parent's active participation in their child's education. The research on this topic has garnered a variety of results, which vary heavily according to a number of demographics, including socio-economic status, ethnicity, and home language.

Most school communities encourage parental involvement. Many private and charter schools even have parent participation requirements, in which parents must volunteer for a certain amount of hours per year. Public schools provide opportunities for parents to become involved as chaperones for field trips, volunteers for school events, helpers in the classrooms, members of the PTA/PTO, etc.

According to numerous reports, children whose parents are involved in their education often show more success in their education than children whose parents are not involved (Dervarics, 2011). This same research has found a correlation between parental involvement, proficient test scores, higher grades, and enrollment in higher education institutions.

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

If parental involvement is so vital to a child's education, why can it be so difficult to get parents involved? The absence of parental involvement in many schools is an economical issue. In addition to raising their child/children, most parents have full time jobs that take up the majority of their days. For more affluent families, this "busy parent excuse" is sometimes used as the reason for not attending school events, such as Back to School Night, Parent Teacher Conferences, and Open House, when the reason for their absence may be something else entirely.

However, parents of low socio-economic status often have more than one or even two jobs, in which the "busy parent excuse" isn't an excuse, but a reality. These families must prioritize their needs, so they trust that their child's education is in good hands with their child's teacher. Unfortunately, their child's education is not something that they feel they can be a part of. Low socioeconomic status comes with a slew of other obstacles, as well. Many low-income families have parents with a lack of education and low self- efficacy (Malone 2017). These parents do not feel like they have much to offer in regards to their child's education, or may feel embarrassed about their own skillset.

What can administrators do to increase parental involvement in a school with notoriously low participation? It is the administrator's responsibility to make sure that all parents are offered the opportunity to become part of their child's education. Schools must research best practices to increase parent involvement, primarily with low-income parents. Administrators and teachers need to create a dialogue in which parents feel safe and heard. Through this open communication, the school can begin to help low SES families through workshops and trainings aimed to inform them of volunteer opportunities and ways they can help their child at home.

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

### **The Importance of Parental Involvement**

Parental Involvement in education is a multi- faceted construct. *Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement* maintains that there are six different types of parental involvement in education: communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and community collaboration (Barges, 2003; Dervarics, 2011; Epstein, 1992). Epstein's framework promotes having a home environment that values education, school to home communication, participating in school or classroom events, helping with homework and providing learning opportunities, becoming active members of the school organization, and working with the community to benefit the group (Epstein,1992). Research shows that if a parent is able to provide involvement in each of Epstein's six criteria, then their child will show greater respect for parents and school staff, develop positive values, have improved school attendance, demonstrate responsibility, practice self awareness, and earn better grades (Barge, 2003; Dervarics, 2011; Epstein, 1992; McNeal, 2014).

Additionally, research indicates less student success when parents are not involved in all six areas. For example, many parents are very involved with the parenting aspect of Epstein's framework (by providing their child help with homework, ensuring that their child's nutritional needs are being met, etc.) but may lack in school community involvement (McNeal 2015). On the contrary, there are parents who are more apt to show up to field trips and volunteer opportunities, but do not provide any academic support to their child at home.

Through her research, Laura Desimone gathered parenting skills that have the largest positive student outcomes (1999). The skills involve using authoritative child rearing methods, expecting high academic standards, keeping up communication with teachers, staying involved

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

in school events and activities, helping with homework, and holding discussions in the pursuit of knowledge (Desimone, 1999).

Schools normally encourage parent involvement (McNeal, 2015). Most schools actively seek parents for support with school events and to attend progress meetings about their child. Attending something as simple as a twenty minute parent teacher conference can make an immense amount of difference in a child's education. When a parent attends a parent teacher conference, they are collaborating with their child's teacher to ensure that their child will become a better student (McNeal, 2015).

Schools use a variety of techniques to encourage parents to become involved in school activities. Many schools try to entice parents by sending home weekly flyers in various languages to encourage parents to participate in school events (Wassell, 2017). Other schools use robo-calls to spread the message about a concert, parent education night, multicultural fair, or other school activity.

Parent involvement is not only beneficial to the school, but to the whole child. McNeal used results from the National Education Longitudinal Study to analyze the effects of parent involvement (2015). This data followed the same set of Black, White, and Latino students for two years in high school. Throughout the two years, students were given baseline exams in science, mathematics, and reading. Their progress was tracked through follow up exams and parent data. His results revealed that parent involvement increases achievement in each area he studied: at the individual and school-levels. McNeal found that not only did individual students gain more success by having involved parents, but students whose parents are not involved also benefitted from their peers' parent involvement (McNeal, 2015).

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

There is a trend throughout the topic of parent involvement that singles out parent- child communication as the largest influence on student achievement. Eleni Katsarou from the University of Illinois found that parent involvement most benefitted students in the form of a parent- child dialogue about school (YouTube, 2014). Katsarou discovered that if parents engage their children in a daily discussion about what their child did academically and socially throughout the day, the child will regard their education in higher esteem. Eric Dearing also contended that parent involvement through communication promotes self-efficacy, better attitudes, and positive feelings towards education (Dearing, 2006).

Aryn Dotterer and Elizabeth Wehrspann (2015) contend that academic and cognitive engagement in school is the most crucial factor in academic success. Students who feel engaged in school are more apt to stay in school and further their education. School communities try to promote school engagement by creating a positive and safe atmosphere, and through teaching practices specifically aimed at student engagement. Dotterer attempted to make a connection between school engagement and parent involvement. In this study Dotterer gave her participants (students in grades six through eight) school engagement and parent involvement rating surveys during the fall and spring semesters. They were asked to rate how involved their parents were in regard to their education. Then they were asked to rate their self- esteem, school bonding, and school trouble. Dotterer's findings showed that students with consistent and adequate parental involvement had higher grade point averages (GPA's) and "perceived academic competence" (Dotterer, 2015, p.812).

When parent involvement is achieved in low performing schools, student gains are made at a quick rate Chuck Dervarics and Eileen O'Brien (2011) found evidence of this from schools



Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

in Minnesota and West Virginia. The research conducted in Minnesota involved a study in which some students and their parents participated in a literacy program, while there was a control group that did not participate in this program. The students who participated with their parents in the literacy program tested notably better than the students in the control group. Another school in Minnesota began initiating parent contact whenever students were struggling in a particular subject. They would call, email, schedule meetings, and give parents resources to help their child. This communication yielded a 40% increase in test scores. The last study involved nine Title I schools in West Virginia. These schools strived to increase test scores through parent involvement. They began the school year with a workshop informing parents with materials on math and reading. At the end of the school year, the researcher studied the test scores and grades of the students whose families attended and those who did not. The students with more involved parents received higher test scores and grades. The research also determined that income did not play a role in this study (Dervarics, 2011).

While some schools make parental involvement mandatory, most do not. Professors Bogenschneider and Johnson from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2004) campaigned for legislation regarding parental involvement. They collected and conducted bodies of research that served as evidence to prove that parental involvement is necessary for a child's academic success. Upon studying 8,000 students from nine different high school with a variety of demographics, they concluded that; parental involvement, regardless of socioeconomic status, parents' levels of education, or English Language proficiency, produces higher attendance, low drop out rate, higher grades, higher standardized test scores, and all around positive attitudes about school (Bogenschneider, 2004).

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

### **Deterrents to Parental Involvement**

There are many obstacles that deter parents from becoming integral parts of their child's education. Many of these hurdles are contingent upon a variety of factors.

The lack of parent involvement can be an economical or social paradigm. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's research identified three main "psychological factors" that contribute to a lack of parent involvement (McDermott, 2000). The first factor maintains that some parents feel uncertain about their role in their child's education. These parents are unsure of how to provide support to their school aged children, so become wary of becoming involved. Secondly, some parents "feelings of efficacy" dissuade them from participating. Some parents do not have the skills necessary to help their child with their homework, or the ability to write an email to their child's teacher for clarification on a specific subject area. Lastly, some parents do not feel welcomed by the school to participate. Some schools do not make an extra effort to accommodate the diverse parent population, so parents abstain from partaking (McDermott, 2000).

Researchers have noted that particular cultures of parents are more apt to attend and participate in school events than others. Devarics (2011) used data from the National Center for Education Statistics' Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey to examine how many and which parents attended school events. Devarics found that White parents were more likely to attend school events, volunteer, or help fundraise than African American or Latino parents. However, he also found that African American and Latino parents were more likely to check that their child's homework was complete (Devarics, 2011).

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

McNeal Jr. (2015) argued that parent involvement has a mostly positive affects on the academic success of a child. In his research, McNeal hypothesized that parent involvement relies heavily on socioeconomic status and school norms on parent participation. He calls for people to determine the distinction between “what poverty is and what poverty does” (McNeal, 2015).

Barge and Loges (2003) identified key factors that deter parents from being involved in their child’s education. These factors include “level of education, socio-economic status, parents’ own negative school experiences, and lack of transportation” (2003, p.141).

Parents often believe that teachers are responsible for their child’s education, when in fact it should be a collaborative effort. Joel Klein (2013), former Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, noted in an interview with the Aspen Institute that parents often put all of their trust in their child’s teacher, because “they know best.” This can be a dangerous assumption on behalf of the parents. Klein declared that while teachers can provide a wonderful education for a child, parents still need to be informed and know what kind of education their child is receiving (Aspen Institute, 2013).

Parent teacher conferences, volunteering, and family activities are reactive forms of parent involvement (Olmstead, 2013). These forms of volunteering are the least beneficial to promoting success in a child’s education. They can often create negative relationships between parents and teachers. Parental involvement should more often be a proactive approach to support each child (Olmstead, 2013).

As children get older parent involvement begins to taper off. Skinner (2004) links this decline to the complexity of the schoolwork, the attitude that children should be more

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

responsible for their education, and the fact that in middle and high school children have multiple teachers (Skinner, 2004).

Several researchers found that most low socioeconomic status families want to participate in their child's education but are unable to do so because they lack time, money, transportation, and child care (Malone, 2017). Peter McDermott and Julia Rothenberg (2000) conducted research on why parents in urban school settings are reluctant to participate in school events. While the demographics of parents have been a key factor in much of the research, this study looked at the demographics of teachers as a concern. The researchers noted that there was distrust among diverse populations of parents with predominantly White teachers. Low-income families find that communication styles of teachers are often different than what parents are accustomed to (McDermott, 2000).

In a similar study, Williams et.al (2011) explored the barriers parents face in a predominantly African American, inner city school. As a result of her research, Williams concluded that there were four barriers to parental involvement: time poverty, lack of access, lack of financial resources, and lack of awareness. Time poverty refers to the lack of time that parents have to spend with their children, due to employment or other time consuming activities. Lack of access, another common barrier, refers to the structure of the school building and the scheduling of school events as barriers to access; parents with physical limitations have a hard time attending school functions and the scheduling of events and operating hours often interfered with the parents' work day (Williams 2011).

Williams (2011) also cited a lack of financial resources as a potential barrier to parental involvement. Many of the participants in William's study stated that they believed parents had

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

difficulty paying for a reliable car or did not have enough money for public transportation. Some participants also felt that they were not welcome at the school because they did not have the money to pay for certain school fees. Lack of awareness, William's fourth barrier, means that parents are unfamiliar with school policies or are not informed about a school activity (Williams, 2011).

Communication barriers can be a major factor in the lack of parental involvement. Wassell et.al. (2017) points out that one of the barriers impeding healthy school-to-parent communication is the teachers' preconceived notions about various cultures' willingness to participate. This study focused on teachers' perceptions of Spanish speaking English Language Learners parents. They found that teachers had "deficit assumptions about diverse families" and pass judgment when these parents fail to attend school events. These teachers also wrongfully assumed that parents were not helping their children with homework. The researcher notes that in order for families of ELL students to feel empowered and respected, they need to feel like the teachers want to communicate with them despite their language barriers (Wassell 2017).

### **Bringing Parents In**

Essential viewpoints to consider when developing methods to encourage parent participation is those of parents, students, and teachers. J. Kevin Barge and William E. Loges (2003) researched how parent, student, and teacher perceptions of high-quality parental involvement differed from each other They found that two common themes were mentioned across all three responses in regards to what constitutes high-quality parental involvement and communication: (a) building positive relationships with teachers, and (b) monitoring a child's academic progress (Barge, 2003).

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

Barge and Loges (2003) also found some clear differences in the responses by parents, students, and teachers regarding what counts as high-quality parental involvement and communication. The first difference focuses on the idea of discipline and encouragement. Parents did mention discipline as an essential strategy for parental involvement, instead focusing on encouragement and monitoring. Students, in contrast, noted the significance of rewards and punishments in motivating them to achieve better grades (they specifically mentioned phone privileges and sports participation as particularly effective rewards). Students also recognized that appropriate discipline from their parents indicates love and support. Teachers' views on high-quality parent involvement differed still, with teachers' focusing on the importance of involving parents through communicating in ways that support the teacher's corrective measures taken toward the student in the classroom (Barge, 2003).

Schools, particularly schools with low parent involvement, are responsible for providing a variety of opportunities for parents to become more involved in their child's education and the school community (Skinner, 2004). Skinner proposed that schools should reach out to organizations and businesses that can provide parents with resources or information on how to obtain necessary services for their children (Skinner, 2004). Similarly, research indicates that lower income parents are more likely to become involved when the school makes an effort to focus on these families and their children (Dearing, 2006). Involvement among this population is most likely to increase when schools not only pursue these specific families, but also help these families with child care and transportation needs for the school event (Dearing, 2006; Malone, 2017).

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

According to Dr. Debra Malone (2017) there are four potential strategies that enable SES families to participate in their child's education. The first strategy is to implement flexible volunteer opportunities. This includes early morning or after hour's volunteer's times that work around the parents' work schedules. The second strategy is providing free childcare to allow families to attend school events. Childcare will often be on school grounds by a certificated or classified employee of the district. The third strategy is offering training programs for parents. These programs can be geared towards parenting or education. The fourth and final strategy is increasing awareness to meet the needs of working parents. When parents feel like they are important and needed they will often respond positively (Malone, 2017).

Epstein's (1992) theoretical framework on parental involvement not only provides the six types of parent involvement, but it also includes Sample Practices. Epstein suggests home visits, family support programs, and neighborhood meetings to develop a better home atmosphere, conducive to learning. In order to promote better communication, Epstein recommends sending useful notes homes, phone calls, report card conferencing, and clear information about school policies. Educators can accommodate all families by providing parents a variety of opportunities for them to volunteer. Epstein advises teachers to send home surveys at the beginning of each school year to get to know parents and their individual skills, availabilities, and interests (Epstein, 1992).

The age of technology has changed school to home communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Christine Olmstead (2013) of the Orange County Department of Education studied how technology is used to increase parent involvement in schools. Despite their socioeconomic status, most parents have access to the Internet with computers, tablets, and/ or smart phones.

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

Olmstead focused her study on the use of email, teacher websites, text messaging, and social media to communicate with parents individually or through an all school blast. Olmstead concluded that all schools should conduct professional developments dedicated to increasing communication via technology. She determined that most parental involvement could be achieved through technological mediums (Olmstead, 2013).

When parents are knowledgeable about school events, expectations, and curriculum, they are able to impart this information to their children. Devaric's (2011) argued that the most effective way for parents to be involved in their child's education is through participation in "programs and interventions". When parents are involved in literacy and outreach programs, or participate in workshops, they are better equipped to provide their child with the academic support they need. Devarics suggests that schools must find the areas in which they are the most deficient (i.e. test scores, attendance, literacy, mathematics etc.) and develop workshops and materials for parents to become informed of these issues and find ways for them to remedy them (Dervarics, 2011). Workshops can be also be aimed at helping families develop better parenting skills (Skinner, 2004).

As previously stated, some parents do not feel welcome by the school community due to language barriers, lack of education, or socioeconomic status. It is important that when teachers and administrators communicate with parents to collaborate rather than having communication as a reactive measure (Molden, 2016; Montgomery, 2005). Furthermore, Matthew Kraft (2014) conducted a field study on parent-teacher communication He conducted surveys with parents and his preliminary findings showed that teachers rarely communicated with parents. Kraft had the teachers write individualized one-sentence messages to parents every week about their child's



Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

progress. As a result the students' grades and attendance became to dramatically increase.

Recurrent communication creates a relationship between parents and teachers, which allows for positive collaboration (Kraft, 2014).

Parent involvement is not an unfixable problem. While much of McDermott et al.'s (2000) research discussed the reasons parents were reluctant to become involved, it also explained that this problem could be reversed (2000). This research determined that teachers should demonstrate understanding and respect for the various ethnicities and cultures of the school population. McDermott et. Al. conducted small parent focus groups. The data collected from these focus groups indicated that good and frequent communication with parents keeps them informed and involved in their child's education. They noted that if teachers initiate an open dialogue, parents feel more comfortable to be involved (McDermott, 2000).

### **Conclusion**

The research gathered on the topic of parental involvement spans decades. All of this research points to how necessary parental involvement is in a child's education. Despite how glaringly obvious the findings are, parental involvement will always be a relevant topic in education.

Every school thrives to improve attendance, test scores, grades, and behavior. There are countless programs and initiatives in place to obtain growth. Many schools have the Positive Behaviors, Interventions, and Supports (PBIS) model in place to improve behavior. Resource teachers are hired to provide extra support to struggling students. Schools spend thousands of dollars on supplemental literacy and mathematics programs to improve test scores and grades. However, not many schools spend enough money, time, or resources to entice parents to become

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

more involved, despite research that shows the significant gains students make from having involved parents.

Countless studies have yielded a tremendous amount of results that prove that parental involvement is beneficial to children's education. Children whose parents are involved are more likely to attend college, have high grades, higher self-efficacy, better attendance, and high-test scores. These children are able to understand the importance of education through two the school institution and at home.

Parents are their child's best educators. Teachers and administrators can aim to inspire, but children often look to their parents' actions for guidance. This is evident in the extensive research on this topic. The absence or inclusion of the parent/s results in innumerable gains or consequences. *Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement* is the premier frame of reference for most researchers on the topic of parental involvement. Epstein not only provides researchers with what parental involvement looks like, but she provides practices and results. Although her framework is nearly 30 years old, researchers continue to rely on it as a guide to improving parent involvement.

Although the tools are out there to improve parental involvement, there are an incredible amount of barriers that deter parents from becoming involved. Many low-income parents work multiple jobs to support their families. They lack the time and energy necessary to attend school events or help their children with their schoolwork. In addition, low-income parents often lack a high level of education. They simply cannot help because they do not know the material. A lack of education can also be an embarrassment to the parent, and they will not attend school events or meetings due to this reason.

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

The most significant deterrent to parental involvement is the absence of appropriate communication between school to home, and vice versa. The parents least likely to be involved are low- income, ELL, and undereducated parents. There are often times a stark contrast in education levels between the school staff, who are highly educated, and parents in low income schools. This difference can be overwhelming to parents and communication might seem condescending, particularly if the content of the interaction is negative.

Improving parental involvement in a school with low participation is the responsibility of the school's administrator. Administrators need to educate their teachers about the benefits of parental involvement and the barriers that parents face. Teachers should know how to approach parents with concerns, requests, and information in a way that is both respectful and productive. With this knowledge, administrators should create a school wide initiative to improve the communication between school to home.

Nearly all parents, despite their household income, have smart phones. There are many internet and application companies that are geared towards improving communication. Companies like Facebook, Twitter, ClassDojo, Shutterfly, and Remind are easy to use and often translate in most languages. Administrators should also set aside money in the school budget to go directly to improving parental involvement. This money can be used for parenting workshops, childcare, transportation, and resources that benefit families.

Each child deserves the opportunity to achieve academic success. Parent involvement can be a large factor in closing the achievement gap for many low-income students. Although there are many obstacles in the way, schools need to put forth extensive effort to ensure that parents become involved.

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

This study aimed to increase parental involvement through the use of effective communication practices from school to home. Administrators and teachers used the behavior management and parent communication application, Class Dojo, to communicate important information to parents. To make this information more accessible to all parents, fliers for each event were sent out in the “Wednesday Folders” in both English and Spanish.

This study’s design included the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. Quantitative data has been collected through sign in sheets from five school events during both the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. In addition to these data, this study also examined parent engagement through Class Dojo’s School Story feature. Lastly, more quantitative data was achieved through an anonymous Likert Scale survey sent to all parents via ClassDojo School Story, hard copies were also sent home with students in their “Wednesday Folders.” Qualitative data was obtained through interviews with active Parents in the Parent and Teacher Association (PTA).

This study focused on the parents’ role in their child’s education. Therefore the main participants of this study were City View parents. More specifically, parents who were connected to the Class Dojo platform and active PTA members.

Parental involvement is a key component of a student’s academic success. The setting of this study, City View Elementary (Pseudonym) has exceptionally low parental involvement, a high English Language Learner and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged population. The PTA is comprised of ten parents and seven teachers. Many events that take place during or after school hours yield low participation. This study hopes to answer the following research questions:

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

1. How does changing the communication practices between school staff and parents affect parental involvement?

2. What practices can improve parental involvement in a low income, high English Language Learner population in the California?

### **Design**

This study required a mix of qualitative and quantitative data methods to collect and analyze data. The qualitative collection consisted of information gathered through one on one interviews with four active PTA parents. These parents were asked open-ended questions about how they felt about school to home communication and parent participation. The quantitative data is composed of participation data and results from a Likert Scale survey about school to home communication. Prior to the start of this survey, limited parent participation data was collected from the 2016-2017 school year. After the school wide implementation of Class Dojo, parent participation data from the 2017-2018 school year was collected from September 2017 through May 2018. While the new communication practices include both the use of Class Dojo and English/Spanish fliers in the Wednesday folder, Class Dojo's School Story allows administrators and teachers to see how many parents have viewed school blasts. In a related study, Christine Olmstead (2013) researched how technology was being used within schools to promote parental participation. Her research culminated in the recommendation of increasing the school's use of technology to communicate with parents (2013). Through the increase of communication via technology, parents have immediate access to information. The use of technology coupled with past practices of sending home flyers with important information each week, should ensure that parents have more access to information than ever.

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

### **Participants**

The participants in this study are the parents of the 332 City View Elementary students. There are 348 parents connected to the Class Dojo application. Of the 348 parents, only about 200 regularly accessed the application and viewed the School Stories (these are the posts made on the platform by administration and staff). On School Story, parents were given a link to an anonymous Likert Scale survey about school to home communication and parental involvement as shown in Figure 1. These surveys were also printed out and sent home through the students' "Wednesday Folders," a weekly folder that is sent home with important paperwork. Parents were told that participation with this survey was not mandatory, but their insight would be both appreciated and used to create better school to home communication practices.

Four consenting parent participants were chosen for one-on-one interviews. These participants were chosen because they volunteered regularly at the school and were active members of the PTA.

### **Setting**

The study takes place at City View Elementary School in Stark, California. City View is located in a low-income neighborhood within Stark. There are 332 students in City View Elementary (Great Schools, 2018). City View has a high percentage of English Language Learners, students with special needs, and low-income students. The median household income is \$74,449 and 9.7% of people are below the poverty line. School records show that 74% of students come from low-income families and are eligible for free/reduced lunch. Family surveys reveal 61% of students at City View are English Language Learners. The ethnic breakdown of students is as follows: Hispanic (44%), Filipino (25%), Asian (21%), Two or more races (4%),

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

Black (2%), White (2%), Pacific Islander (2%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (<1%) (2018).

City View's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has a 1.5% parent participation rate. These parents regularly attend PTA meetings, contribute at least ten dollars annually, and volunteer at all of City View's school events.

There is little information provided on parent demographics. However, based on family surveys it is evident that the majority of City View parents are English Language Learners (61%) (Great Schools, 2018). Of the 332 students' parents, 111 stated that they attended college, 75 stated that they graduated high school, 32 stated that they did not graduate high school, and the remaining 114 declined to state (Datazones, 2018).

City View's high English Language Learner and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged population make it an ideal setting for this study. Dr. Debra Malone (2017) identified that parental involvement is historically low in schools with a high population of low income and ELL students. The results of this study could potentially benefit schools with similar demographics.

### **Instruments**

A variety of instruments were used to collect parental involvement data. These instruments included one on one interviews, surveys, and records. Prior to the collection of new data, old records of parent participation at school events were analyzed. One-on-one interview questions were open ended to garner thoughts and opinions on communication and parent participation. Figure 1 shows the anonymous survey given to parents via a link on Class Dojo's School Story. This Likert Scale survey aimed to determine parents' overall satisfaction with the

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

new communication system and their thoughts on parental involvement. At each school event families were asked to sign in to verify their participation. Figure 2 shows an example of the document used to monitor parent participation. This document took into account the grade level and room number of students and which events their parents participated in.

### School to Home Communication

This survey aims to collect information about how you feel about City View's School to Home Communication.

\* Required

#### Consent

**Hello Parents and Family,**

I am currently attending California State San Marcos to obtain my Masters Degree in Educational Administration. I am currently studying the impact of communication practices on parental involvement in the school community.

You are being asked to take part in a research study about school to home communication and how it can affect parental involvement. We are asking you to take part because your child attends this school. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

**What the study is about:** The purpose of this study is to learn how school to home communication affects parental involvement.

**What we will ask you to do:** Complete an anonymous survey about how you feel about the communication practices used by our school. The survey will take about 5 minutes to complete.

**Risks and benefits:**

I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

There are no benefits to you.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we make public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. If we tape record the interview, we will destroy the tape after it has been transcribed, which we anticipate will be within two months of its taping.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

**If you have questions:**  
Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Christina Sanchez at [sanche420@csusm.edu](mailto:sanche420@csusm.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at [irb@csusm.edu](mailto:irb@csusm.edu) or (760) 750-4029.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

I consent to take part in this survey. \*

Yes  
 No

#### Survey

I feel informed about the events and activities going on at my child's school. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

I feel like my child's school acknowledges the different languages and cultures of its community. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

I feel comfortable talking to the school's staff about questions and concerns. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

I feel welcomed to attend school events by my child's school. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

SUBMIT



Sanchez, Christina

# Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

Figure 1

Participation Tally- 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (Room I)							
Student's Name	Fall Parent/ Teacher	Fall Garden Day	Fall PTA Meeting	Pizza And Movie Night	Reading Night	Multicultural Night	Back to School Night

Figure 2

### **Procedure**

This study began by determining and implementing a school wide communication system. The staff at City View Elementary School each agreed to use to communicate with parents. Class Dojo has a School Story feature that allows teachers to post information for all parents to see. During this study 348 parents were connected to Class Dojo. 213 parents regularly accessed and viewed posts on School Story. All school events were posted on and flyers in English and Spanish will be sent out. In addition to this, City View invited parents to their new Friday Flag assemblies where important information is presented.

At each school event sign in sheets were created and used. These sheets determined which parents were in attendance, their child’s name, and their child’s room number. After the quantitative data from the school events were collected, a link to an anonymous Likert Scale

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

survey was sent out to parents via Class Dojo's School Story feature and a hard copy was sent home in the students' "Wednesday Folders."

Qualitative data was obtained through one on one interviews with four active PTA parents. They were asked open ended questions about City View's school to home communication practices and about their thoughts on parental involvement.

### **Analysis**

This thesis is deeply rooted in the struggles of low income and/or non-English speaking families. Therefore, I analyzed my results through an inclusive lens. When looking at best communication practices to involve parents, I decided to use methods that would be potentially beneficial for low income and/or non-English speaking parents.

The quantitative data collected from various school events and ClassDojo parental participation was analyzed through graphing and statistical analysis. These graphs represented parental attendance data from the 2016-2017 school year juxtaposed with parental involvement data from the 2017-2018 school year; after a communication system has been put in place. ClassDojo allows staff to see how many parents have viewed and translated the information posted on School Story. This study also looked at the difference in parent participation on ClassDojo from the application from the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. The mean of this data were compared from both school years.

Qualitative data from in person interviews with parents, and quantitative data from a communication survey that was posted on Class Dojo were collected. In person interviews with parents were gathered and interpreted through an iterative process. In order to ensure that this

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

research was reliable and valid, I used both quantitative and qualitative data to represent parent opinion. The quantitative data (the measurement of potential attendance growth between last year and this year) was based on sign in sheets from various school events (multicultural night, parent teacher conferences, back to school night, open house, pizza/movie night, PTA meetings, and parent participation on ClassDojo). I conducted in person interviews with parents who regularly participate at school events about the school's new communication practices. My survey on Class Dojo included Likert Scale questions to allow all parents the opportunity to share their opinions; the information I gathered from the anonymous surveys negated any possible variables in regards to an improvement or decline in attendance.

### **Conclusion**

City View Elementary School has struggled to engage parents to participate in school events for many years. In an attempt to increase parent involvement, City View staff members agreed to use Class Dojo to communicate important information to parents. In addition to the platform, City View also sends home weekly flyers in both English and Spanish.

Through the mixed use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection measures, I attempted to determine if parental participation improves after the implementation of a structured communication system. Attendance data collected from school events and an anonymous Likert scale survey posted on Class Dojo served as the quantitative measures of collecting data for this study. Interviews with involved parents provided some qualitative data about the new communication practices. The analysis of this data answered the research questions: How does changing the communication practices between school staff and parents affect parental

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

involvement? and What practices can improve parental involvement in a low income, high English Language Learner population in the California? Chapter 4 gives a thorough analysis of the data collected in this Chapter.

### **Chapter Four: Data Analysis**

The purpose of this study, a qualitative and quantitative case study, was to examine parental involvement following implementation of a new communication system in a California elementary school identified as having a low-income, high English Language Learner population (California School Dashboard, 2018). It also examined parental involvement prior to implementation of a school wide communication system and the frequency in which information was accessed by parents. City View Elementary had low parental involvement as measured by attendance at school events for many years. Based on the findings of Barge, 2003; Dervarics, 2011; Epstein, 1992; McNeal, 2014; Malone, 2017; Olmstead, 2013, research on this topic has shown that parents need to feel informed, accommodated, and welcomed by their child's school.

The research questions addressed in this study were as follows: 1. How does changing the communication practices between school staff and parents affect parental involvement? 2. What practices improve parental involvement in a low income, high English Language Learner population in the California?

This study used both qualitative and quantitative data analysis strategies. The first research tool was a sign in sheet corresponding to school-wide events held during the 2017-2018 school year at the case study site. This recording sheet (Appendix A) was used to identify the parent(s), student(s)'s room number, grade, and how they heard about the event (Class Dojo,

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

“Wednesday Folder” flyer). There were five recording sheets for all of the events, and a participation tracker document was created to combine all of the quantitative data into one document. Information gathered from the recording sheet was graphed to show an increase or decrease in attendance after a communication system was put in place, these graphs also show variations in attendance due to popularity of the event. This strategy allowed me to find visible patterns within the data (Shagoury, 2012).

Four active parent participants of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) were interviewed to gather insight about the communication practices of City View Elementary staff to parents. The information gathered through interviews was analyzed through a narrative. This narrative identified common themes and opinions in the four interviews to create a new story (2012).

### **Data Presentation**

The data collection and presentation strategies used in this research were created with the research of Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler in mind (McDermott, 2010). This research identified the psychological factors that impede on parental participation: uncertainty about their role in their child’s education, problems with self efficacy, and feeling unwelcome by their child’s school (2010). This case study aimed to make parents feel welcomed and able to participate in school events through the implementation of a new communication system.

### **ClassDojo School Story Results**

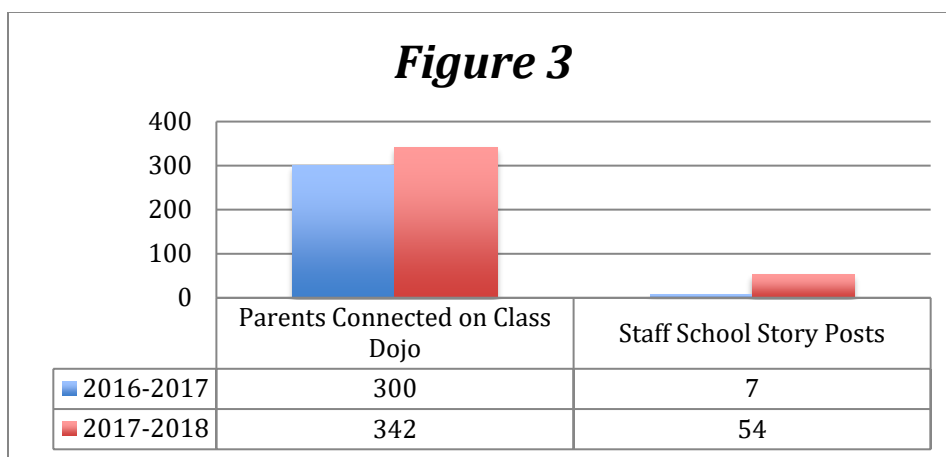
ClassDojo is a communication application that allows schools to send and receive information from parents effectively and privately. ClassDojo has a School Story feature that allows every connected parent to access photos, videos, links, and information posted by school staff onto a stream. Parents can like or comment on the content, and even translate the

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

information to their preferred home language.

*Figures 3 and 4* show ClassDojo data from both the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. Prior to the 2017-2018 school year, ClassDojo had been used by a majority of City View teachers as a behavior management system within the classroom, and as an occasional message delivery system to individual parents. However, in 2017-2018, as part of this research and with the permission of the school administrator, I required 100% of City View teachers to create ClassDojo accounts, upload their student roster, and send home parent invites to have parents connect to the platform.

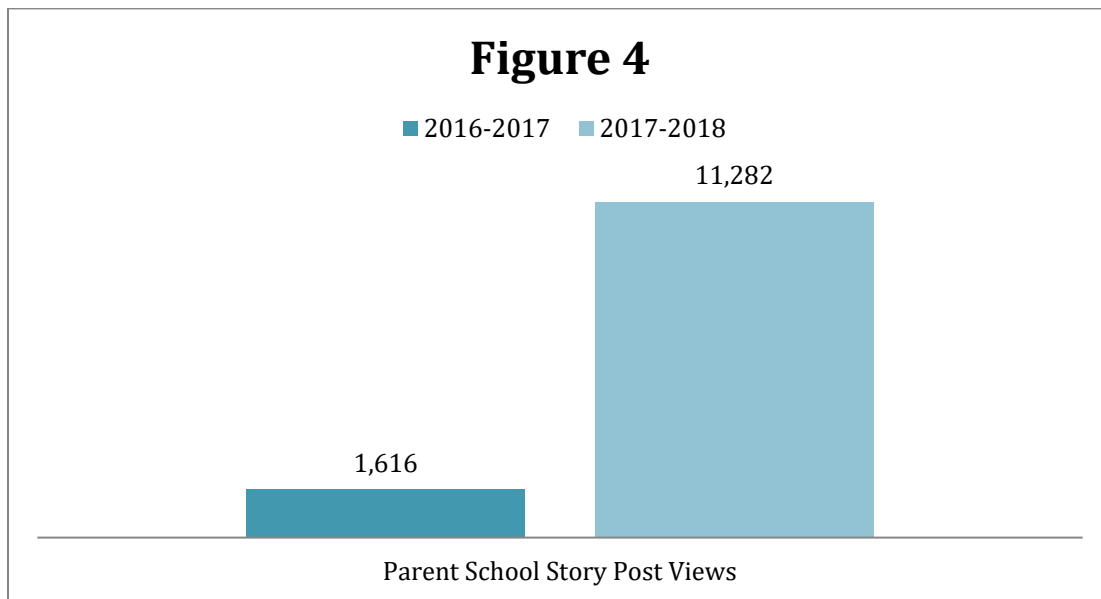


*Figure 3's* data shows the increase in parental participation within the ClassDojo application. Although there is only a 42- person difference between the parents connected in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school year, the parents of the 80 former fifth grade students were removed from the application when their children graduated in the summer of 2017. During the 2016-2017 school year, teachers and the administration only posted information on School Story seven times. Additionally, *Figure 3's* data shows the difference in the usage of the ClassDojo School Story from the 2016-2017 to 2017-2018 school year. There were a total of seven posts

Sanchez, Christina

### Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

made by teachers and administration in 2016-2017, compared to 54 posts made during the 2017-2018 school year.

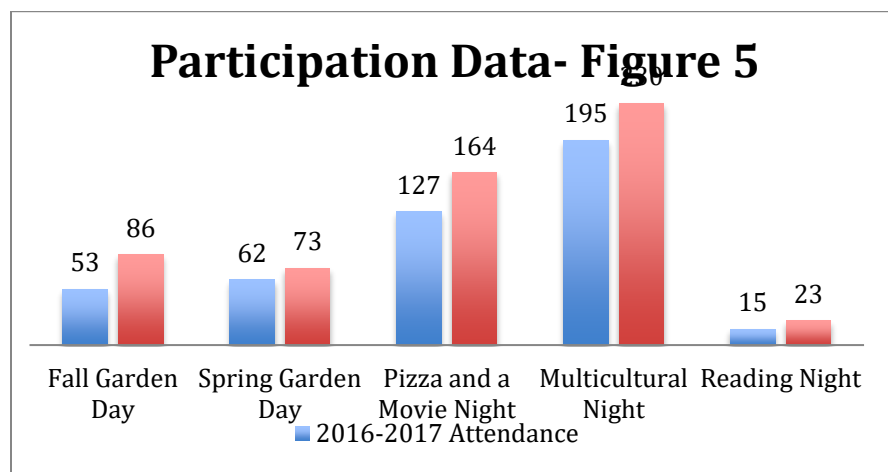


*Figure 4* provides more insight about the parents' use of ClassDojo during the current 2017-2018 school year as compared to the previous 2016-2017 school year. During the 2016-2017 school year, teachers and administration posted on School Story seven times with a total of 1,616 combined views. Alternatively, during the 2017-2018 school year, teachers and administration posted 54 times, with a combined view total of 11,282.

### Participation Results

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study



Participation data were collected from five school events that occurred within the time constraints of this study, during the 2017-2018 school year. Each of these five events were held annually at City View Elementary. Therefore, basic attendance data were collected during the 2016-2017 school year. *Figure 5* compares the 2016-2017 attendance data with the 2017-2018 data.

### **Description of Family Events at City View Elementary**

#### **Garden Day**

City View Elementary boasts a beautiful, staff and student-maintained garden on school grounds. During both the Fall and Spring seasons there is a Garden Work Day in which families are asked to come to City View on a Saturday and help pick weeds, plant crops, and harvest fruits and vegetables. In years past, Garden Day was only advertised in the “Wednesday Folders.” This school year, City View heavily advertised Garden Days through ClassDojo, in addition to the weekly fliers in both English and Spanish.

#### **Pizza and a Movie Night**



Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

Once a school year, the fifth grade team hosts a Pizza and a Movie Night to raise funds for field trips and the end of the year promotion ceremony. Pizza and a Movie Night is aptly titled; families come to the school on a Friday night and eat a pizza dinner while watching a movie projected on a big screen. Similarly to Garden Day, Pizza and a Movie Night in the past was only advertised in the “Wednesday Folders”, and the notices were only sent out in English. This school year, Pizza and Movie Night fliers in both English and Spanish were sent home with students, along with ClassDojo School Story reminders.

### **Multicultural Night**

This school year marked City View’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Multicultural Night. This night is the most attended event of the school year. Families are asked to bring a dish from their culture or pay a ten-dollar entrance fee. RSVP forms were sent out in both English and Spanish about a month prior to the event and weekly reminders were posted on ClassDojo’s School Story for 4 weeks leading up to the night.

### **Reading Night**

Reading Night is one of City View’s few events that occur on a weeknight. Advertisement for this event was not significantly strong. This year fliers were made in both English and Spanish, a change from last school year’s English only flier. One School Story post was made about Reading Night one night prior to the event.

### **Anonymous Parent Survey Results**

Parents were asked to complete a four question Likert Scale survey anonymously through a hyperlink via ClassDojo or through a hard copy of the survey sent out in the students’ “Wednesday Folders.” *Figure 6* shows the results of the survey along with percentages of

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

parents' opinions.

**Figure 6- Anonymous Parent Survey Results**

Questions	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
<b>I feel informed about the events and activities happening at my child's school.</b>	55%	44.4%	0%	0%	0%
<b>I feel like my child's school acknowledges the different languages and cultures of its community.</b>	66.7%	33.3%	0%	0%	0%
<b>I feel comfortable talking to the school's staff about questions and concerns.</b>	66.7%	22.2%	1.1%	0%	0%
<b>I feel welcomed to attend school events by my child's school.</b>	77.8%	22.2%	0%	0%	0%

### Interview Findings

Four PTA parents were chosen to participate in one-on-one interviews for this study. To maintain privacy, these four participants will be referred to as Parent A, Parent B, Parent C, and Parent D. Parents were asked four questions: *As a parent, how do you feel about using ClassDojo's School Story feature to obtain information from your child's school? Do you feel more informed about school events and information? As an active member of the PTA, do you think that more parents are participating in school events? What do you think the school can do to increase parental involvement?*

### Data Analysis

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

### Accessing Information

The data in Figures 1 and 2 signify that 86% more parents have access to and have received the information posted on Class Dojo during the 2017-2018 school year than the previous school year. The information posted on ClassDojo not only provided parents with important dates, but also advertised and gave specific details about each school event. This allowed parents to be more informed about events. This knowledge provided parents with the ability to know exactly how and when to participate.

### Increase in Event Participation

Figure 7

Event	Attendance Increase
	(%)
<b>Fall Garden Day</b>	38%
<b>Spring Garden Day</b>	15%
<b>Pizza and a Movie Night</b>	23%
<b>Multicultural Night</b>	15%
<b>Reading Night</b>	35%

Figure 5's participation data showed a substantial increase in parental involvement at school events from the 2016-2017 to the 2017-2018 school years. Figure 7 presents the same data, however it looks at the percentage increase from the 2016-2017 to the 2017-2018 school year. The increase in attendance ranges between 15%-38%.

While attendance has increased at each annual event, there is a stark contrast between the

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

attendance at Multicultural Night and Reading Night. A few factors could have contributed to this large difference in attendance. First, Multicultural Night is a social event, while Reading Night is more academic. Additionally, Multicultural Night takes place on a Friday night and Reading Night occurs on a weeknight. Lastly, Multicultural Night asks parents to play a larger role i.e. RSVP in advance, cook and drop off a cultural dish. Reading Night simply requires parents to bring their child to school from 6pm-7pm on a weeknight. McDermott (2010) discusses how a lack of self-efficacy plays a role in a parent's desire to be participate at their child's school. Academic school events may question a parent's self-efficacy, so they tend to not attend these events.

### **Parent Satisfaction-Surveys**

The anonymous Likert Scale survey results revealed that parents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements: *"I feel informed about the events and activities happening at my child's school," "I feel like my child's school acknowledges the different languages and cultures of its community," "I feel welcomed to attend school events by my child's school."*

*Figure 6* reported that 55%-77.8% of participating parents answered favorably to the anonymous Likert Scale survey. 1.1% of participating parents answered neutrally to the statement: *"I feel comfortable talking to the school's staff about questions and concerns."*

### **Parent Satisfaction- Interviews**

Common themes emerged through the face to face interviews with PTA parents that created a clear narrative of parent participation at City View Elementary School.

### **Theme One: Contentedness**

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

When asked about both using ClassDojo as a communication system and their feelings about being informed about school events and information, the four participants all responded favorably. Parents A and C have been members of the City View PTA for many years. They have both been connected to ClassDojo since their youngest children were in Kindergarten. They both stated that prior to this school year they only used ClassDojo to see how their child was behaving in class and to receive and send information to their child's teacher. Parent A answered, "I appreciated receiving pictures and videos on events that we as parents don't get to experience with our kids in school." In response to the same questions, Parent C responded, "I am always so busy. It is nice to have reminders about upcoming events at the school."

### **Theme Two: Uncertainty, Not Unwillingness**

The four parent participants carry the great burden of being the only parents who regularly attend PTA meetings and plan PTA events. Despite this fact, they were quick to identify that City View parents' lack of participation is often due to a lack of knowledge. Parent B shared, "At our school we have a low percentage of families active in our PTA. I feel many parents are afraid to commit to PTA and are not willing to ask for more information. But, when we need our parents for certain events to volunteer, they really come out to help." Parent D had a similar response, he clarified "Many City View parents don't speak English, very little education, some may even be undocumented. They have a lot on their plate, but you see them at Multicultural Night participating and enjoying every minute of it. That is one night when everyone feels like they belong."

### **Theme Three: Parent Nights**

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

Across the four parent interviews, it was evident that they unanimously agreed that many City View parents lack the education necessary to become more involved in their child's school and their education. Parent A suggested, "I think we can put together more social meetings with parents and inform or educate them on what PTA really needs." Parent B, who has a child in one of our districts' middle schools, said, "My son's school does coffee with the principal once a month. I go every single month to talk to the principal about life. I think that our administration should do something like that to get parents to feel welcomed by the school and administration."

### **Interpretation**

This case study attempted to find a correlation between the implementation of a new school wide communication system and an increase in parent participation. Multiple studies have identified that parental involvement in a child's education is beneficial to both their academic and social attainment (Barge, 2003; Dervarics, 2011; Epstein, 1992; McNeal, 2014; Malone, 2017; Olmstead, 2013). The results and findings of this case study identified an increase in access to information through ClassDojo as noted in the amounts of views of City View's School Story during the 2017-2018 school year as compared to the 2016-2017 school year.

Attendance data at school events showed a 15-38% increase between last year's 2016-2017 event attendance before a communication system was put in place, and this year's 2017-2018 event attendance. Quantitative data from the Likert Scale Survey and qualitative data from Parent Interviews revealed parent satisfaction with the new communication practices. Parents not only feel informed, but they feel welcomed and accommodated by City View School. The implementation of a new communication system has undoubtedly contributed to the parents' feelings of being informed about school events and activities.

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

### **Conclusion**

This case study has successfully used quantitative and qualitative data to identify an increase in parental involvement through research and implementation of best communication practices. The results and findings from this case study showed a significant increase in information accessed, growth in participation data at school events, and overall parent satisfaction.

The presentation and analysis of this data has provided an answer to the research questions this case study aimed to answer. Changing the communication practices between school staff and parents has conclusively improved parental involvement at City View Elementary. Additionally, it can be concluded that communication programs that can be accessed via a cellular phone or a computer provide parents with instant access to information. These programs, coupled with a simple language accommodation, have proven to increase parental involvement with City View's low income, high English Learner population. The data analysis and interpretation of the results and finding have unveiled limitations and future research goals. This will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

### **Chapter 5: Recommendations and Discussion**

Students in high need areas at City View Elementary, particularly Latinos and ELL students are underperforming in both Math and English Language Arts. Upon reflection of this data, its causes, and in working with students from these high need areas, I identified that these students lack the opportunity to succeed due to numerous factors, including a lack of parent involvement. Parental Involvement is extremely limited at City View, the PTA is composed of one leader and a few regular volunteers. Through the use of qualitative and quantitative data

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

collection practices, this case study aimed to answer the research questions, “How does changing the communication practices between school staff and parents affect parental involvement?” and “What communication practices can improve parental involvement in a low income, high English Language Learner population in the California?”

### **Finding Summary**

Prior to data collection, a new school communication system was implemented. This included the use of the application ClassDojo for school to home communication. Additionally, paper flyers for student's Wednesday Folders were also translated in Spanish to accommodate Spanish speaking parents. This case study's design included the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. Quantitative data has been collected through sign in sheets from five school events during both the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. In addition to this data, this study also examined parent engagement through ClassDojo's School Story feature. An Anonymous Likert Scale survey was sent to all parents via ClassDojo School Story, and hard copies were also sent home with students in their “Wednesday Folders.” Qualitative data was obtained through interviews with active Parents in the Parent and Teacher Association (PTA).

Results from the quantitative participation data at school events and the parent engagement data from ClassDojo provided a distinct and positive response to this case study's first research question, “How does changing the communication practices between school staff and parents affect parental involvement?” In changing the mode in which City View staff communicated with its families, parental participation increased at school events by 15%-38%, according to the particular event. Additionally, parent access (as measured through the amount of views and likes on the School Story feature) to information on ClassDojo increased by 86%.



Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

The school wide implementation of ClassDojo coupled with the practice of translating hard copy flyers in both English and Spanish proved to be effective communication practices and provided a clear answer to this case study's second research question, "What communication practices can improve parental involvement in a low income, high English Language Learner population in the California?"

I hypothesized that through a simple shift in communication at City View Elementary, parental involvement would increase. The quantitative and qualitative findings of this case study have verified that my hypothesis was correct.

### **Finding Interpretation**

This case study began with the implementation of a new communication system, and there were numerous variables that were required to conduct this study. Parent participation was the clear dependent variable for this case study. The independent variables that contributed to an increase or decrease in parental involvement included the use ClassDojo and the translated "Wednesday Folder" flyers. Additionally, without the participation of parents at City View Elementary, qualitative and quantitative data would not have been properly collected to find a correlation. This study heavily relied on teacher "buy in", parents downloading the ClassDojo application on their phones, parents accessing information, and students bringing home Wednesday Folders with translated handouts.

### **Findings in Context**

One of the major bodies of research regarding parental involvement is Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (Epstein, 1992). This includes communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and community collaboration (1992).

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

Research shows that if a parent is able to provide involvement in each of Epstein's six criteria, then their child will show greater respect for parents and school staff, develop positive values, have improved school attendance, demonstrate responsibility, practice self-awareness, and earn better grades (Dervarics, 2011). This case study heavily focused on Epstein's idea of the parent's role in community collaboration. Although each type of involvement is equally important, I thought that strengthening the communication "bridge" between the school and its community would be a great starting point for more involvement opportunities.

Dr. Debra Malone's (2017) four potential strategies that enable families from low socioeconomic status to participate in their child's education assisted in the methodology of this case study. Malone's fourth and final strategy is what I have built my case study around: increasing awareness to meet the needs of working parents. When parents feel like they are important and needed, they will often respond positively (Malone, 2017). Malone found success with this strategy, as did this case study.

### **Recommendations**

This case study created a simple solution to a large problem. Low income, high English Language Learner populated schools across America are undoubtedly afflicted with a lack of parental involvement. This causes low standardized test scores, high truancy rates, and behavioral issues (Malone 2017).

Schools need to acknowledge that most parents want to be involved in their child's education. However, parents in tough circumstances may find it difficult to figure out how to be involved. City View Elementary changed the way its staff communicated to parents and saw remarkable results. The use of ClassDojo created a juncture for a school community to gather on

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

a daily basis. Parents were able to access information in their own language at their own convenience. Decorated school flyers in the “Wednesday Folders” were no longer only accessible to English speaking parents, they were now relevant to our large Spanish speaking community.

### **Limitations**

This case study included some limitations regarding data and time. Much of the participation data at school events collected for this case study was juxtaposed with data from the previous school year’s participation data. For the purpose of this study, I created a meticulous RSVP system prior to each school event and a “day of” system at each event. However, the data from last school year were collected simply from sign in sheets at each event. While there are many school events at City View Elementary School, only five of the events from the 2016-2017 school year had sufficient data that could be included in this case study.

### **Future Direction**

As previously mentioned, this case study only focused on the community collaboration aspect of parental involvement. I would like to continue to increase parental involvement at City View Elementary by providing parents with opportunities to become engaged in a more academic capacity. In order to achieve this, I would like to host Parent Education Nights at City View that focus on parenting, curriculum, and educational technology.

### **Conclusion**

When I began this case study, I was not a parent. As I conclude this final chapter, I am weeks away from becoming a mother. Now, more than ever, I can acknowledge that a lack in parent participation is not due to lack of care, but a lack of opportunity. In this age of

Sanchez, Christina

## Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

communication and technology, there are so many ways to stay in contact and create that opportunity.

Six years ago, as a brand-new teacher, I was introduced to a behavior management system called ClassDojo. I was able to reward my students with positive points, which they would later cash in for small prizes. As ClassDojo evolved, so did my communication with parents. I was able to communicate any questions or concerns with parents, and they had the opportunity to do the same. I felt like these parents trusted me and appreciated me for including them.

Change is never easy, but I was surprised to learn that so many other teachers were interested in using ClassDojo in their classrooms. However, the fact remained that not every parent had the means to own a cellphone or a computer. Our staff brainstormed that our past practices of sending home flyers should still be exercised and accompanied with a Spanish translation.

School administrators are the bridge from school to community. As I prepare for a career in school administration, I will take the knowledge I have gained from this case study to ensure that I will do everything I can to involve parents in their child's education. Through this collaboration, I hope to narrow the achievement gap of the diverse community I have grown to love so much.

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

Appendix A

QUESTIONS	PARENT A	PARENT B	PARENT C	PARENT D
<b>AS A PARENT, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT USING CLASSDOJO'S SCHOOL STORY FEATURE TO OBTAIN INFORMATION FROM YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL?</b>	I was introduced to ClassDojo when my youngest daughter started Kindergarten. I appreciated receiving pictures and videos on events that we as parents don't get to experience with our kids in school. It's a great way to inform us of school events that were coming as well. Overall ClassDojo is a great app for teachers and parents to communicate.	This is my first year using ClassDojo and I am so glad that City View is using it regularly. I have to look at it all of the time to remind myself about what is coming up.	I absolutely love ClassDojo. I always have my phone on me and whenever there is a post from my child's teacher, or a teacher from the school I get an immediate notification. I am always so busy. It is nice to have reminders about upcoming events at the school.	I don't know what I would do without it! My child is in 5 <sup>th</sup> grade and they never bring handouts home from school. Everything that is sent home is also posted on ClassDojo, so I go on there at least once a week to check in.
<b>DO YOU FEEL MORE INFORMED ABOUT SCHOOL EVENTS AND INFORMATION?</b>	Like I mentioned it is a nice way to find out about events coming and also to see assemblies that our students experience at school.	I feel like I am there! I love watching the videos of assemblies and learning about what my child is doing in class.	I wish I did a better job of keeping myself informed, but ClassDojo has made it easier.	I feel more informed this year than any other year. This is my sixth year with the school!
<b>AS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE PTA, DO YOU THINK THAT MORE PARENTS ARE PARTICIPATING</b>	I think that it depends on the events. A lot of people come to the "fun" events weekend events but fail to show up	At our school we have a low percentage of families active in our PTA. I feel many parents are afraid to commit to PTA and are not	It's hard to say. To be honest, I haven't been at many school events this year. I am	Many City View parents don't speak English, very little education, some are even

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

<p><b>IN SCHOOL EVENTS?</b></p>	<p>during weekday events. I get it though, they have work and can't make it.</p>	<p>willing to ask for more information. But, when we need our parents for certain events to volunteer, they really come out to help.</p>	<p>a single mother and I work until 7pm every day. I bet there are a lot of people in similar situations.</p>	<p>illegal. They have a lot on their plate, but you see them at Multicultural Night participating and enjoying every minute of it. That is one night when everyone feels like they belong</p>
<p><b>WHAT DO YOU THINK THE SCHOOL CAN DO TO INCREASE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT?</b></p>	<p>I think if we can put together more social meetings with parents and inform educate them on what PTA really needs. Since we have a very weak PTA, I am the only one running our PTA at this time it makes it hard for me to plan new events. I am hoping to recruit more parents this year to hopefully run more meetings. I think overall, to get more parent involvement we all just need more TIME!</p>	<p>My son's school does coffee with the principal once a month. I go every single month to talk to the principal about life. I think that our administration should do something like that to get parents to feel welcomed by the school and administration.</p>	<p>I wish there were more weekend events, on Saturdays and Sundays. I would be able to make those with my children, but there are not many.</p>	

Sanchez, Christina

Parental Involvement After the Implementation of Effective Communication Practices in a Low Income, High English Learner Populated School in California: A Case Study

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Sanchez, Christina

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