

**Cultural Capital, Boundary Crossing, and Parent Involvement:
A Case Study of Involvement by Low-Income, African-American Parents at a
Charter School**

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Francisco and Rebeca who worked hard to provide me with a strong educational foundation, to my husband Oz who has shown me the importance of partnership, and to my daughter Sara who has made me explore parent involvement in a new light.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
List of Appendices	vii
Abstract	viii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Theoretical Overview and Literature Review	6
Chapter Three: Methods	36
Chapter Four: Parent Involvement at Roosevelt Charter School	76
Chapter Five: Teachers' Views on Parent Involvement at Roosevelt	137
Chapter Six: Parents' Views on Parent Involvement at Roosevelt	183
Chapter Seven: Conclusion	221
Appendices	239
References	260

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographic and performance data for RSD and OPSB (2013-2014)	40
Table 2. Responses from Community Organizations	42
Table 3. Data Collection and Analyses Phases	51
Table 4. Summary of Events Observed	52
Table 5. School Staff Interviewees	55
Table 6. Parent Interviewees	59
Table 7. State Standardized Test Results (%) for the 2013-2014 Academic Year	77
Table 8. Activities that Occur at the Beginning of the School Year	90
Table 9. Activities that Occur Throughout the School Year	98
Table 10. Description of RFA Meetings (2013-2014)	107
Table 11. Roosevelt Rhino Guardian Meetings and Events (2013-2014)	112
Table 12. End-of-Year Parent Involvement Activities	126
Table 13. Survey Results about Roosevelt Communication Efforts	190
Table 14. Survey Results about Families' Reported Involvement	195
Table 15. Survey Results about Families' Engagement with Different Parent Involvement Activities	207
Table 16. Survey Results about Families' Satisfaction with Roosevelt	212
Table 17. Percent of Respondents Who Desired Workshops and Services for Parents	217

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Examples of Parent Involvement Documentation at Roosevelt	61
Figure 2. 2013-2014 Parent Survey	66
Figure 3. Coding Guide	71
Figure 4. Snapshot of Over Time Analytic Matrix	74
Figure 5. Roosevelt Weekly Newsletter (August 15, 2014, Document)	101
Figure 6. Pictures of Roosevelt Rhino Guardians' End-of-Year Breakfast Feedback (May 16, 2014, Picture)	116
Figure 7. Ms. Banks' Summary of Math and Literacy Night Stations (March 11, 2014, Email)	119
Figure 8. Parent Letter about Fall Fest (October 15, 2013, Document)	123
Figure 9. Example of Kindergarten Grade-Level Newsletter (March 13, 2014, Document)	145
Figure 10. Sample Daily Report Card provided by Ms. Smith, a 2 nd Grade Teacher (March 13, 2014, Document)	147

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A. Administrator Interview Protocol	239
Appendix B. Teacher Interview Protocol	241
Appendix C. Parent In-Person Interview Protocol	243
Appendix D. Parent Phone Interview Protocol	246
Appendix E. Coding Guide	247

ABSTRACT

Although the research literature shows mixed relationships between different types of parent involvement and student outcomes, public rhetoric suggest that parents are integral to their children's education. Yet low-income and minority parents tend to be involved at lower rates than White or more affluent parents. While much of the research literature has examined the role of parents' attributes in explaining parents' rates of involvement, less research has focused on the role of the school in parent involvement. This study uses the concepts of cultural capital and boundary crossing to understand how one charter school, identified as having strong parent involvement practices and serving a student population that is predominantly low-income and African-American, works to involve parents and how parents respond. Using a case study methodology, the author found that the school's parent involvement program included a wide range of activities that were executed with varying degrees of success. Most of the activities at the school were traditional parent involvement activities, like special holiday events and PTA-type meetings. The school also offered a handful of more innovative parent involvement activities, such as a father's group and a photography club for parents.

The results from this study suggest that gaps in teachers' and parents' cultural capital as it manifests in schools persist, even at schools that may be identified as inclusive. Despite the school's attempts to institute practices that helped parents and teachers to cross boundaries, the school and home domains remained mostly separate.

Teachers and parents generally agreed that the school offered parents many opportunities to become involved, and parents seemed satisfied with the school's staff and academic program. However, teachers and parents diverged in their satisfaction with levels of parent involvement. While teachers wished that parents could be involved more, parents indicated that they were frequently involved with their children's education in ways that were developmentally appropriate and logistically possible. The divergence between teachers' and parents' satisfaction with parent involvement might be explained by two factors. First, teachers may have had unrealistically high expectations for parent involvement. Second, parents' involvement, especially at home, may not have been acknowledged by teachers because teachers could not see it or because they did not feel that it was as important as parents' presence at school.

Further research on parent involvement should examine how schools determine the design of parent involvement programming and the relationship between degrees and types of parent involvement and student achievement. Such studies could inform how schools may best make use of their resources to bring parents and schools together to improve student outcomes.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Schools in the United States are charged with educating children while using a limited set of resources. With a fixed financial allocation, schools must hire and manage staff, select and implement curricula and assessments, and ensure equitable learning outcomes. Given schools' limited resources, one way that schools have attempted to expand their capacity is by getting parents involved with their children's education.

Schools' implementation of parent involvement programming has been encouraged by federal policies through the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and by state, district, and school policies. This is especially true in schools that serve large populations of low-income students where the distribution of Title I funds is contingent on parent involvement plans (United States Department of Education, 2004). Many teachers support these parent involvement efforts as an integral part of their children's schooling (Epstein and Becker, 1982). This sentiment continues to be echoed in schools and local districts that insist that their success educating students hinges on the involvement of parents.

The idea that parent involvement is an integral part of students' schooling is predicated on the notion that parent involvement is positively linked to student outcomes. In fact, many types of parent involvement can have a positive impact on student outcomes. High rates of parent involvement have been associated with higher student achievement (Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, and Simpkins, 2009; Falbo, Lein, and

Amador, 2008; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasporw, and Fendrich, 1999; Kuperminc, Darnell, and Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008; Patall, Cooper, and Robinson, 2008; Stone, 2006; Taylor and Machida, 1994), better student attendance (Falbo et al, 2008), more positive student attitudes towards school and work (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Holbein, 2005; Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan, 2000; Wettersten, Guilmino, Herrick, and Hunter, 2005) and productive academic adjustment among students (Klimes-Dougan, Lopez, Nelson, and Adelman, 1992; Stone, 2006). In addition, increased levels of parent involvement are also correlated to lower levels of dropping out (Englund, Egeland, and Collins, 2008; Stone, 2006; Teachman, Paasch, and Carver, 1997), lower rates of retention and placement in special education (Miedel and Reynolds, 2000), and fewer behavioral problems at school (Domina, 2005; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, and Sekino, 2004; Taylor and Machida, 1994). Despite the positive effects of many types of parent involvement, other types of involvement, such as parent help with homework or attendance at PTO meetings, have not been clearly linked to positive student outcomes (Balli, Demo, and Wedmean, 1998; McNeal, 1999; Muller, 1998; Xu and Corno, 2003).

Yet schools persist in trying to involve parents, and many schools continue to struggle with rates of parent involvement. In particular, understanding parent involvement among low-income and minority parents continues to be a challenge for researchers, as these communities of parents tend to be less involved in schools than their White and more affluent counterparts (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, and Ortiz, 2008; Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, and Skinner, 2004; Lee and Bowen, 2006; McIntyre, Ecjert, Fiese, DiGenneraro, and Widenger, 2007; Wong and Hughes, 2006). Lower rates of involvement among low-income and minority parents are particularly worrisome because minority and low-income students continue to exhibit lower levels of achievement

compared to their White or higher-income peers (Center for Education Statistics, 2007a; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007b). If parent involvement can help to close this achievement gap – and yet minority and low-income parents continue to be less involved – the reasons for their lower levels of involvement deserve to be explored.

The research literature has offered a number of explanations for why minority or low-income parents might be involved at lower rates than their White or more affluent counterparts. Often, these explanations rest with parents themselves – their resources, beliefs, and experiences (Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Brody and Flor, 1998; Jeynes, 2005; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, and Lynn, 2003; Rowley, Helaire, and Banerjee, 2010). Some researchers have placed more responsibility for parent involvement with the schools, attempting to explain that a mismatch between low-income parents' and schools' cultural capital has led to the exclusion of low-income parents from their children's schooling (Abrams and Gibbs, 2002; Auerbach, 2007; Howard and Reynolds, 2008; Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 2011). Despite these challenges to low-income parents' involvement, however, there is some evidence that suggests that some schools are working to cross the boundaries between home and school through specific employee roles or by implementing specific programs that integrate parents and the school (Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Mitchell, 2009; Shah, 2009).

This study seeks to examine parent involvement efforts at one school, Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School, that has a reputation for strong parent engagement practices. Roosevelt was well-known across its city for trying to link the home and school contexts in pursuit of a sense of community at Roosevelt and to improve student outcomes while also serving a student population that is predominantly low-income and African-

American. Choosing to focus on a school with strong parent involvement efforts among low-income, African-American parents ensures that I am able to better understand parent involvement among low-income and minority parents specifically.

In particular, this study seeks to address the following:

1. How do administrators and teachers at Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School work to involve parents? Why do administrators and teachers involve parents in these ways?
2. How do different African-American parents take up the school's efforts around parent involvement? How do the school's administrators and teachers contribute to parents' understandings?

These research questions examine Roosevelt's parent involvement programming from both the school and parent perspectives. The first research question focuses on the attributes of administrators and teachers at an elementary school that is perceived to successfully engage low-income, African-American parents. The second research question explores how parents at the school react to the school's efforts to involve parents and what factors might inform their reactions. Just as the first question seeks to understand the complicated work on the side of the school to involve parents, the second research questions seeks to understand the complicated landscape of individual parents and families and how they react to the school's efforts.

I begin this manuscript with a literature review about parent involvement in schools, linking different types of involvement to student outcomes and examining the research on parent involvement among low-income and minority parents in particular. I follow the literature review with a description of the case study site selection process and the methods used to collect and analyze my data at Roosevelt. Chapter 4 presents an overview of parent involvement programming at Roosevelt while Chapters 5 and 6 examine teachers' and parents' views of parent involvement programming at Roosevelt. I

close the manuscript with a discussion of the overlap between the home and school contexts and implications for future research.

Schools can use parent involvement programming as a useful tool to help to improve student outcomes. However, given the limited resources that schools face, they must be strategic in how they employ those resources for the purposes of parent involvement. This study seeks to understand how one school with reputedly strong parent involvement practices worked to involve parents and how parents took up that involvement. By better understanding the complicated landscape of parent involvement at one school, other schools may be able to engage more strategically with parent involvement efforts.

CHAPTER TWO:

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW AND LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated in the introduction, many types of parent involvement are related to positive student outcomes (Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, and Simpkins, 2009; Englund, Egeland, and Collins, 2008; Falbo, Lein, and Amador, 2008; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Holbein, 2005; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, and Fendrich, 1999; Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan, 2000; Klimes-Dougan et al, 1992; Kuperminc, Darnell, and Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008; Miedel and Reynolds, 2000; Patall, Cooper, and Robinson, 2008; Stone, 2006; Taylor and Machida, 1994; Teachman, Paasch, and Carver, 1997; Wettersten, Guilmino, Herrick, and Hunter, 2005). However, schools continue to face lower rates of parent involvement among low-income and minority parents (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, and Ortiz, 2008; Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, and Skinner, 2004; Lee and Bowen, 2006; McIntyre, Ecjert, Fiese, DiGenneraro, and Widenger, 2007; Wong and Hughes, 2006).

Most of the parent involvement research has attempted to explain why low-income and minority parents exhibit lower levels of involvement by relating parent involvement to parents' resources, beliefs, and experiences. The literature that examines parents as the explanation for variation in levels of involvement generally attempts to link parent characteristics with parents' frequency of engagement with various involvement activities (Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Brody and Flor, 1998; Diamond and Gomez, 2004; Heymann and Earle, 2000; Jeynes, 2005; Ji and Koblinsky, 2009;

Pelletier and Brent, 2002; Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel, 2001; Wong and Hughes, 2006; Wu and Qi, 2006). Implicit in this line of research is the assumption that the reasons that parents do or do not become involved are attributes of parents and thus that the predominant capacity to change levels of parent involvement lies with the parents themselves.

Some of the studies examining parents' roles in parent involvement attempt to explain how parent characteristics translate to low levels of parent involvement through the application of cultural capital, a notion popularized by Bourdieu (1987). Cultural capital refers to a sociological concept describing individuals' resources and assets beyond those of monetary value, including aspects of an individual like their education, patterns of speech, knowledge of cultural symbols, and manner of dress. These aspects of an individual serve currency in social interactions, facilitating or complicating interactions because different forms of cultural capital are privileged in different situations. Thus, an individual's possession of certain types of cultural capital can place him or her at an advantage or disadvantage in different situations with different actors. Institutions like schools, favor White, middle-class forms of cultural capital, which places other members of society at a disadvantage in their interactions with schools (Bourdieu, 1999; Bourdieu, 2008; Lareau, 1987). Thus, middle-class parents share values and interactional norms that facilitate their interactions with their child's school and help their children to succeed (Lareau, 1987). On the other hand, the forms of cultural capital privileged by schools and other institutions place low-income and minority families at a disadvantage, going so far as to inadvertently exclude low-income and minority parents by making them feel out of place and unwelcome (Lareau and Horvat, 1999).

Although several authors use cultural capital theory to provide a compelling conceptualization of why some parents are more involved in school than others, this theorization – despite its attention to institutional inequities – inadvertently overemphasizes the role of parents in the home-school mismatch and underexplores the role of schools. Scholars who apply a cultural capital lens to parent involvement often assume that schools are static entities, refusing to adjust their norms to meet the needs of low-income and minority parents. These authors ignore the potential permeability or instability of the boundary between home and school. Although some researchers have begun to explore how schools adapt to the low-income and minority families that they serve (Chrispeels and Rivero, 2001; Cooper and Christie, 2005; De Gaetano, 2007; Fantuzzo, Davis, and Ginsburg, 1995; Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Waterman, 2007), we generally know very little about how schools might operate differently, consciously including parents from low-income and minority communities and crossing boundaries between home and school.

This chapter constitutes a comprehensive analysis of peer-reviewed publications examining parent involvement in their children’s schooling, and it includes an examination of cultural capital theory. In addition, I draw upon the theoretical idea of boundary crossing to discuss how schools can help to shift or make more permeable the boundaries between the home and school contexts.

The general purpose of this literature review is to examine the research on parent involvement, with a particular emphasis on research examining parent involvement among low-income and minority communities. In addition, this literature review seeks to examine explanations for lower rates of parent involvement among minority and low-income communities. To this end, the literature review attempts to address two questions:

1) What is the relationship between different forms of parent involvement and student outcomes?

2) What explains lower rates of parent involvement among low-income and minority parents?

I begin this chapter by describing the methods that I used to conduct this literature review, emphasizing my selection criteria and the ways in which I classified and analyzed the parent involvement literature. I then summarize the evidence linking different forms of parent involvement to student outcomes, emphasizing that parent involvement seems to have stronger positive results for low-income and minority students in particular. I then turn to the research that attempts to explain the reasons for lower levels of involvement among low-income and minority parents, emphasizing the research that has used cultural capital as one way to explain low-income and minority parents' lower rates of involvement. I highlight the fact that cultural capital differences between home and school may result in schools inadvertently using different forms of exclusion, which may discourage low-income and minority parents' involvement. I follow this with a discussion about research that begins to complicate the role of schools in the parent involvement partnership, suggesting that schools may be able to affect the boundaries between home and school in positive ways that bring parents and the school together.

Literature Review Methods

I initiated this literature review using general search terms in education-related databases and then restricted the resulting list according to various criteria. I conducted a broad search of articles in ERIC, Proquest and JSTOR using "parent involvement" as my search term and limited the results from my article search to include only peer-reviewed

studies printed in journals. Next, I reviewed all of the abstracts from the peer-reviewed parent involvement articles and focused on empirical articles published within the past 30 years. I decided to exclude articles that focused on parent involvement in special education, which requires parents to be involved in the IEP process, due to the specific and mandated nature of this involvement. In addition, I excluded articles that examined parenting more generally. The more general parenting articles included literature that examines parenting styles, such as authoritative parenting versus permissive parenting, and certain forms of socialization, such as racial or gender socialization, in which parents instill values about their child's race, gender, or other characteristics. Although these elements of parenting can technically be defined as parent involvement, my interest is in understanding the implications for schooling. Consequently, I focused on literature that examined different types of parent involvement specifically related to schooling, both at home and on the school site.

I categorized the remaining articles as studying parent involvement in the general parent population or as studying parent involvement specifically among low-income and minority groups. To do this, I examined the methods sections of the studies in an effort to determine the racial and socio-economic status (SES) composition of the population under study. If the population included in the study was undefined or grouped all SES and racial groups together, I classified the article as one that examined parent involvement generally. I classified articles that focused specifically on one racial group or low-income parents as "specific."

I additionally coded the general parent involvement articles according to two criteria – the location of parent involvement and the outcome of parent involvement. I labeled the article as related to home involvement with schooling or school involvement,

which I identified through the authors' description of parent involvement measures and their discussion of different forms of parent involvement. Home involvement with schooling refers to parent involvement at home that is closely related to school activities. Most commonly, this refers to creating rules around homework and helping with homework. It also includes parent-child conversations about school. School involvement refers to parents' attendance at school functions or direct interactions with their child's teacher or school. In addition to the location of parent involvement, I also recorded the student outcomes the authors explored in the study. Outcome labels include "student behavior," "dropout rate," and "academic achievement."

If a study's population was identified as predominantly belonging to one subgroup, I coded the subgroup parent involvement articles according to the subgroup involved, the location of involvement, and the student outcomes examined. Some of the labels that I assigned to subgroups include "low-income," "Latino," "African-American," and "ESL." I also assigned location labels and outcome labels to the subgroup studies when they were relevant.

After reviewing the general and subgroup parent involvement literature, I honed in on articles that attempted to explain why minority and low-income parents are differentially involved. Some of these studies were quantitative and used parent involvement frequency as an outcome variable. Others were qualitative and sought to understand how parents made sense of their involvement and why they did or did not become involved. Labels for these studies that identified reasons that levels of parent involvement might differ include "school invitations," "financial resources," "cultural capital," and "language barriers."

As I dug into the parent involvement literature, it became clear that much of the research literature clearly delineated between the home and school spheres, viewing the boundary as static or impermeable. This led me to investigate alternative concepts that could help to theorize about the role of boundaries, namely boundary crossing and boundary objects (Star and Griesemer, 1989). Coupled with this theoretical literature, I also began to examine articles that studied specific parent involvement interventions, both generally and with subgroups of parents. My hope was that these studies could illustrate how schools shifted to meet the needs of their students and their families. By examining these studies, I wanted to understand how and why schools adapt to the students and families that attend them.

I coded these intervention studies according to three criteria – their population of focus, the source of the program, and the type of intervention. In addition, I labeled these articles according to their focus on parent involvement in general or a focus on subgroups. I also labeled them according to the source and type of intervention. Labels for the source of intervention include words such as “district-led” or “university-developed,” and labels for the type of intervention include terms such as “homework design” and “parent workshop.”

Types of Parent Involvement and Student Outcomes

The relationship between home involvement and student outcomes and school involvement with student outcomes seem to differ according to the type of involvement analyzed. While home involvement refers to parent involvement at home around schooling issues, like helping with homework or talking to one’s child about school, school involvement refers to parent involvement that requires direct interaction with

school staff at the school site. Different types of home involvement with schooling are generally unrelated to student outcomes, save for parent-child communication about school, which is consistently and positively related to student outcomes. Most forms of parents' school involvement, on the other hand, are positively related to student outcomes, except for parents' PTA participation, which has a more inconsistent relationship with student outcomes.

Home Involvement with Schooling

Generally, home involvement with schooling is not strongly correlated with student outcomes. For example, although Dearing et al (2009) found that parent-reported involvement at home was related to students' literacy achievement, they also found that students' feelings about literacy mediated the relationship between involvement and literacy achievement. Thus, solely parent involvement at home was insufficient to raise student achievement. Similarly, Muller (1998) found that parents' home involvement did not make a large impact on older students' achievement.

Parents' rule-setting and monitoring associated with the completion of homework has also demonstrated a mixed relationship with student outcomes, which may be related to students' ages. Studies examining elementary aged students have found a positive relationship between parents' help with homework and student outcomes. For example, some studies implemented interactive homework, which was designed specifically to encourage parents and students to talk about their homework. These studies found that coupling parent trainings with an interactive homework design resulted in higher student achievement for elementary students (Bailey, Silvern, Brabham, and Ross, 2004; Bailey, 2006; Sheldon and Epstein, 2005). Heller and Fantuzzo (1993) similarly found that parent

involvement with homework coupled with a school-based reciprocal peer-tutoring program produced the highest gains in homework completion for elementary students.

Whereas the research between parent involvement and elementary students' outcomes is generally positive, the results for older students are more mixed. Xu and Corno (2003) found middle school students' reports of parents' homework management unrelated to student achievement, and Balli, Demo, and Wedmean (1998) found no relationship between parent involvement with homework and middle school student achievement. However, Falbo, Lein, and Amador (2008) found that various forms of parent monitoring, including with schoolwork, helped high school students to succeed, leading to higher final grades, a greater number of credits earned, and more consistent school attendance.

A meta-analysis of studies about parent involvement with homework supports these trends for parent involvement with homework. Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008) found that parent involvement with homework led to increased homework completion but not necessarily to improved academic performance. Parent involvement with homework tended to result in increased academic outcomes for elementary and high school students and lower outcomes for middle school students. Further, the study found that parent involvement with homework was positively associated with verbal achievement outcomes but negatively associated with math achievement (Patall, Cooper, and Robinson, 2008). These results demonstrate a complex relationship between parent involvement with homework and student achievement, which does not exhibit a clear link.

Unlike other forms of home involvement that have an inconsistent relationship with student outcomes, several studies have found that the frequency and quality of

parent-student communication about school has been positively related to student outcomes (Izzo et al, 1999; Kuperminc, Darnell, and Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008). In one study of low-income parents, parents reporting supportive home learning environments were more likely to have children with higher social skills and higher levels of academic functioning and achievement among their students. According to the authors of this study, supportive home environments included aspects such as saying positive things to their child about school, helping the child to practice what they learned at school, and telling the child how they were expected to behave at school (McWayne et al, 2004). Pro-educational behaviors at home, such as discussing with the child things that had happened at school and encouraging the child to perform better at school, have also led to better student attitudes toward school and work (Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan, 2000; Wettersten et al, 2005). Similarly, Stone (2006) found that student-reported levels of communication between students and their parents in which they discussed the child's school life was positively correlated with students' GPA and that parent-child home communication about school was positively associated with Latino students' academic adjustment. This relationship was even stronger for high school students than for middle school students. Reports of parent-child connectivity also have been related to lower levels of dropping out, especially among low-income students (Stone, 2006; Teachman, Paasch, and Carver, 1997).

Thus, the empirical evidence indicates that most forms of parent involvement at home are weakly related to student outcomes. In particular, parents' monitoring at home of school-related behaviors and parent involvement with homework are generally unrelated to student outcomes. However, parent-child communication at home about school is more clearly and positively associated with student success.

School Involvement

Unlike home involvement, studies have positively linked school involvement with student outcomes. Among younger students, general parent school involvement has been associated with higher levels of school adjustment and achievement. In a study with Head Start parents, teacher-reported parent involvement predicted students' skill gains and students' positive classroom behaviors (Taylor and Machida, 1994). School involvement also has been related to Kindergarten students' adjustment to school, in which students with higher levels of parent involvement were also more likely to engage with behaviors like listening attentively, working and playing well with others, and meeting new situations with confidence (Klimes-Dougan et al, 1992). For slightly older students, the relationship between parents' school involvement and student outcomes remains. Among elementary students, parent involvement at school seemed to prevent negative behaviors like cheating, lying, impulsiveness, and disobedience at home and at school (Domina, 2005). This study found that the effects of parent involvement in reducing negative behaviors were even greater among low-income students (Domina, 2005). Parent involvement during elementary school also reduced dropout rates among some groups of high school students (Englund, Egeland, and Collins, 2008). Parent involvement at school has also been associated with higher levels of student motivation and engagement with school (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Holbein, 2005).

Parent involvement with volunteering and attendance at school events like performances is also positively related to student outcomes. One review of parent involvement with preschoolers found that preschoolers whose parents were involved at their school tended to have greater preliteracy development (Arnold et al, 2008). Miedel

and Reynolds (2000) also found positive outcomes for young students whose parents were involved at the school site through activities like volunteering. These authors found that parent involvement at their child's parent-child centers was related to students' future reading achievement, lower rates of retention, and fewer years in Special Education. In addition, parent involvement at center sites has been found to mediate the relationship between preschool participation and school achievement and retention (Reynolds, Mavrogenes, Bezrucko, and Hageman, 1996). That is, students who participated in preschool but who did not have their parents regularly involved did not experience the same degree of preschool benefits as preschool students whose parents were regularly involved.

Parent involvement with volunteering and attendance at school events is important even for older children. High school students' reports of their parents' involvement at school and attendance at school events was related to their grades, and the effect was stronger for students whose mothers had fewer resources (Bogenschneider, 1997), indicating that parent involvement may be even more important for low-income students.

Other studies focusing on parent involvement with schools have examined parent involvement with the PTA, which is the form of school involvement least clearly related to student outcomes. Some studies have found positive effects of PTA participation. For example, Gutman and Eccles (1999) found that parent participation with the PTA mediated the relationship between financial stress and student achievement. Thus, PTA involvement was even more important for students whose families were more financially stressed. On the other hand, McNeal (1999) used the NELS database to relate parent involvement and student outcomes and actually found a negative relationship between

parents' PTA participation and student science achievement (McNeal, 1999). However, the author also found that greater levels of parent involvement were related to fewer behavior problems. Consequently, parent participation with the PTA seems to be differentially related to different student outcomes.

A summary of studies linking parents' school involvement and student outcomes indicates that there is generally a positive association between school involvement and student outcomes, except for parents' PTA participation. The stronger relationship between parents' school involvement and student outcomes seems to indicate that parent-school interactions that require direct communication and participation most easily facilitate student success.

Parent Involvement in Low-Income and Minority Communities

Despite evidence that parent involvement, especially parents' school-based involvement, generally has a positive relationship with student outcomes, most studies about parent involvement find that minority parents and low-SES parents are differentially involved with their children's schooling. In particular, many studies have found these parents to be less involved than their White or more affluent counterparts. This is troubling because some studies have found parent involvement effects to be even greater for these groups, meaning that parent involvement may be particularly important for low-income or minority students (Bogenschneider, 1997; Domina, 2005; Gutman and Eccles, 1999; Teachman, Paasch, and Carver, 1997).

Studies that have specifically examined the role of SES in parent involvement have found that low-income parents tend to be less involved than high-income parents. Lower SES status has been associated with both less frequent involvement at school and

with fewer parent-child educational discussions at home (Lee and Bowen, 2006). Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan (2000) also found that parents with less education, a proxy for parents' SES, were less likely to be involved with their child's schooling.

Parent involvement research also suggests that parents' race is related to their levels of involvement with White parents more involved than non-White parents. Wong and Hughes (2006) found that teachers tend to rate White parents as most involved in schools, followed by Hispanic parents and then African-American parents. Lee and Bowen (2006) found that White parents reported a higher frequency of involvement at school and more parent-child discussions about school than either African-American or Hispanic parents.

Another group of studies has found that minority parents are less frequently involved at the school in particular, though they may be more involved with their child's schooling at home (Auerbach, 2007; Dyson, 2001; Huntsinger and Jose, 2009; Keith, Keith, Quirk, Sperduto, Santillo, and Killings, 1998; Sy and Schulenberg, 2005; Valdez, Dowrick, and Maynard, 2007). Studies have found that Asian-American parents tend to have higher educational aspirations for their children than White parents, yet White parents seem to communicate more consistently with their child's school (Keith et al, 1998). In addition, studies have shown that Chinese and Chinese-American parents tend to particularly emphasize communication about academic matters or to support formal home methods of learning (Dyson, 2001; Huntsinger and Jose, 2009). Although these forms of involvement are important, they require less interaction with the teacher, and when they do require interaction with the teacher, it is a more formal interaction. Instead, White parents are the parents who tend to participate more at school and in less formal interactions with the teacher when compared to Asian-American parents (Sy and

Schulenberg, 2005). The same has been found for other minority groups. In her study of African-American and Latino parents, Auerbach (2007) found that many parents preferred to be involved in the home domain, instilling morals and respect for their students' teachers at home and encouraging their children to do well in school. Valdez, Dowrick, and Maynard (2007) found similar beliefs and involvement among Samoan families. Thus, low-SES and minority parents seem to show particularly low levels of involvement at school, though they may be more involved in school-related activities at home.

Given research that indicates that parents' school-based involvement seems to have the strongest connection to student outcomes, it is important to consider *why* minority and low-income parents might be less involved with the school community. The following sections summarize the existing literature that has attempted to address the questions about why parents from low-income or minority communities might be less involved, particularly at the school site.

Explaining Low-Income and Minority Parents' Involvement

Parent involvement studies that specifically examined linguistic or racial minorities or low-income communities typically attributed the source of variation to either parents or schools. The majority of studies attributed different levels of parent involvement to variation in parents' resources, their personal experiences, or their beliefs (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler, 2007). A subset of these studies attempted to explain why the associations between parents' resources, experiences and beliefs and their involvement exist by applying Bourdieu's (2008) notion of cultural capital. This remains the predominant theory used to explain the link between parents and

their involvement, though it often assumes that institutions are static entities that privilege forms of cultural capital that place low-income and minority students at a disadvantage (Lareau, 1987). However, evidence exists that schools may adapt to accept and privilege other forms of cultural capital that enhance the involvement of low-income and minority parents.

Parent Resources

Studies that examine parent resources as they relate to parent involvement usually characterize resources as the tools that parents bring to situations around their children's schooling. This includes parents' financial resources, their linguistic resources, social resources, employment flexibility, and time.

Several studies have found that parents with fewer financial resources tend to be less involved. Jeynes (2005) and Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) specifically examined African-American parents' levels of parent involvement and found that more affluent African-American parents were more likely to exhibit higher levels of involvement. In another study on African-American mothers, Brody and Flor (1998) found that financial resources mediated the relationship between parent involvement and students' educational attainment. These studies indicate that variation in levels of parent involvement exist even within the African-American population as socio-economic status intersects with race to predict levels of involvement within the African-American community. In their examination of low-income families, Waanders, Mendez, and Downer (2007) also found that parents who reported greater economic distress were less likely to be involved.

Similarly, parents' linguistic resources can also help to explain lower levels of parent involvement among some minority parents. Ji and Koblinsky (2009) found that language status and work schedules made it very difficult for recent Chinese immigrant parents to become involved. The same seems to be true for Latino parents and Southeast Asian refugee parents who do not speak English fluently (Blakely, 1983; Klimes-Dougan et al, 1992). Parents who are not able to communicate directly with their students' teachers are less likely to report high involvement and are more likely to rely on their children as sources of information about the school.

Parents' social resources include their social networks and the social supports that they have in place to sustain levels of parent involvement. African-American families where parents are married are more likely to be involved than those who are not (Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein, 2008). In addition, Yan (1999) found that African-American students whose families had a wider array of types of social interactions, including parent-school interactions and parent-parent interactions, were more likely to succeed in school.

Logistical constraints, such as employment and time, can also limit levels of parent involvement. In their study of low-income, minority parents, Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) found that time, distance, and day-care availability were important barriers to parent involvement. Similarly, Heymann and Earle (2000) found that low-income parents lacking paid leave and job flexibility had lower levels of parent involvement, especially among those parents whose children were already doing poorly in school. Because job flexibility can be such an important barrier to parent involvement when it interferes with time available to become involved, unemployed parents within low-income communities may exhibit the highest levels of involvement (Castro et al, 2004).

As evidenced above, parents' financial, linguistic, and social resources affect the levels to which they are able to become involved. Financial and logistical restrictions may limit parents' availability to attend school functions or to help their children at home (Heymann and Earle, 2000; Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel, 2001), and parents' social networks can affect their knowledge about school events or how to navigate the schooling system (Yan, 1999). Finally, parents who are unable to communicate with their child's teachers due to language barriers face another obstacle to involvement (Blakely, 1983; Klimes-Dougan et al, 1992; Ji and Koblinsky, 2009). Parents' resources can thus impact how and when they decide to become involved.

Parent Experiences

Parents' personal experiences also impact their levels of involvement. Sometimes, these experiences concern their previous efforts specifically with parent involvement or their personal education history. However, parents may also engage with experiences beyond the school context that continue to affect their levels of involvement.

For example, some authors have found that parents' experiences with racism and discrimination can help to explain their levels of involvement (McKay et al, 2003; Rowley, Helaire, and Banerjee, 2010). Parents with heightened racism awareness were actually more likely to be involved at school and at home than those who exhibited lower levels of racism awareness. Other authors have also supported the idea that African-American parents' experiences are related to their involvement (Diamond and Gomez, 2004; Howard and Reynolds, 2003; Lareau and Horvat, 1999). Lareau and Horvat (1999) found that African-American parents' experiences in a district with historic racism and discrimination heightened parents' levels of distrust towards the schools, often leading to

antagonistic relationships between the school and parents. For example, one mother expressed disappointment in the fact that the school often overlooked holidays celebrating African-American heroes. The teacher and school principal tried to defend the actions of the school, calling the mother “upsetting” (p43), and sought to determine how they could change the mother (Lareau and Horvat, 1999).

In addition to their personal experiences, parents’ perceptions of their children, which are informed by interactions with them, can also help to explain parent’s levels of involvement. Parents who perceive their children to be struggling are more likely to become involved with their children’s schooling. For example, Drummond and Stipek (2004) found that low-SES parents were more likely to help their children if they judged them as struggling in reading. Similarly, Whitmore and Norton-Meier (2008) examined two mothers who were involved in literacy with their children in different ways. These authors noticed that when the mothers saw that their children were struggling academically, they were more likely to intervene on their behalf. Lopez (1993) found that Mexican-American parents were more likely to become involved when their child encouraged involvement with the school. Thus, in addition to parents’ experiences with racism and discrimination in the school setting, parents’ experiences with their children’s schooling needs are an important factor in determining how they take up future involvement opportunities.

Parent Beliefs

Parent beliefs refer to parents’ philosophies or orientations towards becoming involved with their children’s schooling. Parent beliefs include self-efficacy, or the degree to which parents believe that they can impact their child’s academic experiences

and outcomes. Parents also hold beliefs about the value of education, and they hold beliefs about the role of parents in schooling. All of these beliefs impact how parents become involved.

Parental efficacy is one form of parent beliefs that has been positively related to parents' levels of involvement (Pelletier and Brent, 2002; Waanders, Mendez, and Downer, 2007). Parents whose children are in ESL programs are more likely to report lower efficacy beliefs and are less likely to be involved at school (Pelletier and Brent, 2002). Similarly, Waanders, Mendez, and Downer (2007) found that among urban, low-income parents, parent efficacy was positively associated with home involvement, despite neighborhood social disorder or economic distress.

In addition, parents' beliefs about schooling were also related to their levels of involvement. Beliefs about schooling include parents' ideas about the general benefits of education or their aspirations for their children. African-American parents' positive beliefs about school were positively related to student achievement in Kindergarten, and religiosity was found to have a similar effect as highly religious mothers were more likely to become involved (Brody and Flor, 1998; Wu and Qi, 2006).

Finally, some of the literature about parent involvement among minority and low-income groups has examined parents' beliefs about parent involvement itself and the role that parents should play in their child's education. Wong and Hughes (2006) found that White parents are more likely than non-White parents to believe that parents and schools share the responsibility of their child's education. Instead, African-American and Hispanic parents were more likely to believe that academic instruction was the sole domain of the school while discipline and the provision of basic necessities was the responsibility of the home. Similar results were found among Samoan parents, who

identified their responsibilities as focused on their child's spirituality and discipline (Valdez, Dowrick, and Maynard, 2007). Samoan parents viewed the academic domain as the responsibility of teachers, which did not necessarily overlap with teachers' views of parent involvement. Thus, the teachers viewed Samoan parents as less involved than they would have liked.

Cultural Capital and Exclusion

The research on low-income and minority parent beliefs about parent involvement highlights the mismatch between the predominant notion of parent involvement held by schools and the alternative visions of parent involvement held by different groups of parents. The application of cultural capital to parent involvement research offers one explanation for how parents' beliefs, experiences, and resources translate to lower levels of involvement for low-income and minority parents.

Pierre Bourdieu helped to popularize the notion of cultural capital when he used cultural capital to help to explain the outcomes of young French children in the 1960's. Educational sociologist Annette Lareau succinctly summarizes Bourdieu's arguments about cultural capital. According to Lareau, "Bourdieu argues that individuals of different social locations are socialized differently. This socialization provides children, and later adults, with a sense of what is comfortable or what is natural ([Bourdieu] terms this *habitus*). These background experiences also shape the amount and forms of resources (*capital*) individuals inherit and draw upon as they confront various institutional arrangements (*fields*) in the social world" (Lareau, 2011). Rather than being explicitly taught, more often than not cultural capital is accumulated through one's upbringing or interactions with one's group. These are the resources that one then brings to bear when

navigating institutional and social settings, providing one explanation for why families who vary by their social location also vary in their success working with institutions.

In her observational study of 12 poor, working-class, and middle-class children¹ and their families in the United States, Lareau examined the child-rearing practices of families that resulted in the transmission of certain styles of *habitus* from generation to generation. Middle-class parents employed a style of child-rearing that identified and cultivated children's individual talents. Further, these parents enrolled their children in organized activities and engaged in discussions with their children that often resulted in debate. Lareau termed this parenting style "concerted cultivation" (Lareau, 2011). Children raised under this style of parenting often gained a sense of entitlement, which Lareau argued was helpful in institutional settings, such as schools, where middle-class children learned to question adults and address them as relative equals (Lareau, 2011).

While middle-class parents engaged with concerted cultivation, working class and poor parents more often engaged in a parenting style that Lareau termed the "accomplishment of natural growth" (Lareau, 2011). For poor and working class parents, the responsibilities of parenthood did not involve discussions with their children or enrolling their children in various activities. These groups of parents more often drew a boundary between adults and children and were more likely to use directives in their interactions with their children. This resulted in children's sense of constraint, making the

¹ Lareau defines middle-class children as those who live where at least one parent is employed in a position that entails substantial managerial authority or that draws upon highly complex, educationally certified (i.e., college-level) skills. Working-class children are those who live in households in which neither parent is employed in a middle-class position and at least one parent is employed in a position with little or no managerial authority and that does not draw on highly complex, educationally certified skills. Poor children are those who live in households in which parents receive public assistance and do not participate in the labor force on a regular, continuous basis (Lareau, 2011).

parents and children more likely to simply accept the actions of persons of authority despite sometimes internally disagreeing with them (Lareau, 2011).

While neither style of parenting – concerted cultivation or the accomplishment of natural growth – is inherently better than the other, middle-class families more successfully deployed many of the dispositions and habits cultivated by their parents than poor or working class children, especially in official institutional settings like the school (Lareau, 2011). Bourdieu argues that while the varying success of families of differing social locations in school is often attributed to differences in the families’ merits, skills, or educational status, these differences are actually the conversion of “social hierarchies to academic hierarchies.” Thus, schools legitimize and reproduce social inequalities, serving as one of the most *unequalizing* institutions in our society by adapting to and favoring the *habitus* and capital of the upper classes, who have the most power in a society, thereby excluding other families (Bourdieu, 1999).

Lamont and Lareau (1988) summarize three types of indirect exclusion used by institutions to reproduce existing inequalities, all of which can occur in the school setting and in family-school relationships. First, individuals may be excluded from an institution through self-elimination, whereby individuals adjust their aspirations to their perceived chances of success or because they do not feel at ease in specific social settings. This may occur, for example, when parents face frustrations in their interactions with schools and thus decide to concentrate their involvement at home. Some minority parents may choose to become involved by encouraging their children to do well in school and providing moral support for their academic endeavors through conversations at home (Chrispeels and Rivero, 2001). In her interview study of 16 working-class parents, Auerbach (2007) refers to this verbal encouragement as *apoyo* among Latino/a and African-American

mothers, and the author found that some mothers were more successful than others in translating *apoyo* into advocacy on behalf of their children at the school site. Delgado-Gaitan (1994) similarly examined the role of advice, or *consejos*, among Latino families as parents told their children cautionary tales in an effort to encourage better decisions about school.

A second type of exclusion is through overselection, in which individuals with less-valued cultural resources are subjected to the same type of selection as those who are culturally privileged and have to perform equally well despite their cultural handicap. This in fact means that parents with less-valued cultural resources are actually asked to perform *more* than others since they must act at the same level with fewer resources. Middle-class, working-class, and poor African-American parents expressed this view in a study by Howard and Reynolds (2008). As one middle-class African-American parent stated, “Many don’t think we [African-Americans] belong here [in urban communities], so we need to be on top of our kids to do right, and then to make sure we have cultural events for our kids. Make sure that they have access to Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), AP classes, college curriculum. That’s what we need to do” (Howard and Reynolds, 2008, p90). Parents in this study felt that they had to go above and beyond expectations in order to be accepted by their child’s school and the community at large.

Relegation is a third type of exclusion. With relegation, individuals with less-valued cultural resources end up in less desirable positions and thus get less out of their educational investment. Relegation occurs in a study conducted by Abrams and Gibbs (2002), who note how even though one school attempted to involve Latino parents through a bilingual committee and the PTA, the bilingual committee continued to be marginalized by the more White-dominated PTA. In this study, despite the school’s

attempts to increase involvement from their Latino parents, the school administration found itself caught in the middle of a power struggle between the PTA and the bilingual committee. According to the authors, the majority of parents who served in the PTA were already well-integrated into the functioning of the school and the social networks of parents who participated, unlike the bilingual committee which had been more recently established. Thus, the bilingual committee found itself initially marginalized and struggling for equal recognition by the administration (Abrams and Gibbs, 2002).

These types of exclusion illustrate how cultural capital serves as an important symbolic boundary that creates and reproduces class inequalities. Dominant groups are able to maintain their legitimacy through oppositions such as distinguished/vulgar, aesthetic/practical, and pure/impure, and they do so in a manner that conceals “the power relations that are the basis of its force” (Lamont and Molnar, 2002, p172). This results in “symbolic violence” that reproduces class inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

However, schools are not homogenous or static entities. Although these studies provide ample evidence to suggest that schools operate consistently to discourage low-income and minority parents’ involvement (Abrams and Gibbs, 2002; Bernhard, Freire, Pacini-Ketchabaw, and Villanueva, 1998; Cooper and Christie, 2005; Lareau, 1987; Lareau and Horvat, 1999; Quijoch and Daoud, 2006; Useem, 1992), there is also evidence that schools have successfully sought to change this dynamic by acknowledging and activating parents’ existing forms of cultural capital.

Schools and Boundary Crossing

Although bridging the home and school spheres can be difficult, there is evidence that some schools have succeeded with crossing the boundaries between home and school

(Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha, 2001). The research on schools' and teachers' relationships with parent involvement makes it clear that school policies and behaviors can have an important impact on promoting parent involvement and that these behaviors can change in response to parents' and students' needs. Thus, despite the consistency of many of these boundaries and their resulting exclusion, boundary crossing is possible, and the permeability, stability and *instability* of boundaries has been underexplored in the research literature.

Theoretical and research literature about boundaries suggests two ways that boundaries can be crossed – through boundary spanners and through boundary objects. Boundary spanners are individuals who facilitate the permeability of boundaries or are able to operate in contexts across boundaries (Mitchell, 2009). Similarly, boundary objects, which may be material or conceptual objects, also facilitate communication across boundaries (Star and Griesemer, 1989). Using concepts such as boundary spanners and boundary objects allows boundaries to serve as interfaces that facilitate knowledge production, viewing boundaries not only for “separation and exclusion, but also for communication, exchange, bridging, and inclusion” (Lamont and Molnar, 2002, p 181).

Mitchell (2009) explains the importance of boundary spanners, stating that historically “many of the boundaries between parents and schools are perceived as walls rather than as places to interact and learn” (Mitchell, 2009, p17). She continues, however, offering that “the decisions that parents make about becoming more involved in education are highly influenced by schools...[so] school principals, teachers, administrators, and others who work with parents must embrace the role of *boundary spanner*, learning how to build relationships that hover at the peripheries between home, school, and community” (Mitchell, 2009, p20-21)

One way that teachers and administrators may become boundary spanners is by including minority representatives in their faculty and leadership. For example, Shah (2009) found that Latino representation in school leadership was related to the number of Latino parents who participated at the school. In this case, the hypothesis suggested that when parents saw themselves reflected in school leadership, they were more likely to feel empowered and to become involved. Similarly, Latino representation on school councils was indirectly related to student achievement through an increase in teachers' cultural and community awareness and an increase in schools' efforts to increase parent involvement (Marschall, 2006). This may indicate that individuals from minority or low-income communities who serve within the school can serve as boundary spanners that help to connect teachers and parents across the home and school contexts.

Boundary spanning is not limited to low-income and minority school staff, however. Studies have found that individual school personnel's behaviors and efforts to involve parents, regardless of their SES or racial background, can positively impact levels of parent involvement. Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) found that school personnel's expectations and schools' policy and practices were related to African-American parents' levels of involvement, and other studies have found that teachers who make specific requests for help from parents were more likely to have parents who thought that involvement was important (Drummond and Stipek, 2007). In addition, in some low-income schools, teacher invitations were more important to spur parent involvement than parents' self-efficacy or their resources (Anderson and Minke, 2007). Feuerstein (2000) argued that teacher invitations for involvement could increase the rate of parent volunteerism and PTO participation. These results suggest that teachers have

the ability to impact levels of parent involvement by inviting parents to cross the boundaries between home and school.

Boundary objects are another tool that schools and parents can use to cross boundaries and facilitate cooperation. In their study of the creation of a natural history museum, Star and Griesemer (1989) viewed boundary objects as necessary components for cooperation across stakeholder groups interested in creating the museum. One type of boundary object identified by Star and Griesemer that is relevant to parent involvement is an ideal type, such as a diagram or other description, which in fact does not accurately describe the details of any one thing, but a conglomeration of ideals for the object. For example, a school's family handbook might serve as a boundary object in thinking about parent involvement at schools. These handbooks often include policies for students and families (e.g., how a parent should sign in to the school, schedules for parent-teacher conferences, etc.) that communicate the school's ideal expectations for parent involvement. This handbook could help to bridge the school and home contexts by beginning to align expectations for parent involvement.

A second type of boundary object identified by Star and Griesemer (1989) that is applicable to parent involvement occurs with coincident boundaries where common objects share the same boundaries but have different internal contents. Different groups are able to work independently of each other within a shared space, and they are able to use the shared space as a common reference point. For example, the school building may serve as a coincident boundary object, as it is a common boundary drawn around schooling that is understood by both parents and teachers as a school building, even though the different groups might have differing understandings of and goals for what occurs inside of the building. Coincident boundaries have the advantage of allowing for

the resolution of different goals, thus allowing for the movement of families and school staff towards parallel goals (e.g., academic success for teachers and student social development for parents) in a common space.

Finally, Star and Griesemer (1989) identified standardized forms as another type of object. Standardized forms standardize methods of communication across dispersed workgroups. Report cards, daily behavior reports, and standardized newsletters are all examples of this type of boundary object in family-school relations. The benefit of this type of boundary object is that standardization allows for the deletion of local uncertainties (e.g., whether one teacher's report card looks like another teacher's report card) in communication with the other group (i.e., parents).

Boundaries and exclusion may be a necessary element of family-school relations, but the relationship need not be antagonistic if the boundaries between groups offer an opportunity for cooperation and knowledge-making, as described by Star and her colleagues. We may in fact see this kind of activity at schools with strong parent involvement practices that seek to bridge the boundaries between families and the school.

This case study seeks to understand one such school, a K-8 school that has been identified by its community as employing strong parent involvement practices. This school sees many of the dynamics that create an environment ripe for moments of exclusion – an institutionalized middle-class teaching staff and a poor and working-class minority student population – yet this school was identified by community leaders as involving parents well. One might expect that the boundaries at this school might be more permeable than at other schools. While the school did engage in many attempts to bring the home and school spheres together through boundary spanners and boundary

objects, the boundaries between home and school remained stable and moments of exclusion persisted. The next chapter describes the methods used to study this school and is followed by the results of the case study, which illustrate the stability of home and school boundaries despite efforts to cross them.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODS

This case study of Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School relies heavily on ethnographic methods for four reasons. First, ethnographic methods will provide a rich, full description of one school that successfully involves low-income, African-American parents, creating a nuanced and comprehensive picture of this school's efforts to involve parents. Second, in addition to describing the school's efforts to involve parents, this study seeks to understand the *process* by which parent involvement events and actions take place (Maxwell, 2013). This necessitates not only observation of the events and actions themselves, but also of planning for parent involvement events, as well as understanding how and why parents decide to engage with certain parent involvement events and activities. Third, just as it is important to observe the enactment of various events and activities, it is also essential to understand the meaning that parents, teachers, and administrators ascribe to various parent involvement events and activities. The focus on participants' perspectives is especially important because low-income, African-American parents have historically been marginalized. Including the voice of this group allows for a better understanding of how these perspectives are related to participants' engagement with parent involvement activities (Maxwell, 2013).

Finally, this case study highlights the importance of context in understanding the case study site. This school and its parents, teachers, and administrators do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, schools operate within a particular neighborhood or community that has a

specific relationship with that school. They operate within specific district, city, and state level politics. They vary in the composition of their student body, as well as in the composition of their teaching and administrative staff, and these things shift over time. Students matriculate – and with them – their parents, and staff turnover contributes to changes in teaching and administrative staffs. Schools also vary in their location, their urbanicity, and in their roots in the local community. They vary in their access to resources, in their academic offerings, and in their organizational structure. And when it comes to parent involvement, schools also vary in their beliefs about parents, in their commitment to involving parents, and in the methods they use to involve parents. These contextual factors instrumentally shape schools’ efforts to involve low-income, African-American parents, and this case study can help to elucidate how context acts upon one school’s efforts to involve parents.

Site Selection

In deciding which school to select for my case study, I wanted to study a school with strong parent involvement practices that served a student population composed primarily of low-income, African-American students. These criteria were important because I wanted to ensure that high levels of parent involvement at the school reflected high levels of involvement among low-income, African-American parents in particular. Of course, schools with more diverse student populations may successfully involve parents; however, parent involvement among low-income, African-American parents at these schools may be aggregated or conflated with the involvement of other groups of parents, consequently making our understanding of successful parent involvement among low-income, African-American parents in particular more difficult.

In addition to ensuring that the student population was mostly African-American and low-income, I also chose to focus specifically on studying parent involvement at a school that had elementary grades. Research suggests that parent involvement declines as students get older (Dauber and Epstein, 1993; Izzo et al, 1999; Stevenson and Baker, 1987). Focusing specifically on a school that includes the elementary grades, when parents are more likely to be active participants, ensures a more robust study of parent involvement.

Finally, my focus on a school with strong parent involvement practices comes from wanting to better understand schools that successfully address the fact that low-income and African-American parents are less likely to be involved. Schools with a large proportion of low-income, African-American families are often perceived as facing special challenges with parent involvement that differ from more diverse school settings. This deficit-based approach deserves to be challenged, so I chose to study a site with a large proportion of low-income, African-American families that has successfully involved parents.

Context

I decided to locate this case study in New Orleans, Louisiana, because schools in New Orleans are highly segregated, meaning that the majority of the public schools in the city serve predominantly low-income and African-American students. New Orleans is a medium-sized city in southern Louisiana nearby the Gulf of Mexico. In 2004, the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) oversaw a system with approximately 65,000 students. However, in 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the area, forcing a shift in the demographics and in the educational landscape of New Orleans. Immediately following Hurricane Katrina,

local and state officials passed Act 35, which provided the flexibility to place most of the largely failing Orleans Parish Public School System into the Recovery School District (RSD), a state-run school district, which now oversees over 65 schools in Orleans Parish.²

Although the RSD had already been in existence for two years prior to Hurricane Katrina, it expanded rapidly after the hurricane. The RSD was established by the Louisiana legislature in 2003, and it was designed to “recover” failing schools in Louisiana by providing more autonomy coupled with stronger accountability by Louisiana’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), which the legislation tasked with overseeing the RSD. Although BESE oversees schools across Louisiana (RSD-LA), the vast majority of RSD schools are now located in New Orleans (RSD-NO). In New Orleans, the RSD sought to promote the proliferation of charter schools because the RSD felt that charter operators could more successfully recover failing schools than the state-run school district. Some of these charter schools, known as Type 2 charter schools, were started independently of existing schools while others, known as Type 5 charter schools, began as takeovers of existing schools.

Although most New Orleans schools were placed under the auspices of the RSD-NO, the city also had some schools remain under the purview of OPSB. In 2013-2014, OPSB had 5 direct-run schools and 12 charter schools. Because the RSD-NO took over New Orleans’ failing schools in 2005, all of the schools remaining under OPSB have demonstrated high performance. Many of these schools are magnet schools, and some implement selective admissions processes.

² In Louisiana, counties are referred to as parishes. Often, the school district overlaps with the parish. The Orleans Parish School Board governs the school district, which covers the geographic area of Orleans Parish, which only consists of New Orleans.

In 2012-2013, 88% of the schools in New Orleans – RSD-NO and OPSB combined – were charter schools, and the number has continued to grow. During the 2013-2014 academic year, 85% of students in New Orleans attended charter schools, the highest percentage in the nation (Dreilinger, 2013). In 2012, the RSD announced that it would convert its remaining traditional, or direct-run, schools in New Orleans to charter schools. RSD-NO thus became the nation’s first all-charter school district in September 2014. (See Table 1 for a comparison of the demographics and performance of RSD-NO and OPSB schools.)

Table 1. Demographic and performance data for RSD and OPSB (2013-2014)		
	RSD	OPSB
Total # Schools	63	21
# Direct-run schools (%)	0%	33%
# Charter schools (%)	100%	67%
Total # Students	33,079	13,352
# Students Free- and Reduced-Lunch (%)	29,530 (89.3%)	8,826 (66.1%)
# Students African-American (%)	29,550 (89.3%)	9,470 (70.9%)
District Performance Scores (out of 150)/Letter Grade	71.2/C	109.2/A

The unique educational context of New Orleans provides an exciting backdrop to explore the concept of parent involvement, particularly given the city’s open enrollment policies and the large proportion of charter schools in the city. Charter schools are typically known for having higher rates of parent involvement because parents who enroll their students in charter schools tend to be more proactive and because charter schools tend to be more selective about the students who they enroll. In New Orleans, however,

the large number of charter schools means that charter schools serve the broader population and thus do not differ significantly from their traditional public school counterparts. Further, the open enrollment policies in the city promise that a family can apply to attend a school anywhere in the city, creating a much more competitive environment among schools, which feel the pressure to attract students to their site.

Conducting a case study within a system of charter schools is also interesting because charter schools are known for their school site autonomy and innovation. This potentially opens the door for non-traditional parent involvement practices. In addition, the greater autonomy given to each school means that contextual factors become particularly important for understanding school efforts for involving parents. High levels of parent involvement at a given school in New Orleans are therefore likely more attributable to the characteristics and practices of the school itself, rather than its status as a charter or a traditional school.

Surveying the Community

Based upon the research literature and the intent of my case study, I sought to identify a site that met the following criteria:

- Over 85% of the student body was African-American;
- Over 85% of the student body qualified for free- and reduced-lunch;
- The school included elementary (K-5) grades; and
- The school had strong parent involvement practices.

In order to identify schools meeting these criteria, I decided to survey community organizations that had a good sense of the educational landscape in New Orleans. My questions for the community organizations focused primarily on schools' parent

involvement practices because students’ demographic data could be determined using data from the Louisiana Department of Education.

I asked leaders at each of seven community organizations the following question: In your opinion, which elementary schools in New Orleans successfully involve parents? These seven organizations represented a cross-section of government agencies, education advocacy organizations, civic organizations, and faith-based organizations that were likely to be knowledgeable about a wide range of schools in New Orleans. These organizations were highly respected and locally based, representing diverse interests and neighborhoods. (See Table 2 for a summary of community organization responses.)

Table 2. Responses from Community Organizations			
Organization	Organization Type	Recommended Schools	Charter Management Organization/District
ChildrenFirst, New Orleans City Director	Advocacy	Edna Brewer Charter School	Weshell Charter Schools/RSD-NO
		Southlake Charter School	OPSB Charter
		Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School	Central Community Charter School Board/RSD-NO
		New Orleans Community School	New Orleans Community School, Inc./RSD-NO
		Alan Olson Elementary	OPSB Charter
Recovery School District-New Orleans, Assistant Superintendent of Portfolio	Government	Orleans College and Career Prep	Orleans College and Career Prep/RSD-NO
		Booker T. Washington Elementary	APlus Schools/RSD-NO

Louisiana Public Charter Schools Association, Policy Director	Support/Advocacy	Orleans College and Career Prep Malcolm X Health and Sciences Charter Multiple schools	Orleans College and Career Prep/RSD-NO Malcolm X Community/RSD-NO Weshell Charter Schools/RSD-NO
Orleans Parish Education Outreach, Executive Director and Policy Analyst	Civic	Malcolm X Health and Sciences Charter Louis Armstrong Charter School Pascal Charter School Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School	Malcolm X Community/RSD-NO Weshell Charter Schools/RSD-NO OPSB Charter Central Community Charter School Board/RSD-NO
Orleans Schools Start-Up, Chief External Relations Partner	Research/Advocacy	Maya Angelou Community School Phoenix Academy Success Academy	APlus Schools/RSD-NO Phoenix Academy/RSD-NO University Prep Academies/RSD-NO
Simmons Institute/Urban League, Research Director	Research/Civic	New Orleans Community School Alan Olson Elementary Anderson Charter School South Louisiana Elementary DaVinci Elementary School	New Orleans Community School, Inc./RSD-NO OPSB Charter OPSB Charter OPSB OPSB

New Orleans Faith Coalition, Community Organizer	Faith-based	Michael Rhodes Charter School	APlus Schools/RSD-NO
		Anderson Charter School	OPSB Charter
		Phoenix Academy	Phoenix Academy/RSD-NO

Several of the recommended schools did not meet the criteria for case study site selection because they served students beyond eighth grade or because their student populations were not predominantly low-income and African-American. For example, the proportions of African-American students at Alan Olson Elementary, New Orleans Community School, and Anderson Charter School were below 60%, and the proportions of students qualifying for free- or reduced-lunch at these schools were below 65%. Some recommenders also noted that some of their recommendations, schools like Orleans College and Career Prep and APlus Schools, had historically struggled with parent involvement but were trying to improve their parent involvement efforts, so they would not yet describe those schools as successful with parent involvement.

The following schools did meet the criteria for case study sites and had multiple, strong recommendations:

- Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School (Central Community Charter School Board)
- Louis Armstrong Charter School (Weshell Charter Schools)
- Malcolm X Health and Sciences (Malcolm X Community)
- Phoenix Academy (Phoenix Academy)

Starting with this list of nominated schools meeting the case study site criteria, I then spoke with the contacts at Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School and Louis

Armstrong Charter School. These schools were particularly interesting because recommenders noted that in addition to the more traditional and expected forms of parent involvement, such as parent-teacher communication or PTA, these two schools made additional efforts to ensure that they were well integrated into the broader neighborhood as well, such as through strong extracurricular programs sponsored by community members or through collaborations with their local libraries or community centers.

I interviewed contacts at each school to investigate their responses to the following questions:

1. How important is parent involvement at this school?
2. What does the school do to involve parents?
3. Do parents participate in opportunities for involvement?

The first question examined the importance that the schools placed on parent involvement, which reflected the school staff's beliefs about the importance of parent involvement and its attitude towards parents.

Similarly, the second question, which examined the school's efforts to offer parent involvement activities, also reflected the school staff's beliefs about parent involvement, but it dug deeper than the first question by asking for evidence of the school's willingness to act upon their professed opinion that parent involvement is a priority. Thus, the second question sought to understand how the school actualized its response to the first question. Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School and Louis Armstrong Charter School both indicated that they offered a wide variety of parent involvement activities and that they placed strong emphasis on working with their parents. At the most basic level, this was evidenced by the fact that each school had a staff position specifically dedicated to working with parents and the wider community.

The last question asked to each contact directly investigated parents' rates of participation with their child's schooling, an effort to determine whether the school's public reputation for high levels of parent involvement was actually reflected in their levels of involvement at school events. Both contacts mentioned that they believed that the term parent involvement encompassed a wide range of activities, and the contacts further indicated that a high level of parent involvement could operate across a wide variety of parent involvement activities. Both contacts indicated that the vast majority of their parents participated in at least one parent involvement activity during the year.

Given the two schools' responses to the three questions – providing evidence that parent involvement was a school priority, that each school offered a variety of opportunities for involvement, and that parents were taking advantage of those opportunities for involvement – these two schools demonstrated the characteristics of schools with high rates of parent involvement among low-income, African-American parents. I ultimately chose Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School as the case study site because, in addition to meeting the four above-mentioned inclusion criteria, the staff at this site was more open to participating in this study, as demonstrated through responsive communication and regular invitations to school events.

Participant Observation

At its core, ethnography is about fully engrossing oneself in a phenomenon in order to understand it. According to Anderson-Levitt (2006), “ethnographers cannot help but participate in the scene to some degree. Discovering...is partly a matter of learning by doing.” During the first phase of data collection at Roosevelt, as a researcher I had been having some difficulty gaining access to the school site and breaking into the school

staff's circle. Even though Ms. Banks, the Director of Community Integration, was very welcoming to me, the opportunities to interact with other school staff felt unnatural and forced.

I met with Ms. Banks about these challenges in May 2013. At that time, Ms. Banks and I discussed ways that I could become more ingrained in the school's day-to-day activities. She also expressed some frustration around limited capacity when it came to organizing parent involvement, so she suggested that I volunteer as a parent liaison staff member. While there are challenges to joining the staff of a case under research, seizing this opportunity seemed like a prime tactic to accomplish my research goals.

As parent liaison, we agreed that my work would fall into three major buckets. First, I would staff the parent room on Tuesdays and Thursdays during school hours. Our hope was that parents would be able to drop in if they were visiting the school in order to be connected within involvement opportunities at the school or to be connected with services in the community. My second responsibility as parent liaison was to connect parents with volunteer opportunities. This involved surveying staff members about their volunteer needs and preferences and then training parents and coordinating parent schedules with available volunteer opportunities. Finally, I worked in a support role surrounding the logistics of various parent involvement activities at the school, including designing and distributing fliers for parent events, making copies for parent events, or staffing sign-in tables at parent events. There were several other initiatives that Ms. Banks and I talked about getting off the ground at Roosevelt. However, these were met with mixed success, as will be discussed in future chapters.

Serving as parent liaison at Roosevelt had several advantages. As parent liaison, I had greater access to the study site and participants (Yin, 2009). In the case of this study,

this meant more regular access to Roosevelt's staff and parents, opening the door for more natural interactions with school staff and parents who perhaps trusted me more as a result of my position (Riemer, 1977). Serving as parent liaison also afforded me "insider" status, providing me with the ability to understand the school from the viewpoint of someone "inside" the case study rather than external to it (Yin, 2009). Insider status opened up knowledge that might otherwise be hidden to an outsider, which meant that I began to comprehend situations from the perspective of a school staff member or volunteer (Becker, 1958). For example, as an insider, I could better appreciate the struggles for funding for parent involvement activities or the frustrations that accompanied last-minute decisions made by school staff or administration about schedule or policy changes.

Although participant observation can begin to go into the realm of design research, my primary focus as parent liaison was to implement the school's agenda around parent involvement. That being said, I did have some opportunities to manipulate minor events that benefitted my research purpose. For example, I originally suggested the idea of teacher and parent surveys to Ms. Banks in Spring 2013 because I knew that these surveys could provide the perspective of a wider range of individuals that might not be accessible solely through observation or interviews. Ms. Banks liked the idea of a survey, so she and I co-designed a survey. We launched a comprehensive survey in May 2014 whose results are discussed in later chapters. Although Roosevelt might not have distributed a survey to parents had I not served as parent liaison, Yin (2009) suggests that minor manipulation is actually an asset of active participation in case study research. These surveys accomplished the dual purpose of providing another data source for my case study and providing information for Roosevelt to adapt its parent involvement programming in the future.

Finally, another asset of my service as parent liaison is that it allowed me to fulfill a need for the school while simultaneously furthering my research. Roosevelt had been extremely generous in opening its doors to me, and volunteering with them was one way to show my appreciation.

Just as there were several advantages to my work as parent liaison, there were also challenges that I had to acknowledge and work to mitigate. Working as parent liaison meant additional time with Roosevelt, including time that wasn't always dedicated specifically to data collection or analysis. Thus, one challenge of operating as a participant observer was the potential to invest too much time in the role of active participant at the expense of managing the observer/research role, in which field notes must be elaborated, data must be analyzed, and memos must be written (Riemer, 1977; Yin, 2009). I managed my time by working to consistently process and prepare my data. I implemented a database system to keep track of data, and I used time at the school when parents were not present to collect additional data, elaborate field notes, analyze data, or write memos.

Another challenge in working as parent liaison was protecting against bias due to my potential personal investment as a staff member at Roosevelt. Operating as an active participant at Roosevelt meant that I would have less ability to work as an external, neutral observer. As I worked as parent liaison, there was always the danger that I could become heavily invested in the organization to the point of leading to selective perception and ignoring facts about the school that were important for the purposes of the study (Riemer, 1977). Along these same lines, it was important to not overly intervene within the research setting. Yin (2009) suggests that there are a wide variety of roles that an ethnographer can take, including "serving as a staff member in an organizational setting and being a key decision maker in an organizational setting." Studies where the researchers served as a

staff member of a school or school district are not unprecedented (Horn and Little, 2010; Hubbard, Mehan, and Stein, 2006), and while there are certain protections that should take place in order to protect the integrity of the study, most researchers have acknowledged that the benefits outweighed the challenges.

To address challenges with bias and intervener status, I closely documented my personal participation in all observations, interviews, and other forms of data collection. I also recorded my interactions with school staff and parents as a parent liaison and as a researcher. Close documentation of my role allowed me to analyze instances where I may have had more or less influence. I also focused on collecting data from a wide range of sources, making a concerted effort to observe parent involvement opportunities in which I did not play as active a role, including at Roosevelt Family Association meetings, events like Math and Family Literacy Night or the school's Cook-Off, or school staff planning meetings for parent involvement events. I also supplemented my observations with school staff and parent interviews and other data that I collected on parent liaison days, including photographs, email archives, and journal entries (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). This variety of data sources provided different perspectives on similar phenomena and allowed me to analyze data for events and activities that I wasn't directly involved in planning or creating.

Data Collection

Table 3 provides an overview of three data collection phases for this case study. The first phase of my study focused on high-level document collection and observations with some initial interviews with key informants to better understand the landscape at Roosevelt and some of the larger dynamics at play. Data from this phase was used to

develop more in-depth interview protocols and to begin to illuminate issues that might be interesting to explore. Phase 2 involved more in-depth data collection with more frequent observations and in-depth interviews with a wider range of participants. Based upon data collected in the second phase, I composed and issued surveys to the parents, teachers, and administrators at Roosevelt. These surveys provided further insight into the case study schools from a larger audience and across a wider variety of topics. Finally, using the results from the school survey and from earlier data collection, during the final phase of the study I completed qualitative data collection and addressed any outstanding questions.

Table 3. Data Collection and Analyses Phases		
	Data Collection/Analyses	Calendar
Phase 1	High-level qualitative data collection from case study schools (i.e., document collection, observations, interviews)	9 months (Sept 2012-May 2013)
Phase 2	Continued more qualitative data collection from Roosevelt (i.e., document collection, observations, interviews) Initial qualitative data reviews	9 months (June 2013-Mar 2014)
Phase 3	Completed qualitative data collection Final qualitative data analyses Surveyed Roosevelt Analyzed survey data from case study school	2+ months (Apr 2014-June 2014)

Direct observations

Direct observations allowed me the opportunity to examine interactions between various participants in their typical environment. I conducted observations of scheduled school events for parents, including back-to-school nights, festivals, and awards ceremonies. I also observed parent-teacher conferences and Roosevelt Family Association meetings. The frequency of these observations depended upon the frequency of the events and meetings at the school and my availability to attend them. Formally recorded direct

observations ranged from 2-8 times per month depending upon the school’s schedule. (See Table 4 for a summary of the events observed.) For events that I was unable to attend, I relied on a recap of the events from the Director of Community Integration or from parents.

Month	Number of Recorded Observations	Types of Events
August	4	Prekindergarten and Kindergarten orientations, after-school program sign-ups, community meeting to discuss programs for pregnant mothers at Roosevelt
September	3	Volunteer orientation for parents, Father’s Group meetings
October	7	Roosevelt Family Association planning meetings, check-ins with Ms. Banks, working as parent liaison (i.e., making parent phone calls, recruiting volunteers, conversations with teachers)
November	8	Father’s Group meetings, Report Card conferences, Roosevelt Family Association Meeting, working as parent liaison
December	2	Community meeting about early childhood, check-in with Ms. Banks
January	6	Father’s Group meeting, check-in with Ms. Banks, working as parent liaison
February	7	NBA All-Star Father’s Group meeting, Roosevelt Family Association meeting, working as parent liaison
March	3	Community meeting about early childhood, Math and Literacy Night, working as parent liaison
April	2	Staff meeting about standardized testing, working as parent liaison
May	6	Roosevelt Washington DC reception, Father’s Group meeting, graduation ceremonies

Besides observations of specific parent involvement events, I conducted other observations during school or after school hours, including during student arrival and dismissal times, during scheduled parent meetings during the day, and at odd times during the day, especially in the front office of the school because that area was where most parents visiting the school arrived. Some of these instances provided an opportunity to observe less structured interactions with parents. These observations required regular jottings and the conversion of those jottings into field notes for later analyses (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995).

It should be noted that in addition to those events formally recorded, I regularly spent Tuesdays and Thursdays at Roosevelt Charter School in my capacity as parent liaison. Often, my presence at the school was met with a significant amount of time that did not require substantial work as parent liaison. For example, there might be no parent events or parent volunteers scheduled for the day. On these days, I focused my work on other types of data collection (e.g., interviews, pictures), data organization and analysis (e.g., fieldnote elaboration, database entry, coding), or on other personal work. Although my presence at the school on these days was not always fruitful for the purposes of data collection, my regular presence at the school did allow me to see the day-to-day workings of the school and to develop relationships and legitimacy with the school staff who began to recognize me as a regular volunteer staff member.

Interviews

I conducted three types of semi-structured interviews that varied according to the participants – administrator interviews, teacher interviews, and parent interviews. Interviews were intended to provide a sense of the parent involvement activities offered by

the school that were not captured through observations. They also provided insight into the participants' perspectives of the school's efforts to involve parents and offered explanations for why parents vary in their involvement.

Administrator Interviews. I interviewed Principal Sean Byrd and Assistant Principal Alisa Scribo – the two administrators who led Roosevelt Charter School – together in November 2012 during Phase 1 of the study. Given the administrators' time constraints, a co-interview was the most feasible interview option. Because I was particularly interested in the role of the school in explaining variation in African-American parents' involvement, interviews with school administrators included questions that addressed the following areas: 1) defining parent involvement (e.g., *What do you see as the role of parents when it comes to their children's education?*), 2) characterizing parent involvement at Roosevelt in particular (e.g., *How would you characterize parent involvement at Roosevelt? Do you think that Roosevelt is good at getting parents involved? Are all parents involved at the same level, or are there some more involved than others?*); and 3) explaining parent involvement at Roosevelt (e.g., *What opportunities does Roosevelt offer for involvement? Are there any formal school policies for teachers of for parents around parent involvement at Roosevelt? What makes your school different from others when it comes to Roosevelt and parent involvement?*). The interview protocol also asked administrators general personal information and to help to identify other interesting interviewees. (See Appendix A for the Administrator Interview Protocol.)

Teacher Interviews. In addition to the two principals, I also interviewed sixteen teachers across different grade levels and levels of experience and three school staff members who were not teachers but who worked regularly with parents. The variety of teacher interviews was important in order to illuminate how school efforts to involve

parents might vary from classroom to classroom according to the teacher. Six teachers had been teaching more than five years, while the remainder had fewer than five years of experience. Three teachers taught middle school (6th-8th), three teachers taught upper elementary grades (3rd-5th), and nine teachers taught the early elementary grades (PK-2nd). One teacher – the garden teacher – taught all grades, and the school social workers also worked with students across all grades. (Table 5 provides a summary of all interviewed teachers and school staff members.)

Teacher	Grade Level/Subject	Years of Experience	Ethnicity	Notes
Kayla Stinson	PK	2	African-American	Alternative certification program
Susan Calder	K	20+	African-American	Has taught K, 3 rd , and 6 th at a variety of schools
Cassandra Reynolds	K	8+	African-American	Taught at private and other public schools; 2 nd -career teacher
Nicole Davis	1 st	10	African-American	Dismissed from Roosevelt in March
Kristen Mayhew	1 st	4	White	Alternative certification program
Caroline Prentice	1 st	2	White	Alternative certification program
Samantha Simiyu	2 nd	4	African-American	Alternative certification program
Bianca Smith	2 nd	1	White	
Jennifer Taylor	2 nd	4	White	
Shea Rodrick	3 rd /Math	4	African-American	Worked one year as a school administrator
Trevor Jameson	3 rd and 4 th /Social	7	African-	Includes three

	Studies		American	years teaching at university level
Erin O'Shaugnessy	4 th /English-Language Arts	16	White	Alternative certification program, taught in CT as well as LA
Alana Boudreaux	6 th /Math	28	African-American	Prior experience working in private and other public schools
Matt Alvarez	7 th and 8 th /Science	3	Hispanic	Entered teaching profession via Troops to Teachers, formerly worked with group homes
John Trainor	8 th	1	White	Alternative certification program; teaching is 4 th or 5 th career
Rachel Devereaux	Garden	2	White	Americorps position
Elizabeth Banks	Director of Community Integration	4	White	My main point of contact
Maria Patin	Community Social Worker	N/A	Hispanic	Based at Roosevelt, but funded through Central Community organization
Nancy Williams	School Social Worker	N/A	African-American	School-based and school-funded social worker

Interviews with teachers included questions that examined three areas, similar to those in the administrator protocols: 1) teachers' beliefs about parent involvement (e.g., *What do you see as the role of parents when it comes to their children's education? How*

would you describe your philosophy around parent involvement?); 2) characterizing parent involvement in the classroom (e.g., *Can you describe a typical day for you, and how are parents involved or not involved in that day? How are parents involved in your classroom? Can you give me an examples of a really positive/negative experience that you've had with a parent and their involvement?*); and 3) characterizing parent involvement at Roosevelt (e.g., *How would you characterize parent involvement at Roosevelt? What does Roosevelt do to involve parents? Would you like to see any changes at the school level when it comes to opportunities for parent involvement?*). I also asked teachers to help me to identify parents who they thought would make interesting interviewees. (See Appendix B for the Teacher Interview Protocol.)

Parent Interviews. In order to acquire a broad range of points of view, I attempted to interview a cross-representation of parents across the following categories:

- Parents who varied in their rates of parent involvement: Even at a school with high rates of parent involvement, teachers, administrators, and parents were still likely to identify parents who are more or less involved. Although my intention was originally to interview both parents who were highly involved and those that were less involved in the school, interviewing parents who were uninvolved proved to be challenging, largely because they were difficult to identify since I was located at the school and because most often these parents were identified as difficult to contact, meaning that the same challenges that teachers faced in contacting them were also true for me. Despite this challenge, I was able to capture a spectrum of parents who more or less involved, though I would have preferred to capture a more complete picture of uninvolved parents.

- Parents whose students varied across grade levels: Although all parents in this study had students in elementary school, research suggests that rates and types of parent involvement can vary with students' age, even within an elementary school (Stevenson and Baker, 1987; Dauber and Epstein, 1993; Izzo et al, 1999). I thus wanted to examine parents with children whose ages varied in order to capture this phenomenon – or the lack of this phenomenon – at the school site.
- Parents whose students were in different teachers' classrooms: Because teacher practices varied from classroom to classroom, so too did parent involvement practices. For example, the Kindergarten teachers regularly shared newsletters with their students' parents, and the second grade teachers sent invitations to parents inviting them to a Black History Month performance by the second graders. These actions in different classrooms can lead to different types of parent involvement. Thus, describing how parents engaged with different teachers and the types of parent involvement practices that they use was important.

I interviewed seventeen parents, three of which were fathers and one of which was a grandmother. Their children spanned across grade levels, and parents were recommended across a spectrum of involvement. Approximately half of the interviews were conducted via phone while the others were conducted in person. Phone interviews lasted approximately 10-15 minutes. In-person interviews were much longer, ranging from 30-60 minutes. (See Appendices C and D for the phone and in-person Parent Interview Protocols.)

Table 6. Parent Interviewees				
Parent	Children's Grade Levels	Ethnicity	Recommended By	Notes
Jesus Aldana	K, 8 th	Hispanic	Mr. Trainor	Phone interview
Anne Black	3 rd , 6 th	African-American	Me, Ms. Rodrick	In-Person interview
Tina Carter	5 th	African-American	Ms. Boudreaux	Phone interview
Angela Castillo	K	Hispanic	Mrs. Reynolds	Phone interview
Geneva Earl	2 nd , 4 th , 6 th	African-American	Me, Ms. Davis, Ms. Devereaux, and Ms. Boudreaux	In-person interview
Charity Fiore	3 rd , 4 th , 7 th	African-American	Mr. Alvarez	Phone interview
Penny Jefferson	5 th	African-American	Me	Phone interview
Sheana Kilroy	K	African-American	Me, Mrs. Reynolds	In-Person interview
Aaron Manship	3 rd , 5 th	African-American	Me, Mrs. Calder	In-Person interview
Renee McAllister	2 nd , 5 th	African-American	Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Calder	Grandmother, Phone interview
Bridget Mitre	2 nd , 4 th	African-American	Ms. Smith	Phone interview
Monika Rotolo and Audrey Jenkins	PK	African-American	Me	Interviewed parents together, in-person interview
Daniela Salcedo	PK, K, 1	Hispanic	Me	Phone interview
Monae Simmons	2 nd , 8 th	African-American	Ms. Simiyu, Ms. Banks	Phone interview
Carl and Aretha Yost	PK, 2 nd , 3 rd , 5 th	African-American	Me, Mrs. Taylor	Individual interviews with each parent

Interviews with parents included questions that addressed the following three areas: (1) how parents define parent involvement (e.g., *How do you define parent involvement? What kinds of things do you do to get your child ready for school and for learning? Which events at Roosevelt have you attended this year? What kinds of things do you do outside of school to support your child's learning?*); (2) factors affecting parents'

involvement (e.g., *How would you describe your own educational experience and your own parents' involvement? Do you have any help with your children? What challenges – if any – have you faced with your involvement at Roosevelt?*); and (3) teachers' and school staff's practices to involve parents (e.g., *Do you feel welcome at Roosevelt? What does your school do, if anything, to get parents involved in the school? Do you think some teachers are better at getting parents involved than others?*).

Documentation

Schools produce a large number of documents for various purposes that provide a record of school efforts around parent involvement. Document collection for this study included Roosevelt's regular communication among school staff and with parents through frequently distributed flyers, emails, or newsletters. (See Figure 1 for examples of document used by Roosevelt for parent involvement.) These documents provided evidence of the schools' practices around parent involvement, including information about the parent involvement activities themselves, as well as the forms in which the school chose to communicate about these activities to parents. Documentation also provided evidence of how school administrators and staff organized and executed parent involvement practices.

Figure 1. Examples of Parent Involvement Documentation at Roosevelt

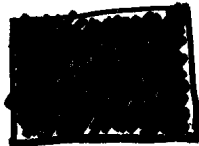


[REDACTED] FAMILY ASSOCIATION

[REDACTED] has PRIDE!
Tuesday September 17th
5:30-6:30p.m.

(Dinner offered from 5:00-5:30p.m.)

- A performance by [REDACTED]'s Fabulous 1st graders
- Community circles and arts workshops for parents & kids related to the theme "pride"
 - Door prizes and raffle
 - All parents and families welcome!





CHARTER SCHOOL
The School Children Deserve!

- Principal *** - Asst. Principal
Director of Finance and Operations*

1.7.2014

Dear Family, and Friends,

I hope all enjoyed the winter break and had a wonderful new year. It is now time to continue our mission of LEARNING. This mission is the responsibility of ALL. Please ensure that your child is coming to school prepared to learn everyday, doing homework and class projects and reading every single day in order to have a successful year. High Stakes Testing is right around the corner and ALL must play a part in our students' successes.
Try - LouisianaPass.Org for practice testing, Password: Tiger

Thank you for your continued support,

Principal

UPDATES AND REMINDERS:

- ✓ Saturday, 11th, 9-12
- ✓ Bead Project Shirts are on sale for \$8 and may be worn on Fridays.
- ✓ Monthly Meeting - Tuesday, January 21st, 5-6:30 pm
- ✓ Dress Down fundraiser for the Marching Unit - Friday, Jan. 10th - \$1.00 Donation
- ✓ LA Children's Museum - Word Play Literacy Program, Thursdays - January 16-February 27
- ✓ Want to VOLUNTEER? Come learn about ways to get involved with events, classroom support, garden work or mentoring. Take a computer class, English-as-a-Second-Language or a photography workshop. Call Monica Candal on for more information!

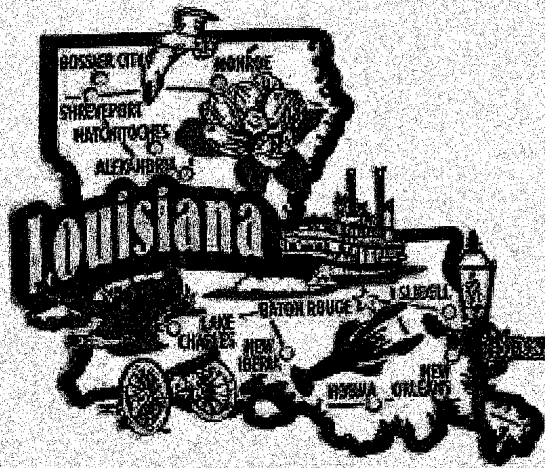
HOWL OUTS TO:

- > All the students participating in the Marching Unit
- > All the students participating in the Peer Mediation Group

SCHOOL POLICY REMINDERS: The newest version of the Family Handbook and the RSD Student Code of Conduct are on the Wilson website. We are asking that families view the documents on-line so that we may save on the printing costs. There are hard copies available at the school if you do not have internet access.

OneAPPS are available for students not attending next year. Eighth graders should complete as soon as possible. If your child intends to return to next year, you do not need to complete the OneAPP.

• New Orleans, LA
In the HEART of



PRESENTS

Louisiana, Our Home

The Kindergarten Class of 2014
Promotional Exercise



Our Year in Video

Processional... The Kindergarten Class of 2014

Welcome... The Kindergarten Class

Greetings ... Mrs. [REDACTED]

Pledge of Allegiance... Audience, Kindergarten Class

The Library Song ... Kindergarten Class

Attendance, Most Improved, Outstanding Effort awards

Today is Monday in Louisiana: book by ... Kindergarten Class

Art, Music and Athletic Awards

The Louisiana Alphabet Song: The Kindergarten Class

Reading, Math, Handwriting Awards

Los Colores ... Kindergarten Class

Good Citizen, Homework, Thank You, and Special Recognition Awards

Good Night NOLA by Cornell P. Landry ... Kindergarten Class

Academic Awards, Parent Awards

Moving Up Certificates

Learning ... Kindergarten Class Song

Final Remarks... Principal [REDACTED] and Kindergarten Class

Three Little Birds... The Kindergarten Class and Principal [REDACTED]

Recessional ... Kindergarten Class of 2014

Archival records

The primary archival records used for this study were emails sent by school staff members about parent involvement. These were all saved and entered into the case study database. Additionally, advances in technology have made it increasingly easy to be able to take pictures of the school setting, so pictures are also included as archival records of Roosevelt.

Archival records also included media articles about Roosevelt, especially those that highlighted parent involvement efforts at Roosevelt. There were also media articles that related to Roosevelt more broadly, which were included in data collection in order to provide information about the broader context within Roosevelt Charter School operates.

Finally, I used the state and school's records containing information about Roosevelt's parent involvement policies, such as those required by No Child Left Behind, including any references to parent involvement in Roosevelt's handbook and Roosevelt's formalized operational policies. The policies provided records of the school's institutionalized practices around parent involvement.

Surveys

Although not typically included in studies based upon ethnographic methods, I worked with Roosevelt to distribute individual surveys to parents at Roosevelt. The parent survey was an important part of data collection because approximately 550 students attended Roosevelt Charter School in 2013-2014, a much larger number of parents than would be possible to represent through ethnographic methods alone, especially when trying to understand parents' variation in involvement. The parent surveys provided an

opportunity to sample a much broader representation of parents than might otherwise be possible.

I used Sheldon and Epstein's (2007) parent involvement survey as a starting point for the survey design. This was then whittled down by staff at Roosevelt who felt that the original survey was far too long and that some questions were irrelevant to parents at Roosevelt. Further, the Principal and Director of Community Integration at Roosevelt opted to add questions that were specific to the Roosevelt context. For example, Ms. Banks was interested in understanding parents' access to computers and email, so although Epstein's original parent survey did not include a question about parents' access to computers, this study's version of the distributed survey did. The administration at Roosevelt was also interested in understanding their student retention from year to year and for examining why students might leave the school, so a question exploring that was added to the survey as well. (See Figure 2 for the final version of the 2013-2014 parent survey.)

Figure 2. 2013-2014 Parent Survey

PLEASE HAVE YOUR CHILD RETURN SURVEY TO HIS/HER HOMEROOM TEACHER
AND HE/SHE WILL RECEIVE A FREE DRESS DOWN TICKET!
PARENT SURVEY: [Redacted] Charter School 2013-14 School Year

Who is filling out this survey?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mother | <input type="checkbox"/> Stepfather | <input type="checkbox"/> Aunt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Father | <input type="checkbox"/> Grandmother | <input type="checkbox"/> Uncle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stepmother | <input type="checkbox"/> Grandfather | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

How many children in your family go to this school this year? 1 2 3 4 5+

What grades are they in? Pre-K K 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th

PARENT SATISFACTION: We would like to know how you feel about the school right now in order for us to plan for the future. Please circle one choice for each answer.

This is a very good school.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The teachers care about my child.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I feel welcome at the school.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
My child talks about school at home.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
My child gets sufficient homework.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The school and I have different goals for my child.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I am satisfied with the school leadership.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I am satisfied with the extracurricular programs.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
This school is known for trying new things.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
This school views parents as important partners.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The community supports this school.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
This school is one of the best schools for students and parents.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: Which of the following have you done this year with your child or children?

Talk to my child about school.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Visit my child's classroom.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Read to my child.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Help my child with homework.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Help my child practice skills before a test.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Talk with my child's teacher at the school.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Talk with my child's teacher on the phone.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Attend [Redacted] Family Association meetings.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Participated in the [Redacted] Men's program.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Volunteer at school or in my child's classroom.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Go to special events at the school.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Take my child to the library.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Take my child to special places or events in the community.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES
Tell my child how important school is.	NEVER	A FEW TIMES	MANY TIMES

If you attended ██████ Family Association meetings this year, what did you like about the meeting(s)?

If you attended ██████ Family Association meetings this year, what would you improve about the meeting(s)?

COMMUNICATION: How well does the school communicate with families?

Tells me how my child is doing in school.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
Sends home news about things happening at school.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
Sends home notices that I can understand easily.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
Contacts me if my child is having problems.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
Contacts me if my child does something well or improves.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
Asks me to volunteer at the school.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
Provides information on community services that I may want to use.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL

What is the best way to communicate with you? (Circle up to two.)

Newsletter Text Voice Message/Phone Call Email

Do you have an email address? Yes No
 If YES, do you regularly check your email? Yes No

SERVICES

When are you available to attend conferences, meetings or workshops at the school?

___ Morning ___ Afternoon ___ Evening

Please select all workshops and services that interest you:

Parenting Workshops:

- ___ Parenting & Technology
- ___ Managing Feelings
- ___ Positive Behavior & Discipline
- ___ Healthy Habits
- ___ Fatherhood Group
- ___ Motherhood Group
- ___ Single Parenting
- ___ Grandparent Group
- ___ Making the Most of Parent Teacher Conferences
- ___ Helping Children Succeed in School
- ___ Standardized Tests
- ___ Bullying

Direct Services for Parents:

- ___ English as a Second Language
- ___ Family Counseling
- ___ Computer Classes
- ___ Financial Planning
- ___ Job Coaching/Resume Writing
- ___ Fitness Classes
- ___ Art Classes
- ___ Cooking Classes

Direct Services for Students:

- ___ Tutoring
- ___ Extracurricular Arts
- ___ Extracurricular Sports
- ___ Cooking & Gardening
- ___ Daily Afterschool
- ___ Counseling

Will your child attend ██████ School next year? Yes No

If not, why? ___ Academic Standards ___ School Safety ___ School Leadership ___ Graduating
 ___ Lack of Afterschool Enrichment ___ School Performance ___ Distance from Home ___ aMoving

After the administration was satisfied with the revised design of the survey, in May the teachers distributed the surveys to their students with the intent that students should pass the survey along to their parents. The school offered an incentive dress-down day for

each student who returned a completed survey. By the end of the school year, 204 surveys were collected, resulting in a response rate of 37%.

Despite the useful information provided by the survey, any conclusions drawn from the survey face three limitations. First, unlike Sheldon and Epstein's (2007) original survey, the adapted survey design used in this study was not tested for validity or reliability purposes. Second, survey distribution relied on teachers distributing the survey to students who then gave the survey to their parents and returned the survey to their teachers. We do not know whether all teachers distributed the survey to students and whether students then gave the survey to parents. Third, Roosevelt incentivized students to return the survey by offering students a "dress down" day, meaning that each student who returned the survey was able to not wear their uniform for a day. This likely helped with the return rate of surveys. However, since the incentive was on a student-by-student basis, some parents filled out the survey multiple times for each of their children. This may have resulted in some repetitive data, but since the survey was anonymous, it was impossible to tell which surveys were filled out by the same parent. For this reason, the response rate was calculated by child with 37% of students returned their parent survey. These limitations are not insignificant and thus should be taken into account when interpreting the results of the survey.

Data Analysis

The data sources described in the case study data collection section cover a cross-section of different levels of this case study, from interviews with individuals, such as parents and teachers, to interactions like those observed at school events between teachers and parents and teachers and administrators. My qualitative data collection, which

includes field notes, interviews, document collection, and archival records, required regular, ongoing analyses while the survey results required one-time analysis towards the end of the data collection phase.

Qualitative Analyses

All data were saved and managed through a case study database that recorded the date of data collection, the type of data collected, a brief description of the data event, and any short relevant notes. The database contains over 750 discrete data entries – from interview audio to transcripts to emails to copies of relevant documents. This structured organization of data allowed me to closely monitor data collection and to cull through data more easily during analysis.

June 2013-December 2013 represented the beginning of qualitative data collection in earnest. During this time, I wrote memos about general patterns that I was discovering while also closely continuing to review the literature about parent involvement practices. I began the coding process by developing a list of parent involvement practices based upon the parent involvement literature, drawing heavily upon Epstein and her colleagues' (2002) six levels of parent involvement. I also used the research literature to develop a preliminary list of codes that could describe organizational challenges to parent involvement programming (e.g., capacity, teacher resistance), as well as describe parents' personal challenges to parent involvement (e.g., feeling excluded, time). Using this preliminary list of codes as a starting point, I then began open coding various types of data, including field notes, interviews, and documents. Open coding various data sources was instrumental to understanding the strengths and weakness of different types of data, including which types of information about parent involvement each type of data could

provide. For example, interviews were stronger as a source of understanding people's interpretations and opinions about events while observations provided more details about types of parent involvement that were not mentioned in interviews.

Open coding various data sources, along with my continued presence in the field continued data collection, helped to fill in several parent involvement codes that were not present in the original coding list based solely upon the research literature. Many of these codes developed as a result of parent involvement practices that were specific to Roosevelt, or they resulted from categories that I had not anticipated at the beginning of the study. For example, although my original intent was to observe the school as an outsider, at the beginning of the school year I had the opportunity to become involved with the school as a parent liaison. I decided to take the parent liaison role because I felt that it would provide me with additional access to the school. Thus, my role and activities as parent liaison became something that I tracked. I also had not anticipated Roosevelt's focus on reflecting upon and improving its parent involvement programming, something that was not frequently mentioned in the research literature. Thus, I decided to develop a category of codes dedicated to suggested improvements for existing parent involvement programming.

Continued open coding also resulted in the reorganization of some codes. For example, rather than identifying parent involvement activity codes according to who was *talking* about the activity as I had originally intended (e.g., a teacher talking about parents helping with homework, which would have been coded ACTIVITY-TCH-HOMEWORK), I decided to reorganize the activity codes to foreground who was *doing* the action (i.e., now the code would be ACTIVITY-WHATPRNTSDO-HOMEWORK). (See Figure 3 for an excerpt of the Coding Guide and Appendix E for the complete coding

guide.) This rearrangement helped me to reorient the codes to better highlight which parent involvement activities were considered in the domain of parents versus in the domain of teachers.

Figure 3. Coding Guide

CODING CATEGORIES

Most of the codes in my coding guide are descriptive in nature, though some – such as some of the teacher and parent opinion codes – are more inferential in nature. All codes are meant to help to identify interesting instances in the data that address the questions. Below, I define the groups and relate them to the research questions above.

ACTIVITY: This group of codes describes different kinds of parent involvement activities, including actions taken by individual parents or opportunities for involvement offered or identified by the school. ACTIVITY codes are sub-grouped in two ways.

First, they are sub-grouped according to the individual who names the parent involvement activity, either a school staff member (SS), a parent (P), or myself through observation (O).

The second method of sub-grouping ACTIVITY codes are by the type of activity. Some activities recurred throughout various data types and thus had more in-depth data. Thus, these codes provide more descriptive detail about the following specific parent involvement activities, including information about outreach for the various activities, the enactment of the activities (e.g., parents' interactions with kids, the structure of the activity), and conversations that occurred covered during the activities (e.g., parents talking about personal hardship, Common Core). The ACTIVITY sub-groups are the following:

- Roosevelt Rhino Guardians – the school's Men's Group, geared specifically towards students' fathers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins, and other male guardians
- Orientation – Roosevelt's beginning-of-year sessions for parents; this includes the whole-school Open House, as well as individual orientations that were hosted for the Prekindergarten and Kindergarten classes
- Roosevelt Family Association – monthly meetings hosted for Roosevelt families that included dinner, student performances, and workshops for parents
- Report Card Conferences – parent-teacher conferences hosted three times per year for parents and teachers to meet one-on-one to talk about student progress
- Roosevelt to Washington – a Washington, DC trip for 5th and 6th grade students that required parents to be involved in fundraising and logistical matters
- Graduations and Award Ceremonies – end-of-year ceremonies to celebrate 8th grade and Kindergarten graduations, as well as award ceremonies for individual grade levels
- English as a Second Language classes – after-school classes offered by the Parent Liaison to Spanish-speaking parents
- Volunteering – near-weekly volunteer activities at the classroom level or special event volunteering, such as for Roosevelt's Fall Fest

- Homework

TCHEXP: This group of codes identifies moments when school staff – including teachers, administrators, and other school staff – share their expectations, opinions, and views about parent involvement in their classroom and at the school and about parent involvement in general. Sub-groups of codes in the TCHEXP category are:

- Level – school staff’s opinions about the level of parent involvement in their individual classrooms and at Roosevelt as a whole
- Why Parent Involvement Matters – school staff’s views about why parent involvement matters to their students and to the school as a whole
- Why Not More – school staff’s ideas about why some parents may not be involved as much as they would like
- Why More – school staff’s ideas about why some parents are involved more than others
- Experience – school staff’s descriptions of specific positive or negative interactions with parents
- Thoughts about Parents – school staff’s opinions about how parents do or should behave and the reasons they behave that way

ORG: This group of codes describes the organizational factors that facilitate and complicate parent involvement at Roosevelt. Sub-groups of this category include organizational supports (ORG-SUPP) for parent involvement, such as school systems and cultural values in favor of parent involvement, and organizational challenges (ORG-CHALL), such as attitudes and actions that inhibit parent involvement at Roosevelt. This group of codes also includes how decisions about different parent involvement activities are made at Roosevelt (ORG-DEC).

PRNTEXP: This group of codes describes parents’ expectations, views, and opinions about parent involvement and related issues. They offer their views about in following subcategories:

- Why Parent Involvement Matters – parents’ opinions about why parent involvement is important and makes a difference for their children
- Academics – parents’ views about the quality of academic programming at Roosevelt
- Behavior – parents’ views about student behavior and discipline at Roosevelt
- Welcome – parents’ discussion about whether they feel welcome at Roosevelt and why
- Supports – parents’ talk about the supports that they have for their involvement at Roosevelt
- Challenges – parents’ talk about the challenges they face to becoming involved at Roosevelt

IMPROVE: This category of codes describes ideas for improving Roosevelt’s parent involvement programming. Sub-groups of this category are based upon who makes the suggestions for improvement. IMPROVE-TCH refers to suggestions for improvement made by school staff, and IMPROVE-PRNT refers to suggestions for improvement made by parents.

PLROLE: This category of codes describes the tasks that I completed as parent liaison at Roosevelt during the 2013-2014 academic year. It also includes some of the tasks of other parent involvement staff, namely the Director of Community Programming.

OTHER: This category of codes covers instances that do not necessarily directly address one of the research questions, but which deserve to be tracked. The predominant code in this category identifies moments in the data where Roosevelt's parent involvement programming involves partnerships with community organizations and the advantages and challenges of those partnerships.

After coding was completed, I faced the challenge of organizing codes across a substantial amount of data. I decided to employ Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion of organizing data through analytic matrices. I created three matrices that helped me to organize data over time, across individual teachers, and across individual parents. I chose to organize the data using these matrices because the Over Time matrix would provide a high-level overview of parent involvement programming at Roosevelt while the Teacher and Parent matrices would provide more nuanced interpretations of individuals' experiences with parent involvement at Roosevelt.

The columns for the matrices varied depending upon the topic of the matrix. For the Over Time matrix, the each column was a month of the academic year. For the teacher and parent matrices, each column represented an individual interviewee. The matrix rows included the following questions:

- What do teachers and the school staff do to involve parents?
- How are parents involved? What do the parents do?
- What are the organizational supports for parent involvement?
- What are the organizational challenges for parent involvement?
- Why does parent involvement matter?
- What is offered as opportunities for improvement?
- What do parents think of teachers and the school?
- What are parent supports for their involvement?

- What are challenges to parents' involvement?
- What is the role of the parent liaison/parent involvement staff?

After using TAMS Analytic Software to search codes that address the questions above, I wrote relevant findings into each of the matrix cells. (See Figure 4 for a snapshot of the Over Time matrix.) I was then able to start identifying trends that were then elaborated and triangulated across matrices and across data types.

Figure 4. Snapshot of Over Time Analytic Matrix

	A	B	C	D		
	August		September	October	November	
1						
2	ACTIVITY					
3	What do the teachers and school staff do to involve parents?	Family Room all-call, including volunteerism, personal enrichment, and direct services (20130807_Document); requires parents to be contacted as part of student solutions and a part of the action plan (20130814A_Document); do an all-call for volunteers for Maintenance Day (20130813B_FieldNotes); Roosevelt Weeklies regularly ask parents to volunteer (20130814B_Document); hosted Kindergarten orientation, asked for parent involvement at that time (20130815_Document, 20130813A_FieldNotes); hosted a Family orientation for all families (20130802_Email); recruited fathers for the first day of school (20130810A_Email); reached out to JC to get ESL classes off the ground (20130816_Email); coordinate among garden and DFO for Maintenance Day with fathers (20130820B_Email, 20130820B_Email); school admin asks teachers to send Unit 1 syllabi home in "parent friendly language" to students and parents ASAP (20130827A_Email); making t-shirts for POPs (20130827C_Email); plan for September RFA meeting in August (20130828B_Email, 20130830B_FieldNotes); placed volunteers into lit blocks (20130829A_Email); created tiers for parent volunteer orientation (20130820_Email, 20130830A_Email); introduce self to POPs (20130807_FieldNotes); Open House, including teachers and community programs, also includes sharing mission and expectations of the school with parents (20130808_FieldNotes); parents must sign form saying they read the Parent Handbook (20130808_FieldNotes); school shares uniform, bus, cell phone, and meal expectations with parents (20130808_FieldNotes); Maria briefly translates Open House speech into Spanish for parents (20130808_FieldNotes); host parent volunteer orientation (20130813B_FieldNotes, 20130822A_FieldNotes); host POPs meeting on August 28th (20130822A_FieldNotes); t-shirts for POPs and volunteers (20130822A_FieldNotes); would like to identify parents who are prepart for Birthmark Doula services (20130822A_FieldNotes); offer photography class (20130822A_FieldNotes); put together calendar of activities for parents (20130822A_FieldNotes); have a meeting to talk about involving pregnant moms (20130830A_FieldNotes); plan "baby shower" for mothers that never comes to fruition (20130830A_FieldNotes)	First parent meeting of the year for WZW (20130817B_Email); September 12th is date for volunteer orientation (20130822A_FieldNotes, 20130912_FieldNotes); post Education Corridor activities in front office, including classes, clubs, and counseling (20130903_Document); first RFA meeting on September 17 with 1st grade performance (20130910_Document, 20130908_Email, 20130909D_Email, 20130910D_Email, 20130910E_Email, 20130911B_Email, 20130917B_Email); Roosevelt Weekly (20130912, 20130925_Document, 20130925C_Email); shares progress reports with parents and results from Scanton Performance Assessment (20130912_Document); asks for volunteers in Roosevelt Weekly (20130912_Document); asks parents to have a set of headphones for each child (20130912_Document, 20130905F_Email); tells parents students may not be on campus after school unsupervised (20130925_Document); shares with parents about breakfast and community circles (20130925_Document); sample syllabus template to be sent home to parents (20130927_Document); collect names of young men who need mentoring (20130906_Email); school staff asks for biweekly phone calls to parents (20130908_Email, 20130909D_Email, 20130909D_Email, 20130911B_Email, 20130923C_Email); Roosevelt Weekly goes home (20130923C_Email, 20130927B_Email); created Central Educational Corridor Release for parents (20130928B_Email, Rhinno Guardians meeting (20130924A_FieldNotes); photography class for parents (20130924B_FieldNotes); September RFA meeting had 44 parents in attendance (20130924B_FieldNotes); October Family Calendar (20130924B_FieldNotes)	Full Fest on October 30 (20130912_Document, 20130925_Document, 20130910C_Email, 20131005_Document, 20131008C_Email, 20131014B_Email, 20131020B_Email, 20131024D_Email); Roosevelt to Washington Yard Sale scheduled for October 19th (20130924A_Email, 20131005_Document, 20131008C_Email, 20131014B_Email); Progress Reports on October 8th (20130926C_Email); RFA meeting (20131005_Document, 20131010D_Document, 20131008C_Email, 20131014B_Email); English Class (20131005_Document); Photography classes on Thursdays (20131005_Document); monthly calendar translated into Spanish on Nov (20131015A_Document); documents at front table, including kids' Kingdom, Central Community Corridor programming, child safety, Birthmark Doula, parent groups, OneApp, Rose Parks programs, studies, school calendar and Family Room information (20131031_Document, 20131031_Document); Roosevelt Weekly (20131018B_Email); fatherhood survey (20131028D_Email); opportunity for fathers to attend a conference (20131024_Journal)	English meeting (20131005_Document); Rose Pd report (20131014B_Email); Washington Yard Sale scheduled for October 19th (20131005_Document, 20131008C_Email, 20131014B_Email); Progress Reports on October 8th (20130926C_Email); RFA meeting (20131005_Document, 20131010D_Document, 20131008C_Email, 20131014B_Email); English Class (20131005_Document); Photography classes on Thursdays (20131005_Document); monthly calendar translated into Spanish on Nov (20131015A_Document); documents at front table, including kids' Kingdom, Central Community Corridor programming, child safety, Birthmark Doula, parent groups, OneApp, Rose Parks programs, studies, school calendar and Family Room information (20131031_Document, 20131031_Document); Roosevelt Weekly (20131018B_Email); fatherhood survey (20131028D_Email); opportunity for fathers to attend a conference (20131024_Journal)	
4	How are the parents involved? What do the parents do?	Rhino Guardians helped on the first day of school (20140814B_Document, 20130812_FieldNotes); attended Kindergarten and Prekindergarten orientations (20140815_Document); parent and student volunteers for school (20130829A_Email); approximately 5 fathers attend the POPs meeting, at meeting men brainstorm ways to get involved and talked about t-shirts and beautification project; men talk about volunteering daily (20130807_FieldNotes); parents bring their children for the first day of school (20130812_FieldNotes); approximately 13 parents sign up to volunteer during the PK and K orientations (20130815_FieldNotes); Aaron attends Maintenance Day planning (20130828_FieldNotes); Aaron offers to heat press t-shirts (20130828_FieldNotes)	39 parents attend first RFA meeting (20130917B_Document); Ballesteros volunteers with Ward (20130905_Email); students' mom volunteers with Stinson (20130902D_Email); parents must read and sign bullying sheets and Louisiana residency forms (20130911A_Email, 20130915_Email, 20130925A_Email); Monique Varnado wants to volunteer with Nicole Davis (20130913A_Email); Sheama's volunteer placements (20130916D_Email); Geneva Earl to volunteer in lit block (20130927C_Email, 20130929B_Email); Anne volunteers to help with Rachel's lit block (20130929A_Email); approximately 10 parents attend the volunteer orientation, including Staci Lewis (20130912_FieldNotes); approximately 10 men attend Rhinno Guardians meeting (20130924A_FieldNotes); Carl drops off son at school every morning (20130924A_FieldNotes); father asks to peek into his son's classroom (20130924A_FieldNotes)	Parents asked to donate items for Full Fest (20131015A_Document); parents signed up to participate in English class during RFA (20131015B_Document); parent volunteer information for Full Fest (20131015B_Document); RFA sign-in sheet - Geneva, Sheama, Angela, Monika attend (20131015C_Document); list of parent volunteers for Full Fest, including Sylvia, Aaron, Aretha Yost (20131030_Document, 20131015B_Email); see Full Fest raffle tickets (20131022B_Email); Daria Magen to volunteer for Jameson lit block (no response from Horton (20131028C_Email); Sheama in photography class (20131010_FieldNotes); aunt wants to volunteer in Frazier's class (20131029_FieldNotes); cover airfare costs of Roosevelt to Washington meeting (20131022_Journal); Aaron comes to school to pay deposit for Roosevelt to Washington (20131022_Journal); three parents attend ESL class (20131022_Journal)	Mr. Rhc himself (20131015B_Document); Mainte (20131015B_Document); Christin card mg (20131022B_Email); Daria Magen to volunteer for Jameson lit block (no response from Horton (20131028C_Email); Sheama in photography class (20131010_FieldNotes); aunt wants to volunteer in Frazier's class (20131029_FieldNotes); cover airfare costs of Roosevelt to Washington meeting (20131022_Journal); Aaron comes to school to pay deposit for Roosevelt to Washington (20131022_Journal); three parents attend ESL class (20131022_Journal)	
5	ORGANIZATION				File for Men's N (201311301313)	

Quantitative Analyses

After collecting the surveys, I entered the data into Microsoft Excel to allow for easy manipulation. I conducted basic descriptive analyses of the survey respondents, the vast majority of whom were mothers. For each of the survey questions in the Parent Satisfaction, Family Involvement, and Communications sections of the survey, I calculated the average and range for each response. For the Best Way to Communicate, Parent Workshops, Parent Services, and Student Services sections, I calculated the

percentage of parents who marked each response. Given that the surveys were not independent items because one parent may have filled out multiple surveys for each child, I did not conduct further statistical analyses. Survey results are presented in Chapter Six.

The data collected and analyzed for my case study of parent involvement at Roosevelt revealed interesting trends regarding the types of parent involvement events hosted by Roosevelt and in both teachers' and parents' views about parent involvement. The diverse array of data types provided an intricate picture of parent involvement at the school and illuminated areas of agreement and tension. The following chapters describe parent involvement programming at Roosevelt and results from the perspective of teachers and parents. The manuscript closes with a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR:

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT ROOSEVELT CHARTER SCHOOL

The following chapter provides an overview of parent involvement programming at Franklin D. Roosevelt Charter School. The school, which serves a student population that is predominantly low-income and African-American, struggled with students' academic performance but remained a source of historical pride for the Central Community, and one way that Roosevelt and the community maintained its connection was through parent involvement efforts at the school. This chapter begins with a general description of Roosevelt and then turns to more specific descriptions of the parent involvement programming at Roosevelt.

Site Description

Roosevelt is a K-8 school under the purview of the Recovery School District in New Orleans (RSD-NO) and operated by the Central Community Charter School Board.³ During the 2013-2014 academic year, over 92% of the students at Roosevelt were African-American, and approximately 7.5% were Hispanic. Over 95% of students at Roosevelt qualified for the free- and reduced-lunch program during that same year. Roosevelt Charter School earned a D letter grade from the state for its academic

³ As discussed earlier, following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the vast majority of public schools in New Orleans became charter schools. In fact, by 2013-2014, all of the schools in RSD-NO were charter schools, and 93% of schools across New Orleans – in both RSD-NO and run by OPSB – were charter schools.

performance during the 2012-2013 academic year. For the 2013-2014 academic year, Roosevelt earned an F letter grade from the state. These scores were despite an overall C average for the RSD-NO, meaning that Roosevelt Charter School significantly underperformed compared to other schools with similar demographics in its same district. (See Table 7 for student achievement results for the 2013-2014 academic year. Basic is considered on-grade-level performance.) More discussion about Roosevelt’s academic performance is included in Chapter 7.

Table 7. State Standardized Test Results (%) for the 2013-2014 Academic Year						
	Mathematics			English-Language Arts		
	Above Basic	Basic	Below Basic	Above Basic	Basic	Below Basic
3 rd	11	51	38	12	37	51
4 th	8	33	59	9	32	58
5 th	3	22	76	13	39	48
6 th	9	46	46	13	46	43
7 th	3	44	55	6	46	49
8 th	3	35	63	6	46	49
	Social Studies			Science		
	Above Basic	Basic	Below Basic	Above Basic	Basic	Below Basic
3 rd	10	51	40	4	30	66
4 th	2	31	68	6	28	65
5 th	7	28	66	7	26	69
6 th	2	32	68	2	38	62
7 th	3	54	44	7	37	56
8 th	3	45	54	3	28	70

Although Franklin D. Roosevelt School existed prior to Hurricane Katrina, the failure of the levee system in New Orleans caused massive flooding and destroyed the original school building. As part of a community revitalization project after the hurricane, members of the Central Community came together to form the Central Community Improvement Association, which then spawned the Central Community Charter School Board. In 2007, the Central Community Charter School Board decided to create a charter and reopen Roosevelt under the Recovery School District. The founding charter school board members were all residents of the Central Community with the founding board president, Janelle Montoya, being a well-known community leader who was later elected to the New Orleans City Council.

Because the original school building was still in disrepair when the school reopened as a charter school, Roosevelt was housed in another building nearby until the destroyed Roosevelt building was restored and expanded. Roosevelt Charter School moved back to its original, improved building in 2010. The renovated building and the school became a great source of pride for the Central Community, especially because many community members had attended Roosevelt in their youth. In addition, the community was connected to the school because Roosevelt served as an anchor of the Central Community Education Corridor, a Central Community post-Katrina initiative that created a network of educational and cultural institutions in Central Community. As an anchor of the Central Community Education Corridor, a number of community programs, such as fitness classes and basketball classes, were hosted at Roosevelt, and classrooms were available for community organization meetings for free.

However, despite the pride surrounding Roosevelt, the school had faced consistent challenges with student performance and school management. Under the state's new accountability system after Hurricane Katrina, Roosevelt continued to score a D or F on the state's report card, landing it on the state's list of failing schools. In addition, Roosevelt's new charter board struggled to find proper management for the school, originally contracting with a private educational services provider for education management consulting services. However, these services were expensive for the school and since the school was not getting the academic results that it desired, the Central Community School Board members eventually decided to manage Roosevelt on their own. The Central Community School Board did not fare much better in managing the school, as it earned an F under the state's accountability system during the 2013-2014 academic year – the year during which the case study was conducted – and had its charter revoked. In 2015, the RSD-NO assigned a new charter operator, one that was not rooted in the Central Community, to lead the school.

Parent Involvement Staff at Roosevelt Charter School

Despite the management challenges faced by Roosevelt, the school dedicated substantial resources to its parent involvement programming. In 2013-2014, Roosevelt had over sixty faculty and staff to serve 652 students. These positions covered a range of administrative, teaching, and support positions. Although all faculty and staff at Roosevelt worked and interacted with parents at some point in time, two roles at Roosevelt were specifically designed to work with parents and the community – the Director of Community Integration and the Parent Liaison. Elizabeth Banks served as Roosevelt's Director of Community Integration while I served as the Parent Liaison. Roosevelt's

dedication of resources to parent involvement illustrates the value that school administrators placed on its parent involvement programming, though the school struggled to execute its parent involvement programming in a way that resulted in positive academic outcomes for students.

Director of Community Integration

Ms. Banks came to Roosevelt as a volunteer during her winter break at a northeastern college and then decided to return to Roosevelt as an Americorps member after graduating. After her tenure with Americorps, Roosevelt and the Central Community Improvement Association, the umbrella organization for many of the revitalization efforts underway in Central Community, decided to find long-term funding for Ms. Banks' position.

As Director of Community Integration, Ms. Banks developed and managed much of the community programming for the Central Community Improvement Association and all of the parent involvement programming at Roosevelt. She also managed relationships with two local universities and community members who volunteered at Roosevelt, and she managed Roosevelt's after-school programs, in addition to supporting programming at the Rosa Parks Community Center two blocks away from the school. Although the Central Community Improvement Association contributed a small amount to Ms. Banks' salary, the vast majority of her salary was paid from Roosevelt's budget, and her office was located in Roosevelt's building, making her a well-ingrained staff member in the Roosevelt school community.

Parent Liaison

As discussed in the Methods chapter, in an effort to provide additional capacity to Ms. Banks and to better integrate myself into the Roosevelt community as a participant observer, Ms. Banks and I decided that I should join the staff as a volunteer Parent Liaison to help her with parent programming and to make myself a more regular figure at the school. As parent liaison at the Roosevelt, I supported parent involvement activities at Roosevelt by (1) staffing the “Parent Room” during school hours two days/week, (2) connecting parents who dropped in during “open house” hours with volunteer opportunities, and (3) facilitating logistics for parent development workshops and other school events.

When I joined Roosevelt’s staff as parent liaison, I made clear to Ms. Banks that my commitment was for one year, so Ms. Banks and I knew that it would be important for us to recruit another person to take over the role. In the middle of my year serving as parent liaison, Ms. Banks and I decided that it would be a good idea to bring a parent on as parent liaison for the following year because a parent might better understand the needs of other parents and be better networked with other parents at the school. Ms. Banks secured funding for a parent liaison position for the following academic year via Americorps, and we interviewed parents to take over my position. Monika Rotolo, the mother of a Prekindergarten student, was ultimately chosen to replace me. Thus, although the parent liaison position started as a new position during the 2013-2014 academic year, by the end of the year the selection of a successor had ensured that the parent liaison position was on its way to becoming more institutionalized.

Parent Involvement Programming at Roosevelt Charter School

Based upon my observations of the 2013-2014 academic year and through conversations with various faculty and staff throughout the year, parent involvement programming at Roosevelt could be categorized in several ways. One useful way to organize parent involvement programming at Roosevelt is through the timing of various parent involvement activities. At most schools, the academic school year typically follows a rhythm with a flurry of activity at the beginning of the school year as the school's planning crystalizes for the school year and students and parents buy school supplies, meet teachers, and more generally prepare for the upcoming year. As the school year progresses, students, and families settle into a routine punctuated here and there by holidays or special events that may be unique to the school. Finally, the academic school year often ends with a series of celebratory events to mark the accomplishments of students and teachers.

Roosevelt Charter School's academic school year reflects many of these typical rhythms with professional development for teachers the week before school starts and parent orientations for older and younger students. The beginning of the school year also marked excitement for the school in terms of parent involvement activities that they were eager to get off the ground. As the school year continued, regular parent involvement activities, including newsletters, phone calls, and Roosevelt Family Association meetings became more predictable. Throughout the school year, the school staff and parents also saw one-time holiday celebrations or other special events, such as a Family Math and Literacy Night, hosted at Roosevelt. The end of the school year saw an uptick in parent involvement activity, as awards celebrations for all grades took place with a special emphasis on graduation ceremonies for Kindergarten students and 8th graders moving on to high school. Parent involvement activity towards the end of the year also shifted from

implementation to reflection, as school staff analyzed their activities for the previous year and tried to develop improvements for the following year's activities.

At the beginning, during, and at the end of the academic year, Roosevelt hosted many different types of parent involvement activities, which varied in their levels of innovation. First, Roosevelt often hosted one-time events for holidays or special family events. Many of these events were part of Roosevelt's annual calendar. Other parent involvement activities met more regularly. For example, the Roosevelt Family Association met monthly, and the Roosevelt Rhino Guardians – Roosevelt's father's group – met at least once per month. (All parent involvement activities will be described in greater detail in the following sections.) Additionally, some parent involvement actions took place idiosyncratically throughout the year as teachers called parents and sent home newsletters or school administrators sent home letters announcing new policy changes.

The parent involvement staff, and school staff more generally, were aware that Roosevelt's student population was predominantly low-income and African-American, and families' identities this seemed to be taken into account both implicitly and explicitly in the design of some of the parent involvement activities at Roosevelt. For example, the Roosevelt Rhino Guardians was specifically designed to counter the myth of absentee African-American fathers, and the computer classes at Roosevelt were meant to address low-income parents' lack of access to technology. Other activities, however, did not seem tailored to the families that the school served. The design of communications like report cards, automated phone calls, and school newsletters seemed standardized and similar to those that could be found in any school.

The variety of parent involvement activities is described in the following sections of this chapter. Roosevelt's parent involvement programming is primarily organized by

the timing of different activities throughout the school year. However, the types of parent involvement programming will also be highlighted throughout the chapter.

Beginning of the School Year

The beginning of the school year at Roosevelt was marked with energy for a new school year, implementing old programs and activities and trying to develop new ones. This was the case for Roosevelt's parent involvement programming as well. The beginning of the school year saw a spate of orientation activities for students and parents, as well as the re-implementation of existing parent involvement activities, and the launch of new parent involvement initiatives. (See Table 8 for an overview of Roosevelt's parent involvement activities at the beginning of the school year.) Different activities were met with different rates of success. The success of the new initiatives in particular seemed to depend upon the reliability of the program or activity's leadership, the time and physical resources investment required from the school, and the amount of participation from parents.

Professional Development. At many schools, the beginning of the school year includes a series of days for school staff to meet and discuss changes for the upcoming school year and the implementation of new policies. At Roosevelt, professional development for teachers started two weeks prior to the first day of school for students. The first day – the only day for which the administration provided an agenda ahead of time – included getting-to-know-you activities and an orientation to the school's mission and vision. On the second day of professional development, Ms. Banks and I engaged teachers to share information from surveys that had been distributed the prior academic

year and to inform teachers about upcoming changes to Roosevelt's parent involvement programming.

At the beginning of the session, Ms. Banks began by asking teachers to divide into small groups and to discuss barriers that their own parents had faced to getting involved or barriers that their students' parents might face. One group of teachers mentioned that their own parents' work schedules had been a barrier to their involvement because their parents had had limited free time. Another group offered that parents' literacy levels might be a barrier because parents would feel uncomfortable at the school setting, and yet another teacher offered that even though her own mother had been unable to be actively involved at school, she had had a neighbor who was able to take her to participate in school activities. This teacher seemed to appreciate the notion that it took a "village" to raise her and offer her the ability to fully participate in her school and its activities. Ms. Banks closed that portion of the session by stating that it is important for the school staff to constantly think about parent involvement because "what we do know from research and from experience and from just best practices is that the more you can involve families as partners in a child's education, the greater chance that they're having a healthy and successful upbringing" (July 23, 2013). Ms. Banks clearly viewed Roosevelt's parent involvement programming as a cornerstone of building students' success at Roosevelt.

The professional development session then turned to me sharing results from a parent survey conducted the prior year in which parents indicated that overall they were very satisfied with the parent involvement activities offered at Roosevelt and with the school's communication with them. After I finished sharing the results of the survey, Ms. Banks explained that Roosevelt would be installing a Family Room (described earlier) and involving teachers in the planning of Roosevelt Family Association meetings. Ms. Banks

and I closed the session by asking teachers how they would like for parent volunteers to be involved in their classrooms. They offered that they would like parents to assist with the middle school Homework Club, maintaining bulletin boards, caring for the science classroom's pets, reading to lower elementary students, and helping in the garden. Teachers offered that parents could also help to set up and chaperone special events like dances, fundraisers, and field trips.

Student and Parent Orientations. The beginning-of-year orientations for students and parents were the most well-attended events of the year with the greatest number of parents in one space, save for the Kindergarten and 8th grade graduation ceremonies at the end of the year. The school-wide Open House took place on the evening of August 8, 2013, four days before the first day of school. Even though Roosevelt served Prekindergarten-8th grades, the Open House was specifically for parents of students in 1st-8th grades who students would start on August 12th. Students in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten were scheduled to start slightly later in the school year, and teachers hosted separate orientations for those grades.

The 1st-8th grade Open House, though originally scheduled to be hosted in the cafeteria, was moved to the gym at the last minute. Hundreds of chairs were set out into rows in the center of the gym facing a large screen positioned at one end of the gym. Long tables lined around the perimeter of the basketball court, and teachers staffed the tables according to their grade levels. Community organizations and other school personnel, including me as parent liaison, also staffed a handful of tables.

As parents arrived, they quickly filled in the seats, resulting in approximately 100 parents and their children in attendance. The principal and other support administrators started the orientation by covering everything from the school's expectations, which

students eagerly shouted to Principal Byrd in a call-and-response style, to bus policies to lunchtime to discipline and uniform. Principal Byrd spent a significant portion of his time talking specifically about school culture and discipline expectations. He explained to parents,

“when it comes to school culture, he wants the one group to have one voice. They want to have a positive culture at the school, so they’re going to leave out the bullying and teasing this year. He explains that with 700 people at the school, stuff is bound to happen, but the school will be working with the students this year to develop new conflict resolution skills. [Principal Byrd] says that in New Orleans, there’s a culture of violence, and they hope to stop that here. No hitting means no hitting, and they’re serious about it. [Principal Byrd] says that his mom used to tell him the same thing, Knock ‘em out if they bother you. However, that should not be the case here. At Roosevelt, there should be no bullying. That is now an expellable offense, and that includes in-person bullying, bullying via text, and bullying via Facebook.” (August 8, 2013, Fieldnotes)

Principal Byrd seemed to anticipate some questions or concerns about the school’s culture and discipline policy and was looking to set expectations for parents early in the year. Principal Byrd seemed to expect that parents would tell their children to react aggressively if they were bothered (“...*his mom used to tell him the same thing, Knock ‘em out if they bother you.*”). Given this belief, he seemed to hope that this speech early on in the school year could curtail parent having those conversations with their children. He also explained to parents that he had hoped to have the Family and Student Handbook available by the beginning of the year, but it “will be coming to parents soon” (August 8, 2013, Fieldnotes). The Family and Student Handbook included details about the school day, discipline, and dress code.

After Principal Byrd finished talking through school policies and introducing the school’s administrative staff, he told parents that “refreshments were on the way” (August 8, 2013, Fieldnotes). Refreshments were supposed to have arrived for the beginning of the Open House, but they were late. In the meantime, Principal Byrd encouraged parents to

walk around to meet their children's teachers and representatives from the community organizations. At my table, I had a flier describing the Parent Room at Roosevelt and a sign-up sheet for parents who were interested in volunteering at the school. Parents roamed the gym, and approximately an hour and a half after the event started, I noted that "parents are cleared out...I have 16 applications from parents who are interested in volunteering" (August 8, 2013, Fieldnotes).

Despite the energy and optimism that seemed to permeate the orientation, I was struck by Principal Byrd's focus on school discipline policies, which I thought hinted at historical issues that the school might have had with student behavior. Besides Principal Byrd's focus on expectations for student behavior, I was also struck by his statements throughout the orientation that suggested that Principal Byrd wanted to distance himself and Roosevelt from the RSD and from other schools in New Orleans. He seemed to disagree with the school district philosophically, even though the disagreements might not always be rooted in fact. For example, he explained that "he'd recently read a story that said that parents were spending \$200-\$300 on school uniforms, but Roosevelt would not be that school. The polo shirts required for students cost \$12, and the rest the parents can buy on their own" (August 8, 2013, Fieldnotes). With this statement, Principal Byrd seemed to acknowledge the struggling economic realities of many of his students' families while suggesting that other schools did not take those considerations into account. While it was interesting that Principal Byrd was trying to accommodate his parents' economic needs, it was also highly unusual that other schools had very expensive uniforms. In fact, many schools in New Orleans gave away free uniform pieces as a way to attract parents to their schools.

Additionally, Principal Byrd stated that “he doesn’t know of any child who wasn’t able to learn due to the color of their shoes, but he does require tennis shoes to ensure students’ safety because they have PE and recess almost every day” (August 8, 2013, Fieldnotes). In this statement, Principal Byrd seemed to be alluding to the strict uniform policies at other schools which required, for example, solid black shoes. These statements suggested that Principal Byrd found some of the strict policies at other schools unnecessary or exclusive, and he wanted parents to know that he didn’t agree with them.

Principal Byrd’s distancing from the school district is particularly salient given the history of the RSD and charter schools in New Orleans. Although students in New Orleans now are served almost exclusively by charter schools, community activities have criticized the RSD for excluding community members, particularly low-income and middle-class African-American residents, in the shift to an all-charter district in which outsiders arrive in New Orleans telling local people what to do (Holly, C., Field, T., Kim, J., Hassel, B. Runyan-Shefa, M., Stone, M., and Zaunbrecher, D., 2015). By distancing himself from the RSD, Principal Byrd was effectively aligning himself with community activists who are skeptical of the charter movement.

Orientation for Prekindergarten and Kindergarten parents was held one week after the 1st-8th grade Open House and three days after the older students had started the academic year. The Prekindergarten and Kindergarten teachers hosted separate orientations for each grade in their classrooms, and my role at each orientation was to talk to the parents about opportunities for their involvement and to have parents who were interested in volunteering sign up to do so. The Prekindergarten parent orientation had approximately 15 parents attend across the two Prekindergarten classes, and the Kindergarten teachers had approximately 50 parents attend across the two Kindergarten

classes. Across the two orientations, approximately 15 parents signed up to volunteer (August 15, 2013, Fieldnotes).

New Initiatives for Parents. At Roosevelt, the beginning of the year was marked by new initiatives that the school wanted to offer to parents. These initiatives included English language classes for Spanish-speaking parents, a computer lab time for parents, a support group for expecting mothers, and a photography class for parents. These ideas were met with varying degrees of implementation. Some came to fruition while others struggled to become a reality. The most telling factors for new initiatives to get off the ground seemed to revolve around the reliability of the new initiative’s leadership, parent interest or turnout for various opportunities, and the time, human capital, physical and monetary resources required from the school. Essentially, the continuation of new initiatives was determined by whether the efforts required to implement the program were worth the outcomes.

Name	Description	Leader	Notes
1 st -8 th Grade Open House/Orientation	Beginning of year orientation for students and parents to learn about school policies and meet teachers and other school staff	Principal and Assistant Principal	
Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Orientations	Beginning of year orientation for students and parents to learn about school policies and meet teachers and other school staff	Prekindergarten and Kindergarten teachers	Hosted specifically for Prekindergarten and Kindergarten parents
English Language Classes	English as a Second Language classes for Spanish-speaking	Me	Held for three sessions and then discontinued

	parents		
Computer Lab for Parents	Computer classes and computer lab open hours for parents	Ms. Banks and Me	Never came to fruition
Support Group for Expecting Mothers	Regularly meeting group for pregnant mothers	Ms. Banks, Maria, and Birthmark Doulas	Never came to fruition
Photography Class	Six-week beginners' photography course	Katie	Successful one-time iteration

Photography Class. The successful implementation of a first-time photography class for parents was exciting for Roosevelt. Although parents had not specifically requested a photography class, due to Ms. Banks' close involvement with the local library and community center, she knew a community member, Anne, who was interested in offering a photography class at the community center. Ms. Banks reached out to Anne in order to coordinate the timing and supplies for a photography class for parents at Roosevelt, and Anne took the lead on planning the curriculum for the six-week photography course. Roosevelt provided a small stipend to Anne for each class that she taught, as well as the cameras and other materials needed for the class because Ms. Banks wanted to ensure that access to cameras and materials would not function as a barrier to parents' involvement with the class.

Four mothers regularly attended the mid-morning course once per week, and at the end of the six-week course the class closed with a public presentation of the mothers' photography at the November Roosevelt Family Association meeting. Due to the success of the class, Anne, Ms. Banks, and I talked about doing another iteration of the class in the following semester with hopes for higher parent participation. However, the follow-up class never came to fruition as Ms. Banks and I never followed up with advertisement for the new class.

ESL Class. Although the photography class was met with some success, other initiatives, like an English as a Second Language (ESL) class struggled to get off the ground. The ESL class for parents was conceived by Ms. Banks, who wanted to offer the growing Spanish-speaking population at Roosevelt an English language class. She felt that this would help Spanish-speaking parents better navigate the school, neighborhood, and employment spaces.

In order to develop the ESL class, Ms. Banks put me in touch with Mario Cortez, a community member who was interested in teaching an English class at the Rosa Parks Community Center. Coordinating a meeting time with Mario proved to be difficult, and after rescheduling our initial meeting several times, we were finally able to talk about the development of an ESL class. He was enthusiastic about the idea and seemed to have had experience teaching these types of classes before. He had previously worked with a nonprofit organization that focused specifically on serving the Hispanic community in New Orleans, and he had access to a curriculum that he thought could be used with parents. We talked about how to make the English class useful to parents – focused more on conversational skills than on grammar and syntax – but left the structure of the class flexible. Just before the classes were scheduled to begin, Mario landed a new job and had to withdraw from leading the English language classes. Because the class had already been included in the parent activity calendar, Ms. Banks and I discussed that I would take over the development of lessons and scheduling for the class.

In an attempt to accommodate working parents' schedules, I decided to host the ESL classes in the evening. I hosted the ESL class for three evenings in October and November, but the classes had consistently low turnout with fewer than three parents attending each meeting. Further, unlike with the photography workshop which only served

four parents, the parents who attended the ESL classes changed each time, so developing a consistent relationship and curricular trajectory proved difficult. Since the effort needed to sustain the class was not resulting in the outcomes that we had hoped, Ms. Banks and I decided that our time would be better spent with other programs. The open-ended nature of the program (i.e., the fact that it was not a closed six-week course) and the work required from staff to properly execute the classes, along with low, inconsistent turnout from parents, resulted in its quick end.

Expecting Mothers Support Group. Another ambitious initiative – the expecting mothers support group – also met with challenges. Early in the academic year, Ms. Banks was approached by a local community doula organization about a grant that they had received to fund low-cost prenatal care to qualifying expecting mothers in the Central Community. Ms. Banks thought that this provided an opportunity to partner with the local doula organization, so a group of staff at Roosevelt – Ms. Banks, Assistant Principal Scribo, Mrs. Calder (a Kindergarten teacher), Mrs. Patin (the social worker with Central Community Cares), and me - was tasked with finding the appropriate ways to identify expecting mothers. Our group debated the merits of various outreach methods – asking students if their mothers were pregnant, asking teachers to ask mothers if they were pregnant when they called them, including a sign-up sheet on the back of the weekly newsletter, or using a phone survey (August 30, 2013, Fieldnotes) - and after much deliberation about how to identify these parents, the group settled on the idea that it would be good to host a community baby shower to advertise the local goods and services available for expecting mothers. We could then use the attendee list to identify potential participants for the expecting mothers support group. The date was decided for November 10th to allow for two months to plan the event.

Although the group settled on the date for implementation of the community baby shower, after the group's initial meeting the baby shower was not mentioned again, and the baby shower and the expecting mothers support group never happened. One potential reason for the demise of the expecting mothers initiative was that no leader was identified to take on the organization for the initiative, which was a large undertaking considering the need to locate space, develop invitations, and gather donations for the event. The lack of leadership ensured that tasks remained undelegated and that none of the parent recruitment methods – the baby shower, teacher outreach, or parent newsletters announcing the group – were ever executed.

Parents' Computer Lab. Finally, another initiative that Ms. Banks and I were eager to get off the ground, but which never came to be, was the computer lab for parents. Ms. Banks hoped that a school-based computer lab for parents and the community could serve as a resource for the many parents at Roosevelt who she felt did not have regular access to computers at home. Ms. Banks thought that open computer lab hours for adults, coupled with voluntary computer classes, could be especially important for parents who were in school or looking for work.

Ms. Banks wanted to model the open computer lab at Roosevelt after a computer lab and computer class hosted at the Bonnet Street Community Center. Ms. Banks and I went to visit the local community center and spoke with the director, who explained the theory and execution behind their computer classes. At Bonnet Street Community Center, the computer program was meant largely to help community members to access email and online job banks, so much of their computer assistance was geared towards helping individuals learn those computer skills.

Ms. Banks and I sought to develop a similar system at Roosevelt but were met with three issues. First, we needed regular access to the computer labs at Roosevelt during the day. Ms. Banks and I discussed the best timing for open computer lab hours, and we decided that daytime hours would be best because the school was regularly open at that time, the lab would be easier to staff, and we were targeting parents who were unemployed in the hopes that access to computers could help these parents to find work. However, since Roosevelt offered computer classes to the students throughout the day, the computer labs were occupied for most of the day, making it difficult for parents to have open access to the computers. Second, we needed to identify someone who was able to monitor parent computer lab use and offer guidance to parents who needed it while the computer labs were open. In my role as parent liaison, I was willing to staff the computer lab for parents during school hours, but we were still faced with the fact that the computers were not available for parents during school hours because students were using them. Finally, Ms. Banks thought that one solution to gain access to computers for parents would be to buy new computers specifically for parent use, so she decided to apply for several grants. However, these grant applications were unsuccessful, and Roosevelt's budget did not have any additional funds to buy computers for parents. Thus, although Ms. Banks and I worked diligently to get this initiative off the ground through research with other organizations and grant applications, the resource challenges for this initiative proved to be too difficult to overcome.

Many of Roosevelt's parent programs were driven by the perceived needs of parents. However, parent involvement activities launched at the beginning of the year were met with mixed success. The major activity that already existed – parents' orientation and Open House – was highly successful with high rates of participation. This

is likely due to the energy and excitement of the beginning of the school year and the practical aspect of the event. The Open House provided the first opportunity for parents and students to meet their teachers and to receive information about the school's uniform, daily schedule,

Newer initiatives launched at the beginning of the year were not quite as successful. The success of these parent involvement initiatives seemed to hinge on three factors in particular: leadership from an individual at the school or in the community, manageable resource investment from Roosevelt, and parent participation. These factors came together in an informal cost-benefit analysis conducted by the school, though the analysis was not purely financially based. The factors were not fixed, but rather worked dynamically in organizing new parent involvement activities. For example, the photography class was successful because it required limited school resources – simply a classroom once per week for six weeks and approximately \$300 – and parent turnout, though low, was regular. The same parents attended the photography class week after week. On the other hand, though other activities like the ESL class or the expecting mothers support group required no money to start up, they required more intensive time investment from the school, and the programs had poorly identified leadership. The more nebulous nature of the ESL and expecting mothers programs, whose designs were in their infancy, also made it more difficult to get these programs off the ground. Finally, the computer lab for parents also required a significant investment from the school – in money. As Roosevelt staff, Ms. Banks and I were willing to put in the time necessary to research and write grants from this program since it was seen to fill such a need for parents at the school, but these efforts were unsuccessful, making it difficult to make the

program a reality. Thus, these factors – leadership, resources, and parent participation – worked together to inform the success of new parents programs at Roosevelt.

Throughout the School Year

In addition to the new initiatives attempted during the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year, Roosevelt had many existing programs that were successfully implemented throughout the year. Most of these parent involvement activities had been in existence prior to the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year – some for several years – while others were more recently launched.

Parent engagement with these activities seemed related to the effort that the various activities required on the part of the school and on the part of parents. For example, throughout the year, Roosevelt attempted to regularly contact parents through written and phone communications. Some of these communications, like weekly school newsletters or the automated phone call system, required relatively low effort from school staff, and the communications reached a broad range of parents. Other types of communications, such as teacher phone calls to individual parents, required more effort on behalf of Roosevelt staff and thus were executed more irregularly.

This was also true of some regularly scheduled parent involvement activities that required parent attendance at school, like Roosevelt Family Association meetings or weekly volunteering. These types of activities required greater effort on the part of the school staff to organize and sustain, and they required more effort on the part of parents to attend regularly, so attendance at these events tended to be limited. Somewhere in between communications and regularly scheduled parent involvement activities were special parent involvement events, which tended to have higher rates of participation, perhaps because

these special events were one-time events that felt more manageable for both school staff and parents.

The following sections provide in-depth descriptions of many of the parent involvement activities that occurred at Roosevelt throughout the year. (See Table 9 for an overview of parent activities at Roosevelt that took place throughout the year.)

Table 9. Activities that Occur Throughout the School Year			
Name	Timing	Leader	Notes
Roosevelt Weekly (School Newsletter)	Near-weekly	Principal Byrd and Assistant Principal Scribo	Followed same format every week
Roosevelt Phone Tree System	Varied	Principal Byrd	Recorded voice message by principal automatically sent to all parents with registered phone numbers
Progress Reports and Report Card Conferences	Report Card Conferences: 2/year, Progress Reports: during months that did not include Report Card Conferences	Principal Byrd and Assistant Principal Scribo, implemented by administration and teachers	Same progress report and report card template used across the school
Roosevelt Family Association (RFA) Meetings	Monthly, except for March	Ms. Banks with a rotating group of teachers each month	Teachers were required to sign up to help with RFA planning by administration
Roosevelt Rhino Guardians (Father's Group)	At least once per month	Ms. Banks and Brandon Cobson	
Roosevelt to Washington	Trip to Washington, DC for 6 th grade students who had attended Roosevelt since Kindergarten	Mrs. Calder	Participation in the trip was also opened to a select few students beyond those for whom the trip was originally intended
Volunteering	Varied	Ms. Banks and myself	One new volunteer orientation each semester; many parents volunteered

			regularly, though difficult to track
Fall Fest	School-wide Halloween festival with booths and rides	Mrs. Trout, implemented by teachers	
Holiday Showcase	Student performances for the holiday season	Ms. Banks, implemented by teachers who chose to participate	Hosted during December RFA meeting
Family Math and Literacy Night	Common Core academic stations hosting activities for students and parents to complete together	Principal Byrd, Assistant Principal Scribo, Ms. Banks	First launched during the 2012-2013 academic year
Annual Roosevelt Cook-Off	Parents cooked dishes that families sampled and then selected as winners	Ms. Banks and myself	First launched during the 2012-2013 academic year

School Communications for Parents. In order to get parents involved with all of the activities available at Roosevelt Charter School and in the Central Community, Roosevelt engaged in very deliberate communications with families at the school. In particular, Roosevelt focused on phone and written communications. These communications systems seemed to be similar to those used at other schools, regardless of the schools' demographics.

Roosevelt paid for a school-wide automated phone calling system, which they referred to as the "phone tree," that automatically called all parents and left them a message recorded by a school staff member, usually Principal Byrd. Principal Byrd recorded these calls when necessary, and they included information ranging from a school bus being delayed to a reminder about the next day's RFA meeting.

In addition to these automated calls, phone calls were also made by individual teachers, which the teachers were supposed to record in a log provided by the school. Teachers were supposed to call parents to remind them about events like report card

conferences and to touch base with parents every two weeks regarding students' academic and behavioral progress, though teachers varied in their compliance with this requirement. Teachers mentioned that they faced time constraints with reaching out to parents and often parents' registered phone numbers were disconnected. (For more information about teacher phone calls, see the Chapter 5.) Teachers commented that they also often used phone texts to communicate with parents.

Another form of communication regularly used by Roosevelt was written communications in the form of newsletters and fliers to remind parents about school policies or to communicate about upcoming events. The Roosevelt Weekly was the near-weekly newsletter distributed to students to take home to their parents. (See Figure 5 for an example of Roosevelt's weekly newsletter.) The newsletter always followed the same format each week, opening with a short paragraph informing parents of upcoming events or changes to school policy. This was followed by a section for updates and reminders, including reminders about upcoming events and an open call to parents who were interested in volunteering. The newsletter then closed with recognition to individuals at the school – whether it be the debate team for winning a tournament or thanking parents for volunteering – and with school policy reminders. The newsletters were typically created by Principal Byrd and Assistant Principal Scribo and then copied and distributed to teachers, who handed them to students in their classrooms. Students then brought the newsletters home to share with their parents.

In addition to the school-wide newsletter, lower elementary (PK-2nd grade) teachers also distributed grade-level newsletters, which were put together collaboratively

Figure 5. Roosevelt Weekly Newsletter (August 15, 2014, Document)



The School Children Deserve!

[Redacted] - Principal *** [Redacted] - Asst. Principal

8.15.2013

Dear [Redacted] Family, and Friends,

We are off to a great start and moving forward with our mission of LEARNING. I want to thank all those who came to our Family Orientation last Thursday. We had a great turnout!

The new Family Handbooks will be given out next week. If you would like to read last year's handbook, you can check out our website.
www.[Redacted].org

Thank you,

Principal [Redacted]

UPDATES AND REMINDERS:

- ✓ Afterschool Programs Registration: Thursday, August 22nd - 3:30 to 6:30, cafeteria
- ✓ Bead Project Shirts are on sale for \$8 and may be worn on Fridays.
- ✓ **PARENTS!** Want to volunteer? We need you! Come visit the [Redacted] Family Room and learn about ways to get involved with events, classroom support, garden work or mentoring. Take a computer class, English-as-a-Second-Language or a photography workshop. Drop-in Family Room hours are Tuesdays & Thursdays from 7:45am-4:00pm. Call Monica Candal or [Redacted] for more information! [Redacted]

HOWL OUT TO:

- The [Redacted] for helping us kick off the first day.

SCHOOL POLICY REMINDERS:

- Students Cannot Arrive to School Before 7:30 am.
 - Breakfast begins at 7:30 am.
 - Students will be marked tardy after 7:50 am.
 - Teachers are not able to hold parent conferences during instruction or supervision. Please call the office if you would like a teacher to contact you.
 - Students cannot be checked out after 3:00 pm, unless it is an emergency.
 - **STUDENT CELL PHONES SHOULD BE OFF DURING THE SCHOOL DAY.**
- FAILURE TO FOLLOW THIS POLICY WILL RESULT IN LOSS OF CELL PHONE PRIVILEGE.**

[Redacted] Street • New Orleans, LA [Redacted] • [Redacted]
In the HEART of [Redacted]

by the teachers in a given grade. Lower elementary teachers also included daily behavior reports with each student. Sometimes, these reports had sections to include individual notes to parents, which teachers sometimes wrote. Although administration had requested that all teachers send home parent newsletters describing each unit, the teachers in the upper elementary and middle school grades did not produce or distribute these newsletters.

Sometimes, Ms. Banks and I created fliers that were distributed to parents to announce upcoming parent involvement activities or events at the school, and these were often followed up with outreach to individual parents. For example, fliers for a parent involvement activity, such as a Rhino Guardians event, were often followed up with individual phone calls by me to the fathers who had signed up for the group. Similar outreach occurred to recruit parents to participate in the Cook-Off. In addition to two fliers that were sent home asking parents to sign up to bring a dish to the cook-off, I also placed phone calls to parents who had regularly attended RFA meetings throughout the year to see if they might want to participate in the Cook-Off. Individualized invitations for parents for certain events like Math and Literacy Night were also developed for parents and sent home through their children.

Teachers, administrators, and other school staff also targeted specific parents for communications depending upon the performance of their children, most often around behavior. All teachers talked about reaching out more frequently to parents whose students chronically misbehaved, though teachers had different experiences with parents' responsiveness to these requests. In addition, administrators required that all teachers reach out to the parents of students who were failing or in danger of repeating a grade.

Although it was clear that Roosevelt used the phone and written communications to keep parents apprised of goings-on at the school, what is unclear is how many parents

actually listened to the messages or read the newsletters, and teachers reported mixed results about parents' upkeep with daily reports on their children. In addition, although many teachers talked about regularly contacting parents, others noted that many parents' phone numbers did not work or had changed due to the monthly or temporary phone plans used by many parents. The success of parent communication efforts was thus difficult to gauge.

Report Card Conferences and Progress Reports. For the 2013-2014 academic year, Principal Byrd decided to divide Roosevelt's school year into trimesters, and the school distributed report cards to parents at the end of each trimester. For months in which a report card was not distributed, Roosevelt sent progress reports home with students to their parents. Progress reports were a way for the school to ensure that parents were kept up to date about their children's performance before final grades were shared in the trimester's report card.

In an effort to ensure that report cards reached parents, Roosevelt hosted report card conference afternoons at the end of the first two trimesters. These were opportunities for parents to come to Roosevelt to meet with teachers and review their child's report card. Although in previous years the school had set aside whole days for report card conferences, during the 2013-2014 academic year Principal Byrd chose instead to host their report card conference times on Wednesday afternoons from 2pm-5pm after the school had dismissed early. Some teachers chose to schedule individual times with parents while others simply let parents arrive on a first-come, first-serve basis. Report cards that were not picked up on report card conference days were sent home with students a few days later. Teachers varied in their satisfaction with the new report card conference schedule, as some felt that the new schedule conflicted with parents' work schedules.

During the first report card conference of the school year, the school also held a parent information session about the Common Core State Standards, which had begun receiving some public pushback across Louisiana. At the Common Core session, Assistant Principal Scribo opened with a 10-minute video about the Common Core and then reviewed sample Common Core questions with the parents. After Assistant Principal Scribo's presentation, the parents then had opportunities to ask questions about the Common Core. Most of the parents seemed supportive of the new standards while others felt that the verdict was still out. For example, one African-American parent mentioned that

“she attended a meeting about Common Core that went into detail about the standards. She says that many people are against the Common Core, but she is just trying to understand the standards. She wants to know whether the kids are going to be trained in the standards. The talk about the LEAP [Louisiana's standardized assessment] made it seem like a really scary test.” (November 13, 2013, Fieldnotes)

This parent later stated that she believed that students needed to be pushed academically, and another parent chimed in along those lines. “Sylvia raises her hand and says that she likes the Common Core because it helps the kids to think for themselves.” (November 13, 2013, Fieldnotes)

Although many of the parents were in support of the Common Core, for several of the parents their concern was less about the standards themselves and more about the transition to the standards and the accompanying high-stakes assessments, as Louisiana required public school students to pass the 4th and 8th grade assessments in order for students to be able to advance to the following grade level. One mixed-race parent also asked about accommodations for special populations of students, including students receiving special education services or those who were English Language Learners, and

Principal Scribo explained that those students' existing accommodations would stay in place (November 13, 2013, Fieldnotes).

According to my observations, approximately 20 parents and 15-20 children attended the Common Core information session during the first report card conference (November 13, 2013, Fieldnotes). This represented a spurt of parent attendance at the beginning of the conference, but parents also had the opportunity to trickle in throughout the afternoon until the conference time ended at 5pm.

Overall, both report card conferences seemed to have limited in-person parent participation across grade levels, though the younger grades tended to have more parents attending. During the first report card conference in mid-November,

“I enter the academic wing, and there are about 5-6 chairs placed in the hallway outside of each teacher's classroom [where parents can wait to talk to the teacher]. As you walk up the floors [to the older grades], there are fewer and fewer parents in the hallways, probably 4-5 families on the third floor (middle school), 5-10 families on the second floor (upper elementary) and about the same on the first floor (lower elementary).” (November 13, 2013)

During the second report conference in mid-February, I did similar rounds at different points in time during the conference.

“At around 2:30, I step into the hallway to see what the action is in parent-teacher conferences. I wander the first floor (lower elementary), and I see about 2-3 parents per classroom...On the second floor (upper elementary), I walk through and see about 7 parents in the hallway with one inside a classroom...On the third floor, I see two parents talking to teachers. For the most part, the teachers seem to be hanging together, sitting together in a classroom.” (February 19, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Two sets of subsequent rounds around the school during the second report card conference yielded similar information about parent attendance. When I asked some of the teachers about parent attendance at report card conferences, they noted that they preferred the full-day conference model that had been used the previous year because it provided more

flexibility to parents who worked different shifts throughout the day. Roosevelt did not host report card conferences after the last trimester because it was the end of the school year.

Roosevelt Family Association Meetings. Roosevelt hosted monthly Roosevelt Family Association (RFA) meetings on the third Tuesday of every month from September through May. RFA meetings were typically scheduled to be 90 minutes long from 5:00 PM-6:30 PM and hosted in the cafeteria. Prior to the 2013-2014 academic year, RFA meetings had typically been planned and executed by Ms. Banks and a haphazard staff team based on staff members' availability and interest in a given month. Ms. Banks had enlisted the help of community organizations like the Urban League to assist with RFA meetings the prior year. However, she had found the quality of community organizations' engagement inconsistent and potentially boring for parents. Thus, during Summer 2013 Ms. Banks enlisted the help of the administration to get more teachers and support staff involved in the planning and execution of RFA meetings. This resulted in the administration requiring all faculty and staff to sign up to participate in the planning of at least one RFA meeting at the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year. The staff signed up for each month were then charged with creating workshops for the RFA meetings that centered around one of Roosevelt's Rhino Pack Principles, or school values – Pride, Perseverance, Achievement, Acceptance, Creativity, Cooperation, Knowledge, and Kindness. For each monthly meeting, Ms. Banks and the teachers tried to organize at least two workshop activities to provide parents with choices for their participation.

In addition to organizing the workshops, teachers at each grade level signed up for at least one meeting at which their students would perform. Ms. Banks and other school staff saw student performances as an integral part of driving parent turnout for the RFA

meetings because they believed that parents were much more likely to attend an RFA meeting if their own children were performing. (See Table 10 for an overview of the principles, workshops, and performances for each 2013-2014 RFA meeting.)

This style of planning RFA meetings was met with some success. In addition to some school staff members who regularly attended the family association meetings – the school guidance counselor, the principal, and the special education coordinator, for example – the teachers who helped to plan a particular family association meeting were also in attendance. Approximately 20-40 families attended each Roosevelt Family Association meeting as well. Although a small number of families attended most of the family association meetings regardless of who was performing, the majority of families fluctuated, most often due to which grade level was performing during a given month as parents came to see their student perform.

Table 10. Description of RFA Meetings (2013-2014)			
	Rhino Value	Workshops	Student Performers
September	Pride	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Circle Up (community circle) 2. Art Activity 	1 st Grade
October	Acceptance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turning Conflict into Cooperation (community circle) 2. Art Activity based on <i>Rainbow Fish</i> 	Kindergarten
November	Creativity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creative problem-solving (community circle) 2. Pocket change and a shower curtain goes a long way! (math/reading skills) 	Middle School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A Modern Day Christmas Carol” (7th and 8th graders) • Hamlet Monologue (8th graders) • TED Talk: How to make breakfast for dinner (7th and 8th graders)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soulja Boy does Mesopotamia (6th graders)
December	Kindness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting through kindness (community circle) 2. 3-2-1 Kindness (group games and skits) 	Roosevelt Music Ensemble
January	Perseverance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Celebrating perseverance (building activity) 	3 rd Grade
February	Achievement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feeding mind, body, and soul for Achievement (presentation and activity) 	2 nd Grade
March	Cooperation	<i>No RFA Meeting (replaced with Math and Literacy Night)</i>	
April	Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoiding the summer knowledge gap: Exercising your brain! (academic web resources) 	4 th and 5 th Grades
May		<i>ANNUAL SCHOOL COOK-OFF</i>	

All RFA meetings followed roughly the same agenda. At 5:00pm, the cafeteria started serving families dinner. Ms. Banks felt that this was an important component of RFA meetings because it could attract parents who might not otherwise attend, and it provided a meal for hungry parents who might be coming to the meeting straight from

work. Dinner in the cafeteria allowed time for parents to trickle in and spend time with their children, with other families, and with teachers.

RFA dinners were typically the same dinner served to students in the after-school program, such as chicken in gravy with mashed potatoes. After dinner, around 5:30pm the principal typically stood at the front of the cafeteria and provided brief announcements for parents, reminding them of school policies or of upcoming events. Then, Ms. Banks would follow principal announcements by introducing the student performers for the evening. Typical student performances lasted 5-10 minutes, after which Ms. Banks explained the available workshop choices to parents. At that point, parents split into one or two different workshops for the following 40 minutes or so. Sometimes, all of the workshops were held in the cafeteria. However, often one workshop stayed in the cafeteria while the other went to the school library on the second floor. Approximately five minutes before the end of the RFA meeting, around 6:25pm, the parents would reconvene from their workshops in the cafeteria for a raffle prize after which families would leave.

Especially towards the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year, at least one of the workshops was a community circle facilitated by the Center for Peaceful Resolution. Community circles were a social-emotional development activity in which students and families had structured conversations about the month's Pack Principle. These community circles at RFA meetings paralleled the community circles that students had in their own classrooms every morning, and they provided an opportunity for parents to become familiar with the community circle process that their children were using during the day. This community circle workshops were especially important because Principal Byrd had stated that he feared that parents would not support the concept of community circles, in which students learned to speak with each other and resolve conflict through a structured

communication interaction (June 21, 2013, Fieldnotes). Having community circles at RFA meetings allowed parents to witness community circles in action and in a fun setting. The other RFA workshop was typically an interactive, hands-on activity designed by the teachers and staff at Roosevelt.

November's RFA meeting typified most RFA meetings. A summary of the event follows:

As Roosevelt's afterschool program wraps up in the school's cafeteria, parents begin to file in for the RFA meeting. The cafeteria serves chicken and rice in a sauce, and some parents file through the cafeteria line to get dinner while others go straight to the chairs that have been set out in rows. As parent liaison, I staff the entrance table to the cafeteria, signing in parents as they arrive and giving them raffle tickets for the raffle that will take place at the end of the meeting. I recognize several parents who frequently attend school events, including Mr. Heathmore, Mrs. Earl, and Mr. Manship.

The meeting opens with Principal Byrd introducing Anne, the photography class teacher, who then showcases parents' photography from her class as a projected slideshow. After the slideshow, Principal Byrd mentions that the student performances this evening, which are centered around the middle school, will start with a student interpretation of *The Christmas Story*. This is followed by a performance of a soliloquy from *Hamlet*, an attempted TED Youth Conference video (which did not work due to computer technical difficulties), and a performance of Soulja Boy's "Superman" with lyrics adjusted to be about Mesopotamia.

After the performances, Ms. Banks explains to the audience that there will be two breakout workshops – a community circle about creative problem-solving and a math and English workshop titled, "Pocket Change and a Shower Curtain Goes a Long Way." I sit with the math and English workshop where parents and students watch as one set of teachers have used a shower curtain and tape to create a coordinate plane which students can then use to practice math problems. The other set of teachers in the workshop uses change to explain the difference between consonant and vowel sounds for students.

I head to the library for the community circle where a smaller number of families are seated in a circle and using a ladder metaphor to explain how to have a problem-solving conversation between students and parents. Each rung of the ladder represents a step towards solving the problem.

At approximately 6:30, the community circle workshop disbands in order to return to the cafeteria where the parents from the Pocket Change and a Shower Curtain

workshop are waiting. A small group of students crowds around Ms. Banks to pull raffle tickets and to determine winners for the evening's prizes. Ms. Banks draws about four names, and each parent whose name is pulled receives a bag with small gifts inside. (November 19, 2013, Fieldnotes)

Most of RFA meetings followed the same structure of dinner, performances, and workshops like the one that occurred in November. In May, however, the RFA meeting was the school's Cook-Off, which is discussed in more detail under the special events section.

Roosevelt Rhino Guardians. The Roosevelt Rhino Guardians was Roosevelt's fathers' group. The Rhino Guardians initially started at the end of the 2012-2013 academic year when Ms. Banks and the social worker for Central Community Cares, Maria Patin, called for all fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other significant men in the lives of Roosevelt's students. (I continue to refer to "fathers" as the participants of the Rhino Guardians, acknowledging that the term describes all father-like figures in the lives of students, not necessarily only biological fathers.) Mrs. Patin and Ms. Banks decided to pull together this group of fathers in order to counter the absentee father narrative that seemed to permeate the African-American community in New Orleans. Mrs. Patin and Ms. Banks believed that there were many active male role models in their students' lives, and it was important to make this group visible within the school and community. Many of the men who participated with the Rhino Guardians agreed with Mrs. Patin and Ms. Banks, mentioning the importance of serving as African-American male role models for their own children and for students at the school.

According to Ms. Banks, this call for fathers resulted in the first Rhino Guardian meeting, which took place in May 2013 with strong father participation. The strong participation from the Rhino Guardians encouraged Roosevelt's staff to continue the

initiative, which held a follow-up meeting in June 2012. Participation at the second meeting was much lower, though Ms. Banks and Mrs. Patin attributed this to the fact that it was the summertime, and they were not able to publicize the fathers’ group event as they would have been able to during the regular academic year.

In order to better serve the fathers, during the summer before the 2013-2014 school year, Ms. Banks recruited Brandon Cobson, a local African-American man from the New Orleans Fathers Project at a local university, to help to lead the group. According to their website, the mission of the Fathers Project was “to develop comprehensive social supports, programs, public awareness and policies that would assist fathers in reaching their fullest potential,” and one way that the organization sought to accomplish this was by establishing fathers’ groups across New Orleans. Ms. Banks felt that Brandon’s expertise in fathers’ issues, his roots in the local community, and his gender could help to create a useful space for fathers to engage with the school and their children.

Table 11. Roosevelt Rhino Guardian Meetings and Events (2013-2014)			
	Description	Participation	Organized/Led by
August	Breakfast Planning Meeting for the year	5 Guardians	Ms. Banks and Brandon Cobson
	Greeting students as they entered during the first day of school	4-5 Guardians	Me
	Maintenance Day Planning Meeting	1 Guardian	Ms. Banks
September	Breakfast Planning Meeting for the Year	Approximately 10 Guardians	Ms. Banks, Maria, and Brandon Cobson
November	Breakfast Planning Meeting for the Year	N/A	Ms. Banks, Maria, and Brandon Cobson
	Maintenance Day	3 Guardians	Ms. Banks

	Men's Night Out: fathers and sons hanging out	9 Guardians	Ms. Banks and Brandon Cobson
December	Guardians and Books Event (fathers read with their children)	10 Guardians	Ms. Banks
January	Boys II Men Luncheon: fathers mentoring at-risk middle school boys	4 Guardians	Ms. Banks and Brandon Cobson
February	NBA All-Star Event: fathers playing basketball with students and then meeting independently	7 Guardians	Brandon Cobson
March	Math and Literacy Night Booth: Guardians hosted a booth at the event to recruit other fathers	0 Guardians	Ms. Banks, Brandon Cobson
April	Spit'In Anger Movie Viewing	N/A	Brandon Cobson
	College Tours	0	Ms. Banks and Brandon Cobson
May	End-of-Year Breakfast Meeting	10	Ms. Banks

Rhino Guardian meetings and events covered a range of issues and activities. (See Table 11 for an overview of Rhino Guardian meetings and events throughout the year.) Meetings at the beginning of the school year sought to gather fathers' input about the activities that they wanted to accomplish throughout the year. At the beginning of the year, fathers mentioned wanting to help with school beautification, hosting an exhibition basketball game, participating in a karate program facilitated by Mr. Cobson, and setting up a father/son mentoring program, in addition to regularly gathering for breakfast meetings. Many of these activities – as well as others – came to fruition throughout the

school year with the support of the organizing staff – Ms. Banks, Mrs. Patin, Mr. Cobson, and me. Other activities, such as the first day of school greeting, Guardians and Books, Boys II Men Luncheon, and college tours, were developed through ideas from the Rhino Guardian organizing staff, creating a space for fathers to participate.

The Roosevelt Rhino Guardian activities varied in their structure. Some of the meetings provided an opportunity for fathers to interact with students around school. For example, in January the school facilitated Boys II Men, a meeting between fathers who were interested in mentoring and a group of middle school boys at Roosevelt who were consistently facing discipline challenges at Roosevelt. Four men attended this meeting and talked to the boys about the challenges they had faced growing up and what they have learned from those challenges, encouraging the boys to make choices at school that placed them on an easier path:

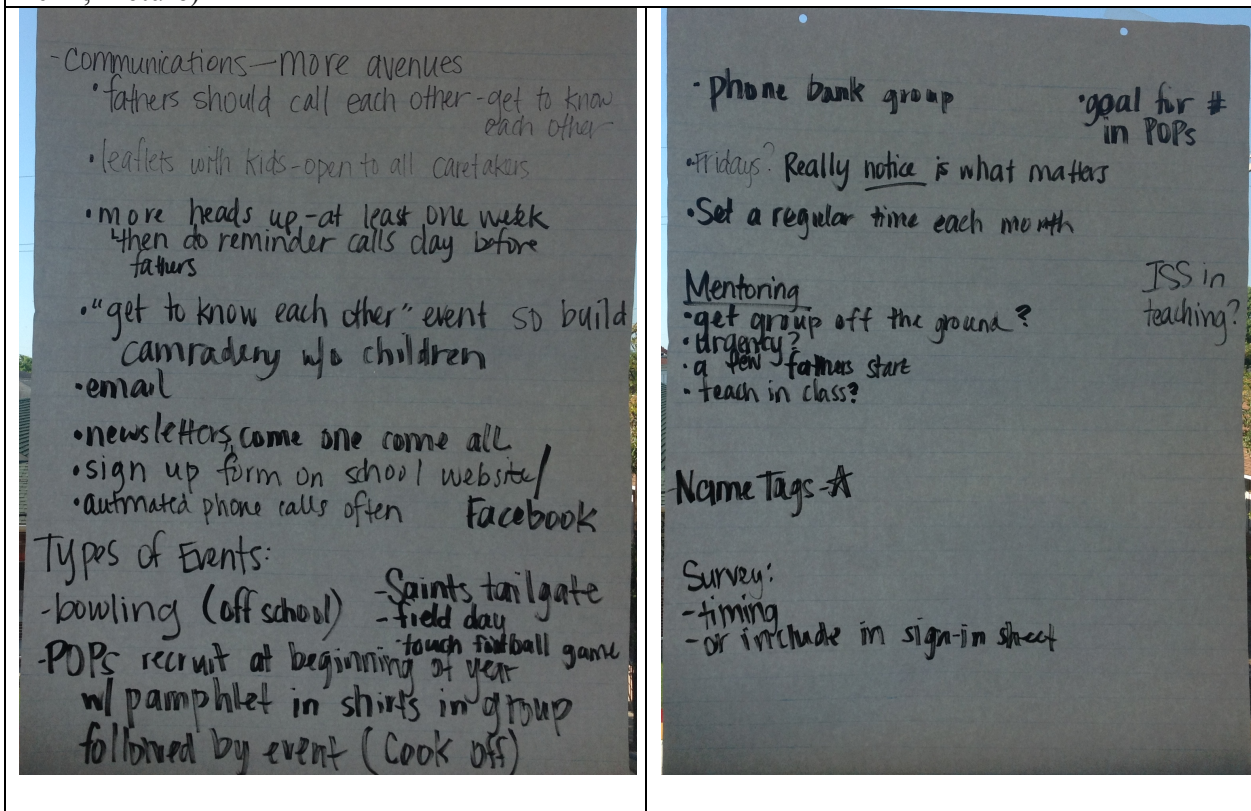
“William Heathmore is telling the boys about his life. He mentions that when he was young, his mom was incarcerated for five years. At that time, he had assumed becoming the man of the house and then his sister became pregnant. William says that his mother blamed him for a long time for letting his sister get pregnant and not keeping an eye on her.

...Donald asks the boys which words come to mind when they hear William’s story – about how he got paralyzed by trying to take a motorcycle, about being incarcerated, about his sister’s pregnancy. Donald says that the word that comes to his mind is about responsibility, about choices – some good and some bad.” (January 30, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Donald shared his own story about struggles with addiction while another father, Aubrey Jenkins, talked about how he started following the “wrong crowd” when he was younger (January 30, 2014). These fathers shared these experiences with hopes that the young men listening to them would be able to avoid some of their mistakes and perform better at school.

Other Rhino Guardian meetings provided a fellowship opportunity for fathers only, either for planning other activities or for the fathers to talk to each other about the challenges facing them. The End-of-Year Breakfast meeting is an example of a meeting that had a fathers-only component – providing feedback about the program for the year and thinking about improvements for the following year – and an opportunity for fathers to interact with their children during breakfast and the sharing ceremony. The End-of-Year Breakfast opened with fathers talking about successes and challenges to the Rhino Guardian program with feedback captured for staff. This feedback session, facilitated by Ms. Banks and me, included the Guardians’ feedback about issues ranging from outreach to meeting timing to suggestions for future activities to include as part of the Guardians program. (See Figure 6 for a picture of the feedback provided by the Rhino Guardians.) This feedback session was then followed by an opportunity for the Rhino Guardians to write a note to their students, expressing their hopes and wishes for their students, at which point the Rhino Guardians’ children joined the breakfast and spent time with their fathers talking about hopes and dreams. The breakfast ended with the children giving their fathers a keyring thanking their fathers for their participation during the school year.

Figure 6. Pictures of Roosevelt Rhino Guardians' End-of-Year Breakfast Feedback (May 16, 2014, Picture)



Participation in various Roosevelt Rhino Guardian meetings was inconsistent over time. One meeting had only one father in attendance while others had up to 20 fathers in attendance. Most often, 5-10 fathers showed up to participate with the meetings. As the logistical organizers of the meetings, Ms. Banks and I tried to vary the meeting dates and times in order to accommodate a wide range of schedules. We also regularly sent home fliers, targeted invitations, and made phone calls to inform the fathers about upcoming events, though we were unclear about which efforts led to more or less success with father participation.

Roosevelt to Washington. One new initiative that got successfully underway during the 2013-2014 academic year, but which also had recurring meetings throughout the year, was the Roosevelt to Washington initiative. This trip was designed to give a

small group of Roosevelt's 6th graders the opportunity to travel to Washington, DC. Mrs. Calder, one of the Kindergarten teachers at Roosevelt, decided to develop the Roosevelt to Washington initiative as a way to reward students who had attended Roosevelt since Kindergarten when she had taught many of them. Mrs. Calder also reflected that growing up, her own family had had limited means to travel, so Roosevelt to Washington provided Roosevelt's students with an opportunity to travel that might not otherwise be available.

Although this initiative was not originally started as part of Wilson's parent involvement programming, due to the nature of the activity for students – essentially, an expensive inter-state field trip – Roosevelt to Washington came to require significant parent involvement for the participating students. In order to organize Roosevelt to Washington, Mrs. Calder recruited a group of teachers who were interested in helping to chaperone and plan the field trip to Washington, DC. Together, this group developed the itinerary and activities for the trip to Washington, DC, which included trips to the Lincoln and Washington memorials, a trip to the Washington, DC football team's stadium to examine the controversy surrounding the team's name, and a tour of the White House. This group of teachers also helped to fundraise and lead meetings for parents of students who attended the field trip. Fundraisers included a carwash, a garage sale, and a gala, most of which were largely organized by teachers but implemented with some parent volunteers.

Math and Literacy Night. Math and Literacy Night was a once-per-year parent involvement activity hosted for the first time during the 2011-2012 academic year, and administrators cited this event as a successful parent involvement events because a large number of parents participated in an event that was not mandatory. At this event, parents

were able to wander across academic stations in the building to interact with their children and with their children's teachers to engage in academic activities together.

Because the Rhino Value for March 2014 was Cooperation, for the 2013-2014 Math and Literacy Night the school staff designed math and literacy activities that focused on Common Core and cooperative learning. Faculty and staff designed and staffed activities at eight stations, focusing on academic skills from Research & Inquiry to Performance Tasks. Several community partners, including the Center for Peaceful Resolution, ChildrenFirst, and Artful Kids, also hosted tables at the event. (See Figure 7 for a description of each of the activities and stations for Roosevelt's 2013-2014 Math and Literacy Night.)

Figure 7. Ms. Banks' Summary of Math and Literacy Night Stations (March 11, 2014, Email)

Math & Literacy Night Stations			
Workshops	Team	Description	Location/Room #
Speaking and Listening	[REDACTED]	Question and Answer Game with Instruments; Locomotive game using the smartboard	Room 205- Ms. [REDACTED]
Performance Task	[REDACTED]	Hands-on activities with layered questions, relating performance task concept. Themes will be grocery, laundry and kitchen. Activities will be grouped into PK/1, 2/3, 4-6, 7/8.	Room 212- Ms. [REDACTED]
Writing	[REDACTED]	Journal-making exercise. Will provide writing prompts and themes for journals i.e. 'all about me' 'my recipe book' 'travel log'. Participants will have the opportunity to personalize their own journals and take them at the conclusion of the exercise	Room 219- Ms. [REDACTED]
Reading on Level Texts	[REDACTED]	"Developing a Love of Reading": Reading comprehension game cubes (make and take); flash card game with sentence builder. Will distribute a list of grade level texts to parents. NOPL will do book giveaway, library card info and read-aloud schedule	Library
Modeling	[REDACTED]	Planning a Birthday Party: Working through math word problems and a budget template	Room 216- Ms. [REDACTED]
Research & Inquiry	[REDACTED]	Ideas: engineering a trebuchet (simple machine) using everyday items, citing sources accurately, compiling a brochure	Room 225- Mr. [REDACTED]

Student Explanations & Defending Point of View	[REDACTED]	Role playing skit (parent and child conversations): Student demands such as shoes, technology, going to a friends house, defending something that happened at school. Parents will be cued with questions to ask and will take home templates.	Room 215- Ms. [REDACTED]
Problem Solving with Others	[REDACTED]	"Interactive Grocery Extravaganza"	Room 211- Mr. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	Ms. [REDACTED]	Arts integration workshop	Teacher Workroom
[REDACTED]	Peer Facilitators		Library (near entrance of library)
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Presentation on Common Core for parents	Room 210, Ms. [REDACTED]'s office
Tables			
Check In Table	[REDACTED]		1st floor hallway, at bottom of stairs
Food & Drink	[REDACTED]		Table in hallway outside of the library
Raffle/Prize	Ms. [REDACTED], Nurse [REDACTED]		On display downstairs near the check in table
New Orleans Public Library	Ms. [REDACTED]	Will give out information about library cards,	Library
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] Leaders	Give out resource cards, recruit others to participate in events	2nd floor hallway table
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Will give distribute info about the afterschool program	2nd floor hallway table
[REDACTED]	Ms. [REDACTED]	Will give out info about Kidsmart	2nd floor hallway table
Review of Parent Compact & the Parent Involvement Plan (Family	[REDACTED]	review of parent plan	2nd floor hallway table
Krewe de Food	Ms. [REDACTED] & Ms. [REDACTED]	selling goods made by the Krewe de Food group	2nd floor hallway table

When families arrived at the school for Math and Literacy Night, they checked in at a main table at the school's entrance, where they received a card with the names of each

station and table. Families could earn stickers for their participation at each station or table, and once families earned a certain number of stickers, they were eligible to enter into a raffle for prizes. The hope was that this encouraged families to visit different stations. The school also provided pizza and drinks and a pizza party incentive to the grade that had the most families attend. According to Ms. Banks, the school “had 61 students so I think it’s safe to say we had about 100 people participate in Math & Lit Night last week. The pizza party goes to 1st grade because they had 15 kids attend” (March 24, 2014, Email).

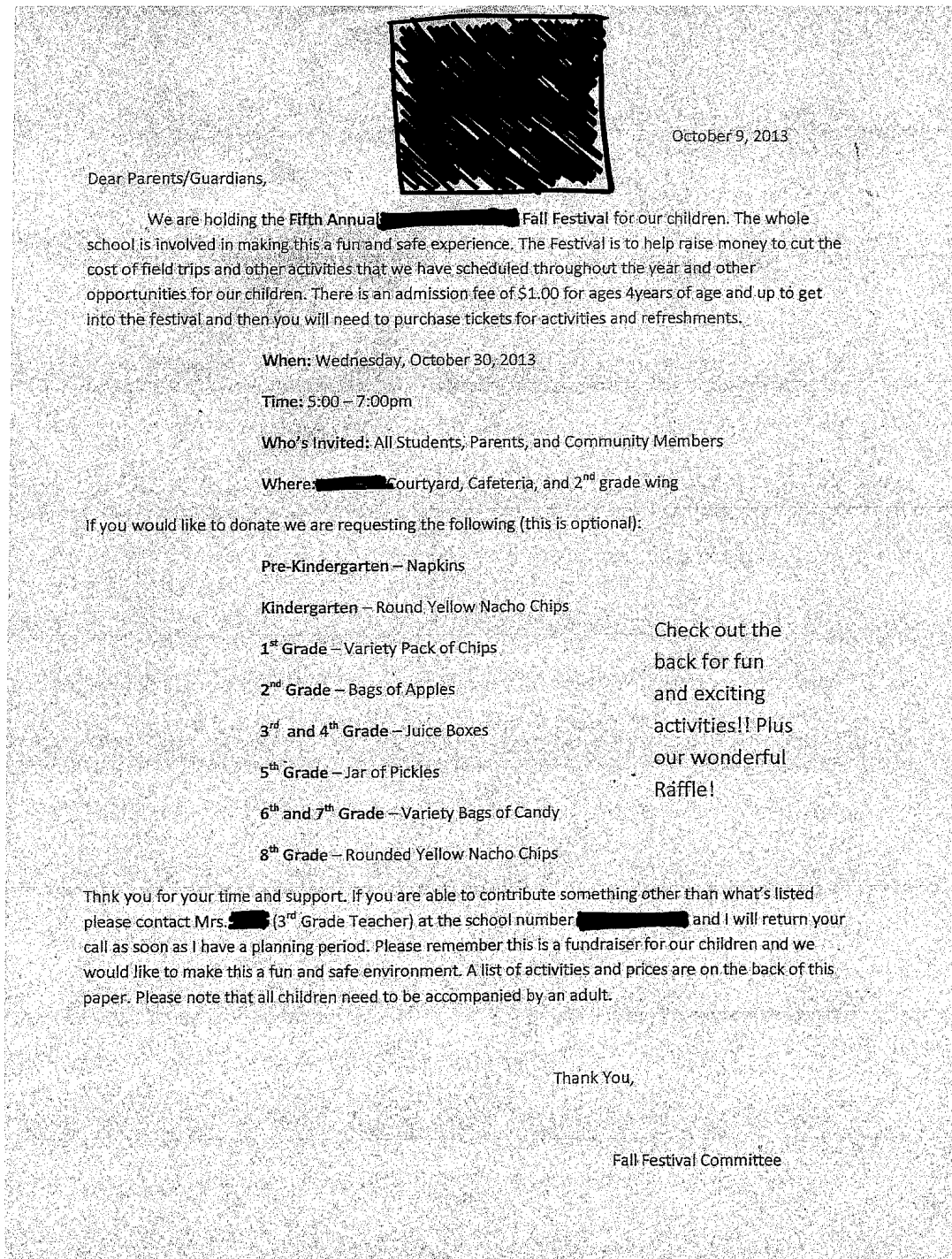
Annual School Cook-Off. Like Roosevelt’s Math and Literacy Night, the Roosevelt Annual Cook-Off was also an event that first took place during the 2012-2013 academic year. Ms. Banks organized the first instantiation of the event and was met with some struggles in recruiting parents who were willing to cook dishes for the Cook-Off. However, she felt that it was worth trying to do again during the 2013-2014 academic year, so she and I worked to recruit parents to cook, to develop a tasting and voting process, and to obtain student performers for the event. Approximately two weeks before the Cook-Off, a flier for the Cook-Off was distributed to all students, and parents who were interested in participating in the Cook-Off returned a form signaling their interest. Ms. Banks also encouraged teachers to participate. As parent liaison, I then followed up with phone calls to those who had indicated their interest to confirm their participation. I also called parents who had regularly participated with RFA meetings throughout the year to recruit them to participate as well. Ms. Banks asked me to inform each participant that they should only bring in one tray of food that could then be sampled in order to make participation inexpensive and feasible. She also mentioned that participants could bring

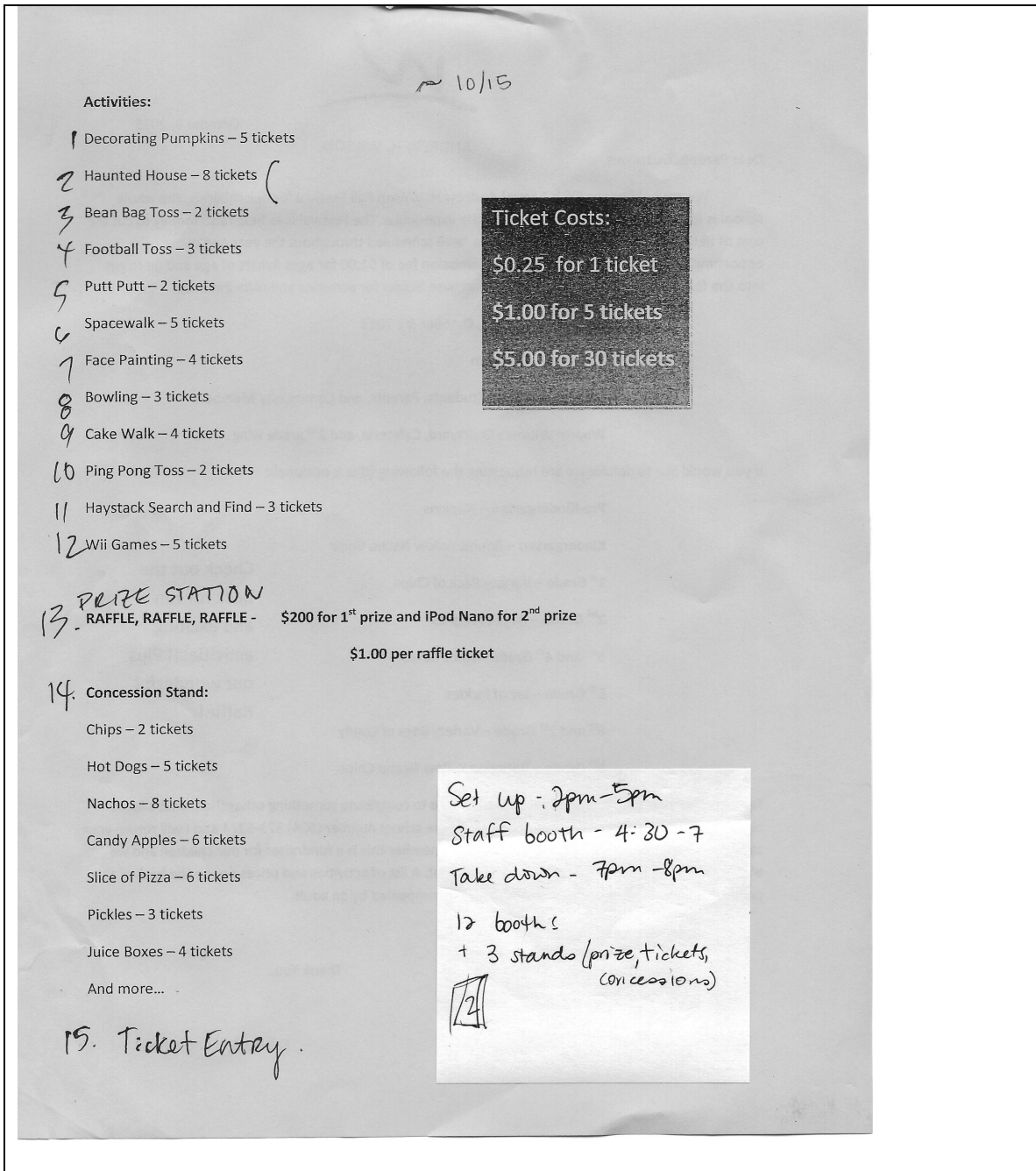
their dish to me in the morning or the day before the Cook-Off in case they had to work right before the Cook-Off.

The evening of the Cook-Off, which occurred during the regularly scheduled RFA meeting in May, seven parents participated, bringing in three main dishes and four desserts. Similar to other RFA meetings, the event began with student performances, this time featuring Roosevelt's afterschool programs and Music Ensemble. During the student performances, sections of the audience were called to join the buffet line and enjoy small tastings of each dish. After student performances were over and everyone had passed through the buffet line, families cast their ballots, and the winners were announced. Each winner received a prize gift card.

Fall Fest. Fall Fest was another one of the major family events put on by Roosevelt. On Halloween, Roosevelt's staff encouraged students to dress in costume and then to return to the school in the evening to participate in a carnival. Ms. Trout, the 3rd grade English-Language Arts teacher, organized Roosevelt's staff to develop ideas for booths and to decide which teachers would spearhead which booths. Roosevelt's administration required all staff to participate in the set-up of Fall Fest. In addition, the administration rented carnival rides for younger students, and the computer teacher led the efforts to redesign one of Roosevelt's hallways as a Haunted House. Students and their families were encouraged to buy tickets to participate in the activities and to buy food in the school's cafeteria, and Principal Byrd acted as emcee for the event. (See Figure 8 for Roosevelt's letter to parents about Fall Fest.)

Figure 8. Parent Letter about Fall Fest (October 15, 2013, Document)





Given that teachers were the main organizers and staffers for Fall Fest, there were few opportunities for parents to be involved in its operation. Some parent volunteers did help to set-up the event and to clean in the evening after the event was over. However, most parent involvement with Fall Fest was in families' attendance. Fall Fest was very

well attended with hundreds of parents and students running around in the courtyard. Many interviewed parents mentioned how much they enjoyed the carnival and that their attendance had largely been driven by students' desire to attend.

Volunteering. A handful of parents offered to volunteer in Roosevelt classrooms on a weekly basis. The most common barrier to regular volunteering at Roosevelt was parents' job schedules, which often rotated and thus made it difficult for parents to negotiate a regular volunteering date and time with me or with their child's teacher. Some parents who started the school year were able to serve as regular volunteers because they had open time due to unemployment. Several of these parents later found employment and thus were no longer able to come into the classroom regularly. In addition, sometimes teachers shifted their daily schedules without consulting parent volunteers and thus a volunteering time that had once worked no longer suited the parents' schedule.

A greater number of parents were able to volunteer to help with one-time events like set up the Fall Fest or the Roosevelt to Washington Gala, cook for the Roosevelt Cook-Off, or chaperone for classroom field trips. For example, I was asked to recruit parent volunteers to help with the set-up and takedown of Fall Fest, and 14 parents volunteered to help. Of those 14 parents, seven parents ended up actually attending Fall Fest and assisting with its implementation. One of these parents later participated in the Cook-Off, which consisted solely of parent participants, and another of these parents also volunteered to help to set up the Roosevelt to Washington Gala since her son was one of the trip's participants. These parents who volunteered for special events became recognizable throughout the year, as in addition to volunteering, they were often regular participants in activities like the RFA meetings, report card conference meetings, or Roosevelt Rhino meetings.

These semi-regular volunteers developed into a core group of parents who regularly participated with activities at Roosevelt, a group of parents that became recognized by teachers and other staff members at the school. Although teachers varied in their viewpoints about whether Roosevelt had a strong level of parent involvement, most teachers recognized this core group of parent participants who were regularly visible and engaged with the school’s parent involvement efforts.

End of the School Year

Parent involvement activities at the end of the school year were largely celebratory events like graduations and awards ceremonies. In addition to these celebrations, the end of the school year also marked an opportunity to reflect upon the previous school year’s parent involvement efforts, as school staff sought to analyze their parent involvement efforts, participation, and areas for improvement. Most of this analysis was completed solely by school staff – mainly the principal, assistant principal, Ms. Banks, and me – with the exception of an end-of-year Rhino Guardians breakfast event when fathers were asked for their feedback about the Rhino Guardians program. (For a description of end-of-year parent involvement activities, see Table 12.)

Table 12. End-of-Year Parent Involvement Activities		
Name	Description	Leader
Awards Ceremonies	PreK, 1 st -7 th grades	Teachers
Kindergarten Graduation Ceremony	Graduation ceremony included recognition for parent volunteers, certificates for students and student performances	Kindergarten teachers
8 th Grade Graduation Ceremony	Graduation ceremony included subject-specific and GPA awards for students, student performance, and student slide show	Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean of Culture, Guidance Counselor, and Computer Teacher

Graduation Ceremonies. The beginning and end of the school year seemed to have the moments of highest parent involvement. In addition to the beginning-of-year orientation, the events with the greatest parent presence were the Kindergarten and 8th grade graduation ceremonies. At these events, a large number of parents and extended family members attended to celebrate their children's successes throughout the year.

Roosevelt also made a big to-do about these celebrations, investing time, effort, and finances into creating meaningful events for students and families. The Kindergarten teachers cohosted the Kindergarten graduation ceremony with the principal arriving to perform Bob Marley's "Three Little Birds" with the students. The girls in the class were dressed in white dresses while the boys wore pants and button-down shirts. The teachers offered certificates of recognition to parents who had regularly volunteered in their classrooms, and students received certificates of promotion. The ceremony lasted for approximately an hour, at which points the students were dismissed and spent time taking pictures and celebrating with their parents (May 22, 2014, Fieldnotes).

The 8th grade graduation ceremony was even more elaborate than the Kindergarten graduation ceremony. When I arrived at the school where the ceremony was to be held, a well-respected local high school, there were a number of African-American families seated and standing around in the lobby. A security guard asked me if I was a teacher, and I explained that I was on the school's staff. The security guard directed me upstairs towards the auditorium where I saw students filing out of the auditorium in a line. The students were dressed up formally for the occasion with the girls required to wear black dresses and the boys required to wear jackets. Ms. Banks exited the auditorium with a look of exasperation, explaining that the 8th graders had just been reprimanded because they

had not been behaving and the program was already running late. The 8th graders filed into a hallway off the entrance of the auditorium, and parents and I entered the large room. The auditorium was decorated in Roosevelt's school colors – green and black – for the event, which was emceed by the principal.

Like the Kindergarten ceremony, the 8th grade graduation ceremony also lasted approximately an hour, consisting of awards to students in individual subjects as well as overall academic performance awards. A group of 8th grade students performed R. Kelly's "The World's Greatest" with some success. Several of the students forgot the words, and the student group was hard to hear. During the ceremony, the students and families also viewed a slideshow of pictures from the eighth grade class. The slideshow was particularly well-received by the students who giggled and oohed and aahed over the pictures. Over 150 family members were in attendance at the 8th grade graduation ceremony, as several parents stood in the audience to take pictures of their children as they processed into or out of the auditorium or received awards (May 20, 2014, Fieldnotes B).

Award Ceremonies. Individual grade levels also hosted ceremonies, though these ceremonies were much less elaborate than the graduation ceremonies held for the Kindergarten and 8th grade classes. These awards ceremonies seemed to be primarily for teachers to celebrate and award students. Parents were much less likely to be in attendance at these award ceremonies. For example, although I had intended to attend the 6th grade awards ceremony, the schedule for the grade-level awards ceremonies shifted from the original plan. When I arrived to the cafeteria on May 20 expecting to see the 6th graders, the awards ceremony for 1st and 2nd grades was underway. Three parents attended the 1st and 2nd grades awards ceremony, but it's unknown whether low parent attendance was due to disinterest on the part of parents or because the schedule had been changed at the last

minute. The programs for awards ceremonies were much less elaborate and less organized, as the principal passed the microphone to teachers out of order and teachers simply made announcements and offered certificates recognizing students who exemplified Roosevelt's Rhino Values (May 20, 2014, Fieldnotes A).

Reflections. In addition to being an opportunity to celebrate students, the end of the school year also marked a time for Roosevelt's staff to reflect on the past academic year. The Roosevelt Rhino Guardians also met to discuss programming for the past year and how they would like to see the future of the program. (See earlier Roosevelt Rhino Guardians section for a description of the Rhino Guardians' feedback.)

Ms. Banks and school staff analyzed the successes and challenges facing various specific parent involvement activities. However, they also reflected more broadly about Roosevelt's identity as a community school and sustainability moving forward. Ms. Banks had brought up the theme of Roosevelt as a community school in conversations throughout the year, but poor test score results at the end of the academic year jeopardized the school's future, making Roosevelt's identity as a community school more salient. Ms. Banks felt that identifying as a community school was a major part of Roosevelt's identity and a major draw for many of the families whose children attended Roosevelt, especially in a school district where schools competed for students. Ms. Banks seemed to think that the Roosevelt's attractive status as a community school was predicated on two things: (1) its programming available to the community and (2) the student population reflecting the community within which Roosevelt had been built. Ms. Banks seemed to become increasingly frustrated as the school struggled to meet these objectives throughout the year.

Throughout the year, Ms. Banks seemed caught in a tug of war with the Director of Finance and Operations to secure funding for her position and more generally for parent involvement and community programming. The Director of Finance and Operations argued that Ms. Banks' role was community centered and thus should be paid by the Central Community Improvement Association (CCIA). However, Ms. Banks countered that the majority of the work that she did was for the school and its afterschool programming, and that the CCIA did not have the budget necessary to contribute additional funds to her salary. These resource struggles were always a reality for Ms. Banks' position, but she became even more invested in the importance of her role at the school because the school branded itself as a community school. Ms. Banks' role and reputation were an integral part of this brand.

Yet the Director of Finance and Operations faced struggles of his own. The school's budget was tight, and Ms. Banks acknowledged that the school funded many academic staff positions that she was not sure were absolutely necessary. However, these positions continued to be funded by the school. At one board meeting at the end of the school year, the Director of Finance and Operations suggested that one way to improve the school's finances might be to merge with another Charter Management Organization (CMO) to take advantage of economies of scale. Ms. Banks expressed dismay over this idea because merging with another CMO would hinder Roosevelt's independence, and the Central Community Board also refused to merge with another CMO for fear that Roosevelt's status as a community school could be jeopardized. As a consequence, Roosevelt's financial situation remained tight, so Ms. Banks continued to apply for external grants to fund the school's parent involvement and community programming, a

source of funding that was far from guaranteed. The unreliability of programming funding seemed to frustrate Ms. Banks and made it difficult to plan for the future.

Besides ensuring parent involvement and community programming, Ms. Banks felt that another important element of Roosevelt becoming a strong community school was for the school to reflect the demographics of the greater Central Community. Despite Roosevelt's location in the Central Community, the school's student body had a much higher minority population than the Central Community. According to the 2010 census, the Central Community was 61% African-American, 29% White, and 7% Latino. Roosevelt, however, was 92% African-American and 7.5% Latino with fewer than 1% of students at Roosevelt being White. These demographics are not unusual for schools in New Orleans. However, Ms. Banks felt that this reflected and reinforced the resegregation of New Orleans' school system. She consequently sought to align Roosevelt with a handful of New Orleans public charter schools whose missions centered specifically around economic and racial diversity. Her goal was to visit these schools over the summer to learn from them and to perhaps form the beginnings of a city-wide community schools coalition that included Roosevelt.

Ms. Banks faced several policy and internal challenges to remaking the demographics of Roosevelt, however. After Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans became an open enrollment school district, meaning that any family in the school district could apply to any school within the boundaries of the city. This was an important part of the Recovery School District-New Orleans' (RSD-NO) parent choice policies in which parents could apply for their students to attend any school within the city, and schools were required to accept students as long as they had available slots. This often resulted in a student body that came from neighborhoods across the city. It also meant that families

from the Central Community could attend schools outside of Central. Because Roosevelt faced struggling performance scores from the state, many neighborhood families likely opted for schools outside of the Central Community.

Roosevelt also had the challenge of being a Type 5 charter school, meaning that it was taken over by the RSD-NO because it had been a failing school. Unlike Roosevelt, many of the schools that Ms. Banks cited as potential partners in creating a community schools coalition were Type 2 charter schools that were created after Hurricane Katrina. These schools started as new schools and often grew from the early elementary grades, adding a grade each year that the school existed. Because many of these schools were founded with missions prioritizing economic and racial diversity, these schools focused their early recruitment efforts and policies to support these missions. Roosevelt, on the other hand, existed as a traditional school prior to RSD-NO takeover. With the RSD-NO takeover, the school retained much of its same student population and the legacy of the pre-Katrina version of Franklin D. Roosevelt School. Thus, unlike other community schools in the city, which could build racially and economically diverse student populations from the beginning, in order for Roosevelt to achieve similar levels of diversity the school would essentially have to exit a portion of its student population.

In addition to the policy and legacy challenges that Ms. Banks faced in making Roosevelt a school that reflected its local community, Ms. Banks also encountered internal disagreement about diversifying Roosevelt. During the summer after the 2013-2014 academic year, Ms. Banks offered Principal Byrd the idea that Roosevelt could diversify its student population by implementing some paid slots for Prekindergarten at Roosevelt. In Louisiana, Prekindergarten funding operates independently from K-12 funding, and so there is more flexibility in being able to charge parents for Prekindergarten services. Ms.

Banks felt that creating Prekindergarten classes that combined free and paid slots for students could provide additional funding to Roosevelt while also inviting a wealthier and more White demographic to attend the school and preserving spaces for low-income students. Principal Byrd promptly refused this idea because he felt that it would filter which families could attend Roosevelt. He seemed ideologically opposed to the idea that Roosevelt would refuse entrance to poor students who would not be able to afford Prekindergarten and who were in greater need. Thus, Ms. Banks efforts to diversify Roosevelt seemed to fall flat, though she continued to be interested in visiting local community schools to see what could be gleaned from their efforts.

Summary

Roosevelt's commitment to parent involvement was apparent through its dedication of resources to parent involvement programming. Although the school faced difficult financial constraints, it remained committed to employing staff specifically for parent involvement purposes, and it continued to implement existing parent involvement programming and growing new parent involvement activities. The breadth of programs offered by Roosevelt was promising given the research evidence of the positive relationship between parents' involvement at school and various student outcomes, especially for low-income students.

At the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year, Roosevelt attempted to institute a number of new parent involvement activities that school staff believed would interest parents. These included classes that Ms. Banks and I believed would be useful to parents, such as a computer lab or ESL classes, as well as those that might simply be fun, such as the photography class. These new initiatives were met with mixed success, which seemed

to hinge upon the activity or program's leadership, the resource investment required from Roosevelt, and the level of parent participation. As a result, the parent photography class was successful, while other initiatives, such as English-language classes or the support group for expecting mothers, were unable to get off the ground.

In some ways, Roosevelt's parent engagement efforts represented an inverse relationship between effort required to implement the parent involvement activity and levels of parent participation. Activities that required more intense and sustained effort on the part of the school and parents seemed to have lower rates of participation than those that did not. Parent communication efforts like the phone tree and school-wide newsletter were relatively easy for the school staff to develop and for parents to receive, so this parent involvement activity reached as many parents as possible. Parent involvement events at the school like Fall Fest and Math and Literacy Night, on the other hand, required more effort from teachers to organize and from parents to attend.

The end of the school year at Roosevelt, although marked with celebration, was also a time for reflection. At the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, Roosevelt seemed concentrated on thinking about how to improve parent involvement programming at Roosevelt. This included thinking about how to acquire sustainable funding for parent involvement programming and also thinking about the future of the school as a community school. Roosevelt's historic academic performance made it a school at risk of losing its charter, and Ms. Banks and other staff saw that it was important to think about how to ensure that Roosevelt was able to stay in operation for the community and for the students at the school. Principal Byrd was also concerned about these things, but he wanted to make sure that the school did not exclude their low-income and African-American families in order to accomplish these goals.

It was clear that Roosevelt was deliberately attempting to bridge the home and school spaces because parents' race and socioeconomic status seemed to underlie many of the parent involvement efforts at Roosevelt. Yet the implementation of many of their parent involvement activities also seemed blind to these demographics. For example, the Roosevelt to Washington program and Roosevelt's intent to develop a computer lab seemed to be the school's attempts to address needs created by families' low-income status, and the Roosevelt Rhino Guardians were developed in order to counter the myth of the absentee African-American father. The ESL classes were also developed in order to help to address ethnicity-specific issues, namely Spanish-speaking parents' need to navigate the school environment.

Yet these tended to be the activities that were implemented with the least success. The ESL classes and computer lab were never realized, and the Rhino Guardians – though implemented for the entire year – had variable meeting attendance, ranging from one father to over twenty. The Roosevelt to Washington program was successfully implemented, but this program did not necessarily rely on parent participation for its implementation. Rather, it was led by teachers for students, and parents were asked to support that effort. The limited success of some of Roosevelt's more unique parent involvement activities points to the challenges of designing, implementing, and maintaining parent involvement activities specifically aimed towards low-income or minority parents, whether due to capacity or will.

Roosevelt also offered a set of parent involvement activities that were not particularly innovative and which fell within the purview of traditional activities typically used by schools. Report card conferences, awards ceremonies, and newsletters are all forms of parent involvement used across schools, and their implementation at Roosevelt

seemed to operate within the purview of what could typically be found at other schools. In fact, as has been demonstrated in some of the parent involvement research literature, the implementation of many of these activities seemed to overlook the fact that cultural capital expectations were set by the school, and little effort was made both to appreciate the cultural capital that parents already possessed or to help parents to build the cultural capital expected by the school. This was also the case at Roosevelt. As the following chapters will show, even though Roosevelt was generally thoughtful about involving students' families, school staff often held expectations of students and their families that seemed to devalue parents' cultural capital and thus still resulted in moments of exclusion, maintaining a division between students' home and school spheres.

CHAPTER FIVE:

TEACHERS' VIEWS ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT ROOSEVELT

In order to understand parent involvement at Roosevelt from teachers' perspectives, I interviewed a diverse group of teachers across grade-levels, race, and experience. (For a copy of the Teacher Interview Protocol, see Appendix B. For an overview of the teacher interviewees, see Table 5 on p55-56 of this manuscript.) The length of completed teacher interviews ranged from 25 minutes to an hour, most often depending upon when the interviews were scheduled. Teachers who offered to participate with the interviews during their off periods often had less time than teachers who scheduled interviews after school or on the weekend.

In this chapter, I draw primarily upon the interview data from 16 teachers across grade levels and the documents that they provided to me, to unpack why teachers think that parent involvement is important. Most interviewed teachers expressed that parents' involvement was important because it communicated to students the high value of education. This discussion is followed by a description of teachers' efforts to involve parents in their classroom through communications, homework, an open door policy, and other idiosyncratic opportunities, which teachers hoped would draw parents to be responsive to student and teacher needs, to help with homework, and to advocate for their students. The chapter then continues with teachers' explanations for variation in parent involvement – both due to personal student and parent factors and due to school and

teacher characteristics. Finally, the chapter closes with teachers' ideas to improve parent involvement at Roosevelt. Some teachers offered that they would like to see more opportunities for parent involvement with academics while other teachers mentioned the importance of building a sense of community at Roosevelt through more informal parent involvement events. Other teachers offered that parents should be more involved in the school's planning.

Parent involvement Is Important

All of the teachers interviewed agreed that parent involvement was an essential part of students' education because it communicated the importance of education to their students, and this helped students to perform better academically. Teachers stated that parents' involvement transmitted to the student that the parent valued their child's education, and parents' involvement kept students from becoming distracted. This meant that parents could help children to feel excited and motivated about school at an age where they often had trouble conceptualizing the importance of education for their futures. Mrs. Taylor, a first grade teacher, expressed her views about the importance of parent involvement.

MC: How would you describe your personal philosophy around parent involvement?

LT: I personally know that I wouldn't have got through my education if it wasn't for my parents. Seeing how important it was to them made it important to me and so that's why I want to educate my [students'] parents on showing them that if you're showing that [education] means something to you, it's just gonna flow naturally into your child because they're seeing an example...It's really hard for [my students] to see the future, and if the future's important to [parents], whether it be through college or some kind of vocation, whatever, you know, somehow it's just important to them, then their child will make the right decisions. (April 1, 2014, Transcript)

Mr. Trainor, a middle school teacher, expressed a similar sentiment, stating, “I think it’s so important that parents model the importance of hard work and the importance of education and the importance of perseverance. Those are the things that are really, really important and with a good model, you know, most of the kids can do fine if they can see the value in going to school” (April 30, 2014, Transcript). Teachers across grade levels thus viewed parent involvement as an integral part of success for their students, though they were not always satisfied with the levels of parent involvement that they saw.

Some interviewed teachers mentioned that some of the parents that they saw did not seem to value education, however. After Mr. Trainor described how important it was for parents to serve as a role model, he stated that at Roosevelt, “we see quite the opposite” (April 30, 2014, Transcript). Mrs. Reynolds, a Kindergarten teacher, similarly explained, “I don’t think that there’s a lot put on education within the community that we work, where the school’s located” (January 21, 2014, Transcript). Thus, although many of the interviewed teachers viewed parent involvement as important because it communicated the value of education to students, many of the teachers were disappointed with parents’ levels of involvement, leading them to believe that some parents at Roosevelt did not value their children’s education.

Teachers’ Efforts to Involve Parents

Because teachers felt that parent involvement was so important, interviewed teachers across the school made efforts to reach out to parents on a classroom and personal level in addition to the school-level activities that were already underway at Roosevelt. Interviewed teachers at all grade levels mentioned using different modes of communication with parents, including texts, phone calls, grade-level newsletters, and

daily reports. Several teachers also mentioned homework as an opportunity for parents to show their involvement, and others mentioned that they always had an open door policy for parents. Finally, some of the interviewed teachers planned special events for the grade-level or for their classrooms, which were open to parent participation including field trips, a career day, and a student-performed play.

Phone Communication with Parents

Interviewed teachers across grade levels mentioned that the most common forms of communication that they used with parents were phone calls and texts, though they varied in the frequency with which they used these modes of communication and in their purposes for using them.

Some teachers attempted to implement systems for regular communication with all of their students' parents. Roosevelt's administration asked teachers to turn in phone call logs documenting teachers' efforts to reach out to parents every two weeks. Mrs. Taylor taught first grade, and her approach to making phone calls was typical of teachers trying to comply with the administration's request to document parent communications.

MC: And phone calls. How do you manage yours?

LT: I have a log that I try to do every two weeks, and I always, I always do positive, negative, not necessarily negative, but positive, something we need to improve on so that you know I'm making the balance of, this is something your child does really great. This is something we could work on so that we know that there's constantly a, I'm gonna call back. I'm gonna check in. And then I log it just to make sure that I know, it helps me know who I haven't talked to and then also, you know, documentation purposes. (April 1, 2014, Transcript)

Like Mrs. Taylor, several teachers tried to call their parents every other week. However, other teachers had different systems for making regular phone calls to parents. For example, one of the Kindergarten teachers, Mrs. Reynolds, stated that she called five

parents each week, equating to calling each parent once per month. Mrs. O’Shaughnessy, the fourth grade English teacher, similarly mentioned that she tried to make sure that she texted parents of students in her homeroom at least once per month.

Although teachers like Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. O’Shaughnessy, Mrs. Reynolds, and others attempted to regularly communicate with all parents, other teachers stated that they were more idiosyncratic with their outreach, reaching out to parents when they had the time. For example, Ms. Smith, a first-year 2nd grade teacher, explained, “I need to be communicating with them, too, but calling all these parents on a week, or biweekly basis, what we’re supposed to be doing, I mean, that’s just not getting done” (March 13, 2014, Transcript). Ms. Smith felt like she had too many things on her plate as a new teacher to be able to sustain the school’s request that teachers call parents every two weeks.

Other teachers, like 1st grade teacher Mrs. Prentice, similarly explained that she did not call parents every two weeks as the administration requested. Rather, she focused on calling parents on an as-needed basis, especially for students who were facing behavioral or academic challenges.

[Mrs. Prentice] doesn’t call all parents every two weeks. She calls the ones who have behavior problems and then she also tries to call them with positive phone calls home as well. Last year, she called parents much more regularly talking about their progress and it was really, really helpful, but she just finds that her students this year are moving along at a better pace and also the school administration isn’t holding her accountable for phone calls in the way that they could.” (February 4, 2014, Fieldnotes⁴)

Another teacher, Mr. Trainor, who taught 8th grade math, explained that he concentrated on making phone calls to all of the parents in his homeroom at the beginning of the year. After the beginning of the year, he then concentrated his phone calls on students who were

⁴ The audio recorder during this interview did not work, so my written notes from Ms. Prentice’s interview serve as fieldnotes capturing Mrs. Prentice’s responses to the interview questions.

struggling academically.

MC: And what outreach do you do to parents?

JT: Well, I made an attempt to call all my, all my homeroom kids and at least touch based and at least start the year with a positive phone call...When there's a particular, I'll admit I don't call home enough when good things happen. Generally, it's calling home to let them know that progress reports and they're in danger of failing, and I've gotta call all my Ds and Fs. It's crazy. I tried calling, I waited and waited calling my Ds and Fs. I said, I'll just knock it out in one lunch hour, and I had nine of them I had to call, ten of them. Ten of them I had to call during lunch. (April 30, 2014)

Like other interviewed teachers, Mr. Trainor felt that calling parents with positive news was important. However, given time constraints he had to prioritize calling students who were in danger of failing first.

Two interviewed teachers felt that it was important for teachers calling parents about behavioral or academic issues to have concrete suggestions for parents to implement with their children. Otherwise, they felt that it could be difficult for parents to intervene with their children. For example, Mrs. Reynolds talked about how she might talk to a parent whose child she notices is struggling:

CR: ...So for instance, if a child is still struggling with letter recognition and we're in January, that's a big red flag. I like to let my parents, make my parents aware of that, give them some strategies to help the child at home, also let them know what we're doing in the classroom, and then also make them aware if I continue to see this when next report card comes, we're gonna sit down and have a conversations and then you and I can talk together and see where we go from there. (January 21, 2014, Transcript)

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy communicated a similar philosophy about offering suggestions for parents to work with students:

EO: ...I expect the teacher to say what would be helpful for the parent to do because sometimes as a parent, you don't really know. Okay, I got this phone call. What do I do with it? How do you want me to help? So it's, I think it's work on both sides communicating and trying to figure out how to best help the student. (March 28, 2014, Transcript)

Mrs. Reynolds and Mrs. O’Shaughnessy felt that it was unfair to assume that parents would know how to address their children’s challenges, and it was incumbent on the teacher to communicate with the parent to develop a plan of attack together.

Beyond addressing students’ academic and behavioral challenges, there were other reasons that teachers called parents. Many teachers expressed that it was important for teachers to call parents with positive news about students as an antidote to the negative news that parents would sometimes receive about their students. Mrs. Prentice and Mr. Trainor, discussed above, talked about making positive phone calls to parents. Mrs. Mayhew, another 1st grade teacher, also talked about the importance of making positive phone calls home. The greatest endorsement for positive phone calls seemed to come from the interviewed middle school teachers, who – similar to Mr. Trainor – seemed to use positive phone calls as a behavior management technique and relationship-building opportunity with parents. Mrs. Boudreaux, the 6th grade math teacher, stated:

AB: ...In the beginning of the year usually can you call, and I’ll, you know, or text, and I’ll call and say, you know, blah blah blah was so good today. You know, they’re really working out. That works for maybe the first probably trimester... So, if one comes in that day and they’re cutting up and, and acting out and then the next day, you know, I notice that they’re doing their focus today, then I’ll say, okay, you know what? Remind me at the end of the class to send a text, and they’re usually, okay, and I’ll send them something.” (May 19, 2014, Transcript)

Mr. Alvarez, the 7th and 8th grade science teacher, expressed a similar sentiment:

MA:...The biggest thing that I tried to focus on this year was calling for positive things, which is so hard for a teacher because you forget about that. You know, but we tried that. I mean, it’s, it’s, it’s, you gotta constantly remind yourself to call parents to say, Hey, you know what? Your kid’s doing a good job, you know. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

For Mr. Alvarez, calling parents with good news was an important tool to remind himself and parents that students were doing a good job and should be recognized for doing well.

Teachers also called parents for logistical reasons. For example, the school

administrators asked teachers to call parents to invite them to report card conferences. Mrs. Taylor mentioned that she did this, calling all of her parents to set up appointments with them during report card conferences. Interviewed teachers thus frequently reached out to parents, sometimes to for logistical reasons, like inviting them to school events, and at other times to discuss students' academic or behavioral issues or progress.

Most interviewed teachers noted that one of the major challenges that they faced with effective phone communications was that parents' phone numbers changed regularly or their phone lines were disconnected. Parents varied in the frequency with which they updated their contact information with the teachers, and so sometimes teachers did not have accurate information to communicate regularly with parents over the phone. This is discussed further in subsequent sections and chapters.

Written Communication with Parents

Teachers also used written communications to reach out to parents. The lower elementary teachers (PK-2nd grade) produced grade-level newsletters that they distributed regularly to parents. Some of the teachers, like the Kindergarten team, had a space at the bottom of each newsletter for parents to sign to show that they had read the newsletter. (See Figure 9 for a sample Kindergarten newsletter.)

Figure 9. Example of Kindergarten Grade-Level Newsletter (March 13, 2014, Document)

The Gumbo House News Letter

Newsletter 01/27/2013

“We’re cooking up outstanding Scholars in the Gumbo House!”

KINDERGARTEN NEWSLETTER

Please sign below and return

Ways you can reinforce your child’s learning this week.

***Read to your child daily.**

Sort object by different color, size or shape at home with your child.

The Word of the Week is “Hibernation”
Please discuss this word with your child. Then use the word “Enormous” in a sentence.

Tell your child a simple word problem, “I ate three cookies at lunch time and two cookies after dinner, how many cookies did I eat in all?” Then write the math problem with your child, “3+2=” and solve “3+2=5.”


Look at a weather report with your child and discuss the forecast.

Talk to your child about why school and learning is so important.

Hello parents and friends. At this point, your child is entering an important new phase in reading instruction. He or she will be learning the sound associated with each letter. In our classes each letter of the alphabet will be given special attention.

In **Envision Math** the kindergarten classes will focus on measurement and solid figures:

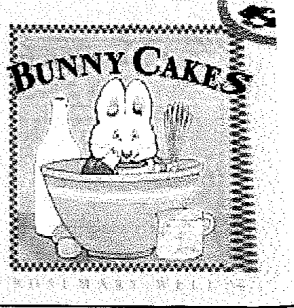
- Addition
- Subtraction



Dear Parents and Friends,

The 100th day of school is fast approaching. Please allow your child to bring in his/her 100 day collections. Also, if you have not brought in the \$5.00 for your child’s 100th Day T-Shirt please do so as soon as possible.

BOOK OF THE WEEK



By: Rosemary Williams

_____ Cut Here and return your signature with your child tomorrow _____

Parent’s Signature: _____

Grades PK-4 also distributed daily folders or behavior reports that students were supposed to show their parents every day. In these grades, the students took home folders that included their homework and classwork, as well as a summary of their behavior for the day. (See Figure 10 for an image of the daily report card used by PK-4 teachers.) Parents were expected to sign the daily report cards as evidence that they had read them. Ms. Stinson, one of the Prekindergarten teachers, and Mrs. Calder, one of the Kindergarten teachers described the daily folders and behavior reports.

KS: The children get a folder. They take it home every day, but they get a packet every Monday that's due on Friday afternoon, so parents should help them with their homework of course...There's a daily report card in there, and they get a color for, there's a column for behavior and a column for classwork, and then just normal handouts and things like that. (February 4, 2014, Transcript)

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SC:...The children have homework folders, and we have what we call a DRC, which is the Daily Report Card, so we'll just put green happy face letting them know how their child did for behavior, and then we'll put a face for how they're doing with their classwork. Because it's not always equal. A child could be doing good for behavior, but he's struggling with skills so the parent, you know, gets a daily report of how the child is doing. (January 25, 2014, Transcript)

These daily report cards were used by all of the lower elementary grades and seemed to be a useful way for teachers to communicate with parents about students' behavior and progress. In addition, the daily report cards had space on them for teachers to write brief notes to parents about other items beyond behavior and classwork. For example, Mrs. Prentice mentioned that she often wrote notes about behavior or missing homework to parents on these sheets, and Mrs. Taylor mentioned that she tried to write a note to each student's parent once per week just to touch base. Daily report cards provided an alternative to regular phone communications with parents.

Figure 10. Sample Daily Report Card provided by Ms. Smith, a 2nd Grade Teacher (March 13, 2014, Document)

Name: _____ Week: _____

Day	Behavior	Class work	Signature	Comments
Monday		☺ ☹	_____	
Tuesday		☺ ☹	_____	
Wednesday		☺ ☹	_____	
Thursday		☺ ☹	_____	
Friday		☺ ☹	_____	

Week: _____

Day	Behavior	Class work	Signature	Comments
Monday		☺ ☹	_____	
Tuesday		☺ ☹	_____	
Wednesday		☺ ☹	_____	
Thursday		☺ ☹	_____	
Friday		☺ ☹	_____	

Green - Excellent Day!
 Yellow - Warning given, opportunity to change behavior.
 Orange - Note sent home.
 Red - please call home

Although 3rd and 4th grade teachers also used the daily report card system with their students, in general it seemed that teachers in upper elementary and middle school grades did not engage in as many written communications with parents. Teachers in 5th grade and up did not use the daily report card at all, and upper elementary and middle school teachers did not send home regular newsletters because, as Mrs. Boudreaux stated, “what happens is I find them all over my classroom...it’s not getting home.” (May 19, 2014, Transcript) Older students did not use the same folder system that the younger students used, so paperwork made it home less reliably, and Mrs. Boudreaux did not think that developing the newsletter was worth the effort.

Homework

School policy dictated that teachers should assign homework daily. In the lower elementary grades (PK-2nd), homework should take a total of 20-30 minutes per day. For upper elementary grades (3rd-5th), homework should take a total of 30-45 minutes per day, and for middle school students, homework should take a total of 45-60 minutes per day (November 13, 2013, Email). In the lower elementary grades, homework was distributed in the same folders that included students’ daily report cards. The first grade teachers also expected students to read at least 20 minutes per day (Mrs. Prentice, Transcript).

Although half of the interviewed teachers mentioned the importance of parents helping with homework, only one teacher – Mr. Jameson, the 3rd and 4th grade Social Studies teacher – mentioned homework assignments that were designed to promote interaction between parents and students. Because his students did not use textbooks, Mr. Jameson created a reference sheet for parents and students to use when studying their social studies materials. As Mr. Jameson explained, “It’s more like a study guide, so it’s

all the content that I'm introducing to the kids. It's all explained, the definitions, what examples with steps you need to take. This is basically what we're learning this unit, so it's more of a take-home guide just in case parents may have questions" (March 13, 2014, Transcript). Mr. Jameson also offered that he tried to give as many home projects as he could in order to involve parents.

TJ: For our economic unit, it ran during Mardi Gras. Mardi Gras ended up being our cultural focus for that unit, so the kids got to do floats at home with the parents. At the end of this unit, like today, they're going home. They're gonna interview an entrepreneur, either in their family or in the community, so that, you know, just whatever I can do to get the parents involved more outside activities and just to show them, hey, your kids are learning, but I want you involved as well. I'm including you because it's, it's essential that you're there. (March 13, 2014, Transcript)

Thus, although many of the interviewed teachers mentioned the importance of parents monitoring their students' homework, Mr. Jameson seemed unique at the school for trying to create homework that could include parents in a role that moved beyond monitoring.

Open Door Policy

Just like they were more likely to use written communications with parents, the interviewed lower elementary teachers were also more likely to invite parents to volunteer, observe, or just "hang out" (Mrs. Taylor, Transcript). None of the upper elementary or middle school teachers mentioned having parents come to volunteer or sit in their classrooms. In fact, 3rd grade math teacher Ms. Rodrick specifically stated that although she called parents to invite them to come to the classroom, she didn't know "if this is an open school...I don't know if the school has an open policy" (March 31, 2014, Transcript).

Although not all of the lower elementary teachers had parents regularly

volunteering in their classroom, most of the interviewed teachers mentioned that parents were welcome in their classroom. Ms. Stinson, Mrs. Reynolds, and Ms. Davis, a first grade teacher, offered their views during their interviews.

MC: What opportunities do you provide for parents to get involved in your classroom?

KS: I think you've [as parent liaison] opened up the opportunity for them to volunteer in the classroom. I don't know. I guess I could give them more opportunities...They're always welcome to come into the classroom and observe or volunteer during centers and field trips of course. (February 4, 2014, Transcript)

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MC: What are the opportunities that you would say that you provide?

CR: We do have an open door policy. Well, you know, of course they have to go through the school, and also I invite parents. When I call them on Wednesday, I invite all my parents to come in. Why don't you come in and stop by? That's my big thing. Of course, you have to go to the office and then check in, but I always invite them, so I think my big thing is the invitation, letting them know they can come in. (January 21, 2014, Transcript)

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ND:...I try to tell them whenever you're available, you can come in. I have an open door policy, you can just pop in and observe. Just let me know. Tomorrow, Ms. Davis, I'm gonna drop in. That's fine. I don't really have a problem with that because I think parents need to see what's going on on a day-to-day basis. (March 11, 2014, Transcript)

In their interviews, Ms. Stinson, Mrs. Calder, and Ms. Davis made reference to the fact that parents were always welcome to come to their child's classroom, whether for volunteering or observation, and particularly during centers time, a time when students are allowed to work independently in groups. Teachers like Mrs. Stinson, Mrs. Reynolds, and Ms. Davis seemed to believe that Roosevelt had an open door policy, so they communicated this to parents by inviting them to visit the classroom. However, this did not always ensure that the interviewed teachers had parents who would volunteer in their classrooms because parents were not always available at the times that teachers would be open to having them.

Two lower elementary teachers mentioned that they were reticent to have parents come to their classrooms. One of these teachers, 1st grade teacher Ms. Mayhew, had had negative experiences with parents during her first year in the classroom.

MC: What do you do to involve parents in the classroom? What are the things that you're doing currently?

KM: ...I haven't really made an effort to have parents come in the class to help out because honestly I feel like it can be a lot more work and it can be a distraction for the kids, and, you know, they get very, I don't know. I've had a couple bad experiences with parents in my class, so I don't want to say I don't want them in here, but it can be, it can make things really messy, but I don't know. That's always been like the tricky line. Like, you know, you want them in the class so they know what's going on, but at the same time unless it goes well, it can either explode in your face or it can go really well. (February 11, 2014, Transcript)

Ms. Mayhew went on to explain that the school used to have a policy in which parents were required to come to sit with their students if their students were consistently misbehaving. Some of the parents would "start to go off on other people's kids or say things that were inappropriate to other students, so it's just, you know, it put me in an awkward situation because I didn't wanna have to confront a parent and tell them what they were doing was wrong" (Mayhew, Transcript). Although Ms. Mayhew understood why it could be beneficial to have parents in the classroom, her negative experiences with parents in the past felt more salient. She had not agreed with the ways in which parents in her classroom had interacted with other students, and because this made her uncomfortable she decided not to put herself into the situation again.

The other lower elementary teacher who initially expressed reticence to having parents in her classroom was Ms. Smith, a first-year 2nd grade teacher. At the beginning of the year, as I surveyed teachers about whether they would like to have parent volunteers in their classrooms, she responded that as a new teacher she was hesitant to have parent volunteers in her classroom. She mentioned that other teachers had suggested to her that

she wait until after her first year to welcome parent volunteers. That being said, although that was how Ms. Smith felt at the beginning of the academic year, by the time I interviewed her in March, she said, “I welcome them to come in and sit in. I’ve had a few do that, just come because their kids are behavior problems” (March 13, 2014, Transcript). Thus, although Ms. Smith had concerns about managing parent volunteers during her first year, she eventually welcomed parents into her classroom to assist around their children’s behavior.

Other

Interviewed teachers also offered a variety of other opportunities for parents to get involved in their classrooms, including field trips, special classroom-specific or grade-level events, and other personal outreach tactics that teachers used.

Seven of the interviewed teachers across grade levels – lower elementary, upper elementary, and middle school – mentioned that they offered field trips as volunteer opportunities for parents. Often, the same parents formed a regular cadre of field trip chaperones. As Kindergarten teacher Mrs. Calder stated, “Definitely parents show up for field trips...so the more field trips that we take, the more involvement that we get. I do find that once they go on field trips, they’re pretty consistent. They want to keep coming” (January 25, 2014, Transcript). Mrs. O’Shaughnessy, a 4th grade teacher, seemed to agree with Mrs. Calder’s assessment of parent chaperones for field trips. “...Last year, we did a lot more field trips, and parents always came on the field trips. There, you’d have your core group of parents that would be able to come during the day” (March 28, 2014, Transcript).

In addition to field trips, some teachers offered special events for parents in their

classroom. For example, the Prekindergarten and Kindergarten teachers offered Prekindergarten and Kindergarten orientations for their students. Unlike the large 1st-8th grade orientation hosted by the school's administration, the Prekindergarten and Kindergarten orientations were organized by the PreK and Kindergarten teachers and hosted in their classrooms. The Prekindergarten teachers also hosted a Career Day in their classroom, for which they recruited parent volunteers. Mrs. Stinson described the event as an opportunity to engage parents who she had not typically seen.

MC: So Career Day on Friday, were there parents here for that? Or how did that roll?

KS: Only two people filled out the form, so we had to call everyone, but I think I had about ten people that said that they were coming and maybe four or five came and then [the other Prekindergarten teacher] had a few more. She might have 6 or 7 people that came, so it worked out since the classes were combined. I was really surprised, and I think we should hold more events like that because there was a parent here who I had never seen before, and she was just saying, Sorry I'm not that involved. I work at night, but I'm really going to try to be more involved. Do you guys need anything? I'll bring a king cake on Friday, so that was really good that she got to see like what the classroom is like and get to see that it's important to be involved, so that was really good. (February 4, 2014, Transcript)

These special grade level events allowed Ms. Stinson the opportunity to see parents that she might not have met otherwise. Fourth-grade teacher Mrs. O'Shaughnessy mentioned another special activity that her students performed. Every year, her students performed *Romeo and Juliet* at the end of year, and parents always attended the performance (Mrs. O'Shaughnessy, Transcript).

Ms. Simiyu, a second grade teacher, seemed to stand out as a teacher who regularly executed small actions to engage with parents beyond the typical forms described in this chapter. For example, at the beginning of the year, Ms. Simiyu sent parents a personal sheet asking parents "about your kid's strengths and weaknesses. You [parent] tell me from your point of view about your kids and that paper is always I would

say done well...They're really, you know, brutally honest and I ask them, What are some field trips you would suggest or what is your availability" (February 17, 2014, Transcript).

Ms. Simiyu found this sheet helpful for getting to know her students and their parents and for helping to establish the foundation of a relationship for the year.

Ms. Simiyu also hosted an intricate Scholar of the Month celebration in which she involved parents.

SS: I have scholar of the month once a month and that's a time for one scholar to be recognized for their awesomeness...The kid doesn't know til the day of. I take a picture, interview them. A big celebration and in the past I've done it every year, and every year it gets a little better. Parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters in the school come...They come. They always share these words. I'm so proud of you, crying, it's just really like, Oh my goodness. I love scholar of the month because it gets like that, and the kids are like, I'm just so proud of my friend and sometimes parents, parents always bring the kid's favorite treat, and they also, sometimes they bring presents, which is just like, Whoa, because it makes other kids be like, Man, I want to be scholar of the month. I want this person to come. (February 17, 2014)

Ms. Simiyu's Scholar of the Month activity offered an opportunity for parents to celebrate their children in a positive light, an opportunity for parents to come into the classrooms without expectations for their helping the teacher or to address problems that their children might be having. Rather, parents were called in to celebrate their child. Ms. Simiyu also mentioned the importance of writing thank-you notes to parents who had volunteered to chaperone field trips or who had brought her treats (Ms. Simiyu, Transcript)

The interviewed teachers thus engaged in a number of parent involvement activities at the classroom level, ranging from phone calls and texts to invitations to volunteer or observe the classroom. While teachers of younger students seemed to have better established systems for written communications and homework in particular, teachers of older students seemed to rely more on phone calls as their primary mode of

communication. Middle school teachers mentioned that they did not like to rely on written communications because they did not feel that their students reliably gave newsletters or other important documents to their parents. Instead, they relied on phone calls, yet they also complained about their inability to reach certain parents consistently. Parents' ability to keep a consistent phone number or to update teachers about any changes to their contact information seemed integral to teachers' ability to regularly connect with parents. In addition to phone and written communications, several teachers hosted idiosyncratic events throughout the school year with which parents could participate. These seemed to be based more on teachers' personalities than on any school policy in particular. For example, Mr. Jameson made special efforts to create homework assignments that would require parent engagement, and Ms. Simiyu invested her time in developing student recognition events that involved parents. Other teachers, such as Ms. Smith, chose to limit their outreach to parents because other matters seemed more urgent. For Ms. Smith, her first year of teaching necessitated that she concentrate her attention on the day-to-day operation of her classroom.

Teachers' Views about the Ideal Parent

When asked what the ideal parent does with regards to parent involvement, interviewed teachers overwhelmingly agreed that parents should be responsive to teachers' needs and requests, though there were some differences in how teachers' talked about parents' responsiveness. In addition, half of the teachers interviewed thought that an important role for parents was to be involved with homework, and a small group of teachers mentioned that it was important for parents to serve as advocates for their children. These roles that interviewed teachers proposed for parents were in keeping with

the research literature in which teachers often sought for parents to act in ways that aligned with teachers' expectations, rather than thinking about the assets that parents brought on their own.

Ideal Parents as Responsive

Of the 16 teachers interviewed, 12 mentioned the important role of parents in being responsive to the teacher. Some teachers conceptualized this as literally responsive, such as answering the phone when the teacher called or responding to written notes. Other teachers referred more to the role of parents in responding to what parents noticed students were learning in the classroom or in supporting the teacher when the teacher called about a child's academic progress or behavior. Teachers mentioned that this responsiveness was important for building trust between teachers and parents and to creating a strong teacher-parent team.

Teachers' conceptualization of responsiveness differed across grade levels according to teachers' expectations. Lower elementary teachers, such as the Prekindergarten or Kindergarten teachers, stated that they liked when parents asked them what parents could do to help in the classroom or what parents could bring to the classroom to help the teacher. This seemed to indicate to the lower elementary teachers that parents were supportive of what they were doing in the classroom and responsive to the teacher's needs.

These teachers also mentioned the important role of parents as their child's first teacher and as a supplement to the learning that occurred in the classroom. These teachers seemed to think about parents' responsiveness with respect to what their children were learning.

MC: So what do you see as the role of parents when it comes to their children's education?

KS: I think they should supplement what occurs in the classroom because learning should be something that happens constantly so if we're doing something in the classroom then they should act to it by taking their children on different experiences and trips and/or helping them complete their homework or participating in activities that we do outside of the classroom like field trips and things like that...I think every parent cares about their child's education, but just showing that outwardly by like asking if you need anything or their child needs help with anything and being more upfront about things. (February 4, 2014, Transcript)

Lower elementary teachers felt that it was important for parents to remain abreast of what their students were learning in order to be able to extend their learning at home and outside of the classroom. One way that parents could do that was by visiting the classroom. In particular, the Kindergarten team felt that parents' participation in the classroom allowed parents to align their expectations with teachers' expectations so that the parent-teacher team could better serve students. Mrs. Reynolds explained the importance of parents understanding what the Kindergarten students were doing in the classroom:

MC: Why [do you say that there should be more parent involvement]?

CR: Because I believe that when a parent comes in the class and actually sees firsthand what their child has to do and what they have to accomplish in just ten months at school in Kindergarten, it makes them aware of, or maybe puts more urgency in their role as a parent, I want to say. When they're disconnected from it, it's like oh, you're sending home homework sheets. Oh, you're just adding, or you're doing this, but there's so much more that happens in the classroom, and if the parents are here, they can see it, and then they know better how to address their child at home. And also, with behavior, I think parent involvement plays a big part in behavior. If a child knows that his parent is involved in school and if the parent knows the rigor of our curriculum, then they'll be more apt to when we have those behavior instances to help, you know. (January 21, 2014, Transcript)

According to Mrs. Reynolds, parents' responsiveness to what students were learning in the

classroom was an essential part of good parent involvement.

At the end of the quote above, Mrs. Reynolds also begins to hint at the importance of parent responsiveness to behavior issues reported by the teacher. The upper elementary and middle school teachers who were interviewed in particular seemed to focus on this type of parent responsiveness. These teachers hoped that parents would take action on behalf of the teacher when the teacher reached out to the parent with an academic or behavioral issue that was going on at school. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy clearly stated this expectation that she had for parents:

MC: So what is your ideal parent doing? What actions are they taking or doing?

EO:...If a teacher needs to call home about behavior or about schoolwork concerns, then I expect the parent to have a conversation with their child.
(March 28, 2014, Transcript)

Ms. Boudreaux, the 6th grade math teacher, took this sentiment one step further, stating that when teachers contacted parents, it was important for parents to know their children and to be honest about their children.

MC: So what do you see as the role of parents when it comes to their child's education?

AB:...First and foremost, know your child because sometimes you can call up, like last night, you know, the parent was, well, that wasn't, I can't believe that's my child doing that, you know, or be honest about the fact that you know these are some behaviors that your children [exhibit].

Ms. Boudreaux seemed to suggest that it was important for parents to take teachers at their word and to support teachers when they reported academic or behavioral challenges with their children. Mr. Alvarez, the 7th and 8th grade science teacher, felt similarly:

MA: It's good to know that I can rely on the parent. If I do make a phone call to state, Hey, your child was acting up or hasn't been doing homework, I know that the parent will reinforce that and take care of the child so the child can change, but I mean it's to the point now that if I call

a parent, Your child is not doing anything, they're like, Okay, I'll fix it, and nothing happens. And that shows you that there's not a parent involvement. They don't support you. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

Middle school teachers felt some frustration in wanting parents to reinforce teachers' academic and behavioral expectations at school.

Finally, a few teachers across grade levels referred to the importance of parents literally responding to teachers' phone calls, texts, or written notes. Some teachers mentioned the frustration that they felt when they reached out to parents who seemed reticent to talk to them or who never called them back or responded to their notes.

MC: So can you describe to me your ideal parent?

KM: I think the parent that's easy to reach and wants to be reached and isn't annoyed when you call, but also isn't afraid to call me either, you know. They don't just wait for me to call if there's a problem. They try to get a hold of me, too... I think some of it is there are parents who, you know, I'll write them notes. We have daily reports that go home every day with like announcements and notes about the day or and what the student's behavior was that day or if they're missing homework or anything like that and I have some parents who I'll write a note to be like, This is what's going on. Please call me. I want to brainstorm solutions with you. And they'll sign next to my note asking me to call them, but they won't call me. (February 11, 2014, Transcript)

Other teachers mentioned that they had challenges obtaining up-to-date parent contact information and thus were not able to reach out to parents at all, despite the fact that teachers may have requested updated information. As Ms. Rodrick, the 3rd grade math teacher stated, "There's a lot of parents, I've been here since October, I've never heard from. I've never met. I have no working numbers" (March 31, 2014, Transcript). She felt that this made her job particularly difficult because she wasn't able to work with parents to help to address students' needs. Teachers felt that it was important for them to be able to reach out to parents and for parents to respond to their requests for communication in order for parents and teachers to stay on the same page about their students.

Teachers felt that it was important for parents to be responsive to teachers' needs, but the terms for considering parents as responsive were dictated by teachers. Teachers differed in how they seemed to communicate these expectations to parents, though rarely did these expectations seem to be explicitly communicated. Rather, teachers expected that parents already knew how to respond to teachers' requests. Many parents did seem to meet teachers' expectations, though teachers overall seemed disappointed in most parents' involvement. Teachers' dissatisfaction with parent involvement is further discussed later in this chapter.

Ideal Parents Help with Homework

Of the 16 teachers interviewed, eight teachers mentioned that it was important for parents to help with homework or to make sure that homework was done. These 8 teachers represented a cross-section of grade levels, including lower elementary, upper elementary, and middle school teachers.

At the elementary school level, helping with homework meant "doing homework with them at night, reading to them at night" (Smith, Transcript). Several lower elementary teachers required students to read a certain number of minutes each night and then to complete a series of worksheets in addition to that.

At the middle school level, teachers stated that parents might not be as able to help their students complete their homework, so middle school teachers pointed to the importance of parents simply making sure that their students had completed their homework. Mr. Alvarez stated, "If I have a homework assignment that they need to do, their parents should be like, Look, do your homework. You have homework" (May 20, 2014, Transcript). Similarly, Mr. Trainor explained,

I would like to see [parents] at least looking over their shoulder to see their homework, checking to see if they're doing their homework. I'm not expecting [parents] to do the homework for [students], but a little bit of interest in, Have you done your homework? Let me see it. If I can help you, I will. Those things would be wonderful. (April 30, 2014)

Thus, teachers across grade levels at Roosevelt thought that it was important for parents to be involved with their children's homework, though that involvement looked different for younger and older students. For younger students, parents were expected to ensure that homework was complete and to assist with its completion while teachers of middle school students simply expected parents to monitor whether the homework was done.

Ideal Parents as Advocates

A small group of three teachers mentioned the important role for parents as advocates. These teachers felt that it was important for parents to be familiar with whatever accommodations their child might need and to ensure that their children's needs were being met. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy cited the challenges in managing a large number of students and acknowledging that sometimes the needs of students fell through the cracks unless parents raised the issue. "If you [a parent] feel like you have a concern, reaching out to the teacher too, because as a, you know, I have 75 kids, and so I do, you know, text and make phone calls, but sometimes you don't realize that a parent has a concern until it's brought up" (March 28, 2014, Transcript). Mrs. O'Shaughnessy felt that parents could help to counter teachers' workloads by highlighting any challenges that their children were facing.

Mrs. Calder and Ms. Stinson, who taught Kindergarten and Prekindergarten, respectively, also mentioned the importance of parents serving as advocates. Ms. Stinson stated that parents "should just be an advocate for their child so if they feel like they're not

getting something, they should come to me and make sure it's happening" (February 4, 2014, Transcript). Mrs. Calder similarly expressed that she sees "the parent as someone who's always involved, who's always advocating for their child, who's always there with their child in those times of need and in those good times as well" (January 25, 2014, Transcript). These teachers viewed parents as critical to making sure that students got what they needed to be successful in the classroom, especially because teachers' attention was extended across a large number of students and responsibilities. These interviewed teachers believed that parents' involvement as advocates could help parents to ensure the quality of their children's education.

Explaining Levels of Parent Involvement at Roosevelt

The interviewed teachers overwhelmingly felt that the level of parent involvement at Roosevelt and in their classrooms "could be better," though they differed in their view of where responsibility for parent involvement levels rest. Some of the interviewees noted that the responsibility for parents' involvement rested with the school while others attributed parents' levels of involvement to parents' personal characteristics or life circumstances.

Parent and Child Characteristics

Children's Ages. Two teachers noted that parents seemed to be more involved in the younger grades than in the older grades. Overall, the interviewed lower elementary teachers noted that they had more parents who regularly attended RFA and Rhino Guardian meetings and volunteered while upper elementary and middle school teachers were less likely to mention that parents of students in those grades had participated with

these programs.

Ms. Mayhew, a first grade teacher, noted:

KM: I think there's more involvement in the younger grades than the upper grades. Just talking to the older grade teachers, we see and hear a lot more from parents than they do and, you know, at Roosevelt Family Association meetings I see a lot of my parents, but you know you don't really see that many of the older parents.

MC: Why do you think there's more involvement in the younger grades versus the older?

KM: I think because then they're still, I don't know. I think they're still excited about getting their kids involved and you know their kids are still young and cute, and it's fun to do little young and cute things with them, and I think it's probably harder when they're older, but I don't know.

Mr. Alvarez seemed to agree with Ms. Mayhew's assessment of why parents differed in their involvement with younger students versus older students.

MA: Volunteering I've noticed, it's always bigger with the smaller students because parents want to be involved because it's their babies. Middle school, the kids start having, the kids undergo a lot of physical and emotional, psychological changes, and they have that disconnect with their parents. You know, we've all been there. It's like, I hate my parents, you know, and that kind of affects that parent involvement. What I have seen is parents that have smaller children in lower grades and also have older students, older children in middle school, that's the parents that I constantly see because they come here, I don't want to say, not necessarily just for their smaller kids, but they come here for them because it's such a huge developmental age, and they know that so they want to be more involved, but after a while, it kind of tapers off.

Ms. Mayhew and Mr. Alvarez felt that parents were more involved with their younger students because students' physical and behavioral changes as they became older might discourage parents from continuing their involvement.

While teachers' assessments that parents were more engaged with younger students because they were smaller and fun might be accurate, it is also important to note that teachers of younger students also offered more opportunities for parent involvement.

For example, lower elementary teachers offered grade-level newsletters and daily behavior reports that middle school teachers did not use. One middle school teacher claimed that this was because she could not rely on students to share papers with their parents regularly. Middle school teachers also had a greater number of students than teachers of younger students, which made it more difficult to regularly call all of their students' parents.

Parents' Neighborhood. Besides children's age, some teachers noted that they tended to see parents who lived in the neighborhood more often than those who lived in other areas of New Orleans. Because these parents had easy access to the school, they were often more present at the school, making it easier for teachers to interact with them formally at events like report card conferences or informally by just running into each other in the hallway or at the pick-up line outside of the school. Ms. Davis, a first grade teacher, offered her thoughts on the challenges that parents outside the neighborhood faced in becoming involved:

ND:...Because our kids are bussed from all over the place, you need to think about how we get parents in [other neighborhoods] to leave to come back to Roosevelt for an event. How do you get that done? It's not the same as a neighborhood school and you can just, Oh, right down the neighborhood. No big deal. We can walk, but it's harder for those parents. It's one of the problems we had at [my old school]. It's always getting the kids and the parents far away to come back to school to do something because it was so, transportation was a problem, and I think always, as long as we have kids getting bussed in from all over, that's always gonna be an issue. (March 11, 2014)

According to Ms. Davis, parents in the neighborhood had an advantage with their involvement because their location made the school more accessible despite potential work schedule or transportation challenges.

Parents' ethnicity. At Roosevelt, over 90% of the student population was African-

American. Only 7.5% was Hispanic, though the school's Hispanic population was concentrated in Kindergarten and in first grade, so some of the classrooms in these grade levels were up to 50% Hispanic. Roosevelt received this influx of Hispanic students in Kindergarten and first grade due to a partnership that they developed in 2011 with a local bilingual Head Start center in the community, and Roosevelt maintained this relationship with the Head Start center for two years before deciding to implement its own internal Prekindergarten program during 2013-2014. As a consequence of terminating the relationship with the bilingual Head Start center, although there was a high concentration of Hispanic students in Kindergarten and first grade, the Hispanic population in the Prekindergarten class was much lower.

Out of the five teachers teaching Kindergarten and first grade, two noted that they tended to see more involvement among Hispanic parents than among African-American parents. Mrs. Reynolds mentioned that her Hispanic parents seemed to be involved across aspects of their child's education, including academics, ceremonies, and parties. However, she found that her African-American parents seemed to be more involved in events like celebrations.

MC: How would you characterize involvement in your classroom? Would you say it's high, medium, low?

CR: It's high amongst my Hispanic parents. It's not high amongst my African-American parents. What I have noticed with my Hispanic parents is their involvement is more to do with academics. With my African-American parents, their involvement is more do with, say, for instance a party or the promotional ceremony or, you know, some play we have. So if their child is in a play, they will show up. But for parent conferences, they don't show up. Whereas with Hispanic parents, it's both. I mean, they show up with plays and what not, but also with academics. They're more involved with that piece. (January 21, 2014, Transcript)

Mrs. Reynolds believed that Hispanic parents in her classroom were more likely to be

involved across the board, and she seemed to want to see her African-American parents more involved specifically with their children's academics. Ms. Prentice, a first grade teacher, described a similar sentiment, explaining that "as a whole her ESL parents tend be really great with involvement, and then some parents aren't, like, won't answer her phone calls or do anything like that, so it just really varies" (February 4, 2014, Fieldnotes). Several interviewed Kindergarten and first grade teachers expressed this sentiment, but the data from the case study was insufficient to confirm these statements. Teachers outside of the Kindergarten and first grades did not mention any parent involvement differences between Hispanic and other parents, perhaps because there were fewer Hispanic students in the upper grades, usually only 1-2 Hispanic students at each grade level.

Another first grade teacher, Ms. Mayhew, mentioned the challenges that came in trying to communicate with Hispanic parents who were limited in their ability to speak English. Although the school had staff who were available to translate, Mrs. Mayhew explained, "It's been different this year having Spanish-speaking parents because I don't speak Spanish and so it's challenging when I need someone to talk to them to grab someone to translate and things like that, so that's been a whole new challenge this year" (February 11, 2014, Transcript). Roosevelt had three Spanish-speaking staff members or regular volunteers, which the school employed to translate conversations and materials for Spanish-speaking parents – a nun who worked on literacy skills with Spanish-speaking students, a paraprofessional in one of the Prekindergarten classes, and me as parent liaison. While these resources were available to all teachers, Ms. Mayhew clearly still viewed communication with Spanish-speaking parents as a challenge.

Parents' value of education. Some teachers attributed low levels of parents' involvement to the idea that some parents just didn't value education or express the

urgency around education that was necessary for their children. Ms. Stinson explained that it was difficult to communicate the urgency around Prekindergarten for some parents because they viewed it as simply a fun time during the day for their kids.

KS: I think it may partially have to do with the parents, and I think it partially has to do with the grade because some people don't take PreK seriously. They think it's just playing and drinking apple juice but it's so much more than that, so I think they'd be involved more if they thought it was, if they realized how serious it was. (February 4, 2014)

Mrs. Reynolds had a different take on why parents might seem to be less urgent about their children's education. She expressed that there seemed to be an understanding among parents at Roosevelt that the education of children fell only in the realm of teachers. This is in keeping with some of the research literature around low-income and African-American and Hispanic parents, which finds that these parents see their roles in a much more supportive light, taking a back seat to the teacher when it comes to shaping the education of their children (Auerbach, 2007; Chrispeels and Rivero, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). She also mentioned that parents in the community didn't seem to value education as much as in other communities.

CR: I think in the area where we are, I think there's a, I think there's a belief that once a child is sent to school that it's the teacher's responsibility only to educate their child in a lot of areas. Not always, not all parents think that way, but I think it's an assumption that once a child goes off to school it's the teacher's responsibility to educate their child, not really the parents....That's not Roosevelt's fault, and I think that we're doing as much as we can with what we have and what we know, the odds that we're facing. (January 21, 2014, Transcript)

Mr. Trainor echoed Mrs. Reynolds' sentiment. He thought that "with a good model, most of the kids can do fine if they can see the value in going to school. Whereas we see, here we see quite the opposite. We're almost like babysitters" (April 30, 2014). These teachers expressed frustration with the way that they felt that some parents viewed education. In

fact, some of the interviewed teachers seemed to generalize about parents in the community and their views on education, referring to parents in the “area” or served by Roosevelt who did not place proper value on students’ education.

Parents’ logistical challenges. Interviewed teachers mentioned that another set of factors feeding into parents’ engagement with Roosevelt revolved around the logistical barriers that some parents faced. Ms. Mayhew and Ms. Davis talked about the difficulty in parents accessing many school events because students came to the school from neighborhoods all over the city, and their parents might not always have access to a vehicle.

ND: I think transportation’s gonna be the biggest thing. I think being able to offer it, which is not always easy, but being able to say, Hey we’re doing this here. We’re gonna have a bus that brings, you know, even if you pay. I mean, I don’t know. Transportation’s always gonna be a problem with kids who live farther away because I have kids [who say], My mom doesn’t have a car right now. Our car doesn’t work, so then I don’t get to come. (March 11, 2014)

Several teachers also acknowledged the challenges of parents’ work schedules. They mentioned that many parents faced irregular and unpredictable work schedules, or they worked multiple jobs, making it difficult for them to schedule meetings at the school during the day, which was the time at which teachers were most often available. Mrs. Calder offered:

SC: Well I have parents that are struggling to provide the basic things that their children need, so they may be working two jobs, or they may be working jobs that require them to work at night, so they’re trying to sleep during the day. (January 25, 2014, Transcript)

Ms. Stinson also described one of her parent volunteer’s schedule change due to changes in her work. “[One student]’s mom used to come in regularly, but then her work schedule changed. She just said today that her work schedule changed again, so she will be able to

come back weekly” (February 4, 2014, Transcript). These schedule changes were a reality for many parents, especially as many parents worked jobs whose schedules were at the whim of their managers, and the schedule changes had repercussions for teachers who scheduled meetings with parents or who expected parents to regularly volunteer in their classroom. Teachers seemed to see these circumstances of parents’ work and transportation situations as an important element affecting their parent involvement.

Teacher and School Characteristics

Many teachers cited reasons for parents’ varied levels of participation that rested with the parents. From children’s ages to parents’ ethnicity, teachers believed that some parents’ characteristics made them more or less prone to be involved at Roosevelt. However, in their attempts to explain why some parents were more involved than others, teachers also mentioned a number of characteristics that lay with the school.

Teachers’ Understanding of Roosevelt’s Parent Involvement Policies.

Interviewed teachers seemed to vary in their understanding of the school’s expectations and policies around parent involvement. For example, as described in an earlier section of this chapter, although the administration supposedly required teachers to turn in phone logs every two weeks, many teachers mentioned that they turned them in less regularly. Some teachers also thought that phone logs were not a requirement but that their completion was implied. Mrs. Reynolds, one of the Kindergarten teachers, explained.

MC: So is there, are there any directives from Principal Byrd and Mrs. Scribo about parent involvement, things that teachers need to do regularly or not?

CR: The only thing that I know that I’ve taken is really the phone calls and the invitation, just inviting parents in your classroom. It’s not really a directive. It’s not really stated, but I think it’s something that’s implied. (January 21, 2014, Transcript)

Mrs. Reynolds' statement illustrates that the administration at Roosevelt seemed reticent to require teachers to become involved in various parent involvement activities, and Principal Byrd and Mrs. Scribo also admitted that they did not keep track of teachers' phone logs as well as they should have. Tracking teachers' phone logs was one of Mrs. Scribo's goals to improve for the following academic year (July 1, 2014, Journal).

Ms. Banks, the Director of Community Integration, also mentioned the phone call log policies, as well as a parent volunteer policy mentioned in the school's handbook.

M: Are there any school policies formal or informal for teachers or for parents?

E: ...As far as teachers' responsibilities, they're supposed to call and they keep a log of all parent calls I think it's every two weeks or something like that. If there's a disciplinary issue or some action that needs to happen, then a parent is always asked to come in and be involved in that conversation. We have something in our handbook about a certain number of hours that parents are asked to volunteer each year, but that's not, yeah, you should look at that, but it's, it's known across the board that it's not enforced, so it's kind of just, just lip service to this thing. (July 7, 2014)

Roosevelt's Family Handbook did include this requirement, but in keeping with the administration's reticence to require too much from teachers, Ms. Banks stated that she didn't like the idea of mandating parent volunteer hours because it seemed punitive. Similarly, although Roosevelt's administration and the teachers stated that parent involvement was important, they were hesitant to require teachers to engage in parent involvement activities. Ms. Banks' statement revealed the fact that Roosevelt could be inconsistent in the policies and values that it espoused and those that it implemented.

The inconsistency over school policies also extended to teachers' understanding of whether Roosevelt had an open door policy. Ms. Rodrick, the 3rd grade math teacher, was new to Roosevelt and began teaching at the school in October. She stated that she was

unclear about whether or not the school had an open door policy, so it was difficult to communicate to her parents that they were welcome to her classroom at any time. She thought that it was important to be able to explicitly state to parents that they were welcome at the school, saying that “if you think the teacher is doing something to your child, come in the room. So I think openly communicating that more. You are welcome to come” (Rodrick, Transcript).

In addition to being unclear about Roosevelt’s phone log and open door policies, one teacher stated that there was also a lack of clarity or enforcement around other Roosevelt policies that seemed unrelated to parent involvement but that had repercussions for parents. One of the garden teachers, Ms. Devereaux, offered that there had been many schedule changes at the school without warning and without communicating the changes to other teachers or families, which was particularly difficult in dealing with volunteers.

RD: The thing I’ve learned coordinating volunteers, coordinating events, consistency is so important and when that consistency is taken away from you without your acknowledgement or permission or it’s beyond your control, I think it’s so frustrating, and I think there are a lot of situations at Roosevelt where systems break, things change, and no one tells anyone. That’s happened, that happens across the board in so many different ways, and I’d really hate to think that it affects parents, but I know it does.

MC: Do you feel like that’s because you’re a part of the garden programming, or do you think it, teachers in general experience that as well?

RD:…I think that is a huge problem at Roosevelt in general, not just with me. Like, Anne [a parent volunteer], was outside of the garden stuff. That was Lit Block [a class], and it was just like, Third grade went rogue and decided not to have Lit Block, and I don’t think they even had permission from adm-, like, that was just their decision as third grade, and there are tons of examples where different grade levels have changed their, their grade-level schedule, and the master schedule that they sent out at the beginning of the year is not relevant anymore. If you tried to find where students are at any given time going by that schedule, it would be, you would be completely off base. (April 25, 2014, Transcript)

In this example, Ms. Devereaux is referring to the experience of a parent volunteer, Anne

Black, who was regularly volunteering to help with the third graders' literacy block, a time during the day in which students gathered in smaller classes for leveled intervention around reading. One day, Anne came into the class to volunteer at her usual time only to find that the schedule had been completely changed without anyone informing her, and she was told that literacy block was no longer underway. I worked with Anne to figure out that third grade had switched their literacy block to the end of the day, and Anne was still able to assist at that time of day, so she recommenced her volunteering. As parent liaison, I was happy to work through any confusion. However, I also feared that the situation may have come off as unprofessional or disorganized to Anne. Ms. Devereaux seemed similarly worried about how parents might perceive sudden or unclear policy changes and how these policy changes affected parents' everyday lives.

Teachers' years of experience at Roosevelt. Some teachers mentioned that a greater number of years teaching at Roosevelt seemed to afford some advantages when it came to parent involvement. Although Roosevelt employed several new teachers, many of the teachers at the school had been employed for three or more years at the school, a long time period in the charter school landscape of New Orleans, where teacher turnover is a significant issue facing schools.

Teachers expressed that more time teaching at Roosevelt allowed them to develop stronger relationships with parents, as they had the opportunity to teach several children who belonged to the same family or had taught the same students for consecutive years. Mr. Alvarez, who had been teaching at Roosevelt for three years, talked about how his relationship with one mother had grown over time.

MA: She would ask me, Did [my son] come in during your time off and study with you? And I said, Sure. You know, that's the kind of thing I want. So that was definitely positive. I've been knowing her since sixth

grade because I've been teaching them from 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, so we've built that relationship.

Ms. Mayhew, who had been teaching at Roosevelt for four years, expressed a similar sentiment about one of her students' families.

MC: Can you give me an example of a really positive experience that you've had with a parent?

KM: Yeah, well it's nice this year because this year I have some students who I've had their older siblings so I've gotten to know their parents very well through the years. One parent in particular, her, you know, I always saw her son when he was younger, and I was like, Oh, I can't wait until he's in my class and all this, and you know it's been really nice to get to know her and her sons and their whole family. She'd always be like, Oh, Ms. Mayhew, these two boys are like night and day. That's what you think right now, but they are night and day. Are you sure you want him? Like, are you sure you want him, so it's fun to get to know the families, and she's always very supportive.

Some of the interviewed teachers enjoyed the relationships that they were able to build with families over time by developing relationships with individual siblings and their parents.

Years of experience at the school were also helpful because they allowed the teachers to build relationships with each other. By talking across grade levels, teachers were able to learn information about the students in their upcoming classes – which students were academically ahead or behind, which students were considered to have behavior issues, and which students were considered to have regularly supportive families. A couple of teachers mentioned that they used this information to preemptively contact parents at the beginning of the year to establish strong relationships before any intervention with a student was necessary. Then, when a teacher had to call a parent to report a student's behavioral or academic struggles, the teacher already had an existing relationship with the parent.

Teachers' Workload. Teachers talked extensively about their struggles to balance

the many responsibilities with which they were tasked. Some teachers who had established systems to distribute their parent involvement responsibilities were able to communicate more regularly with parents. For example, the Kindergarten teachers distributed a weekly newsletter, and the responsibility for creating the newsletter rotated between the two teachers. The second grade teachers similarly collaborated on their weekly newsletters.

Other teachers mentioned that they had difficulty managing making regular phone calls to all of their students. As described in the earlier section about phone communication with parents, some teachers struggled to find the time to regularly reach out to parents or they found it difficult to keep up with the needs of multiple students, so sometimes students fell through the cracks. This seemed to be particularly true for teachers who taught upper elementary and middle school, as these teachers taught larger groups of students beyond their homerooms, and for new teachers like Ms. Smith, the second grade teacher, who was just learning many of the routines for her classroom.

Improving Parent Involvement at Roosevelt

Most of the interviewed teachers expressed that they would like to see better parent involvement at Roosevelt Charter School, and they offered ideas for improvement that they would like to see. Some wanted to see more interaction among parents, teachers, and students specifically around academics while other teachers thought that it was important to foster a stronger community feel at the school with more informal activities for parents, teachers, and students to get to know each other in a more casual setting. Other teachers felt that it was important for the school to create a parent advisory board or to involve parents more in the planning of parent involvement events so that the school could be more responsive to parents' wishes.

Stronger Academic Focus

Ms. Prentice, Mrs. Reynolds, and Ms. Rodrick, mentioned that they would like for Roosevelt to create opportunities for parents to become more involved with academics. All three teachers offered ideas for Roosevelt to involve more parents, not just through events but through the school's grading practices as well.

Ms. Prentice, "would like to see Roosevelt's efforts center more around academics, like RFA meetings should center more on how parents should be reading to their children or how they could help their children at home with academics specifically." (February 4, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Ms. Prentice seemed to believe that if teachers and the school wanted parents to be involved, then the school should teach parents how they should be involved.

Mrs. Reynolds mentioned that she would like to see something similar, except that the events would be monthly literacy nights.

CR: I would like to see a literacy night. We had those at [the school where I used to teach] every month, and each grade was in charge of collecting, you know, focusing the night around a particular book or a particular theme, and all we did was read, and parents really came out with that, and you had parents sitting in one corner, reading to a group of kids or parents here reading, and it was really cool. So I think maybe a literacy thing, you know, would be great.

Ms. Prentice and Mrs. Reynolds seemed to think that offering structured activities for parents around academics could help to foster stronger academic involvement on behalf of parents and that parents could then help their children in more targeted ways that would support teachers.

Ms. Rodrick similarly felt that it was important to foster parents' academic involvement, and she thought that information about detailed information about students' progress was key to this effort.

SR: I think the more detail a parent has on a child, the more that they're willing to come to school. When I know where my child is on each standard, when I know my child is scoring at a second grade level, I know that my child out of 24 standards, my child is not proficient in 18 of the standards, I feel like a parent is like, I'm coming to the school because I need to understand what's happening, what you're doing, so I think just being more apparent with grading. (March 31, 2014, Transcript)

Unlike Ms. Prentice, who mentioned that the school should work with parents on reading to their children, Ms. Rodrick offered that the school should alter its report card system to provide more efficacy for parents. Ms. Rodrick believed that the current report card system used by Roosevelt did not really offer useful information to parents. It was difficult for parents to know how to specifically intervene if their child received a low grade on their report card because the parent did not have any information about the specific skills the student was lacking. Ms. Rodrick felt that breaking down these skills and grading students on individual skills could provide more useful and actionable information for parents and could lead to a more fruitful conversation among students, parents, and teachers.

More Informal Opportunities for Parent Involvement

While Mrs. Reynolds, Ms. Prentice, and Ms. Rodrick thought that more parent involvement activities around academics would improve parent involvement programming at Roosevelt, other teachers mentioned that they would like to see more opportunities for informal interactions between students, parents, and teachers. These teachers thought that more fun activities that simply encouraged a community atmosphere at the school would draw out more parents and promote better relationships among school staff, parents, and students. As Mrs. O'Shaughnessy explained,

EO: I think it helps to have parents know each other. I think it builds the grade-level community, so it's not even necessarily, I think the teacher kind of gets the positive byproduct of that, but when you do different social things and the parents get to know each other and they're on good terms, like they're good relationships, it just helps with the kids getting along in school together. (March 28, 2014, Transcript)

Like Mrs. O'Shaughnessy, Mr. Alvarez agreed that it was important to build the school community through fun activities that involved students and parents. Mr. Alvarez turned to afterschool programming and extracurricular activities as a place where Roosevelt could grow and that could reap particular benefits for middle school students.

MA: It's all about building that community... You gotta build better school culture because that will attract parents. It really will. Athletics, more, you know, more school pride... Last year, before we used to have a barbeque out there, and that's all middle school because only middle school students played flag football. Parents used to be out there because parents, I know parents like to see their children play sports. That's the bottom line. We are a sport-centered community. We are. A child's got a football game against this school, we're gonna go. Teachers go. Parents go. Right there. It brings them outside the classroom, outside the school environment, but it still builds that relationship. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

The flag football team and other activities referenced by Mr. Alvarez were no longer in place at Roosevelt, and he felt that missing these activities was a loss for the culture of the school, particularly for middle school students who were the students most likely to participate in afterschool sports.

However, even teachers of younger students thought that afterschool events would be good for building the school community. Ms. Stinson, one of the Prekindergarten teachers, thought that Roosevelt should offer fun things, "like a movie night or something like that, something that does not have anything else involved other than getting parents and children together with the teachers and getting them to know and feel comfortable with the staff and just being in the building" (February 4, 2014, Transcript). Ms. Stinson felt that it was important to

encourage parents to come to the school building without asking parents to do anything in particular.

Some of the interviewed teachers thus felt that an important purpose of parent involvement programming at Roosevelt was to create a sense of community at the school, and they believed that informal activities that were simply fun could help to do that. Unlike the teachers who wanted to see additional activities focused around academic activities, this group of teachers seemed to focus more on activities that would foster and improve relationships among students and between parents and teachers.

More Parent Input

Some of the interviewed teachers offered that Roosevelt should talk to parents to get a sense of how parents would improve parent involvement programming at Roosevelt. Mrs. Reynolds mentioned using parent focus groups to determine what parents' needs were and how better to accommodate them at the school.

CR: I think maybe we need to do maybe a focus group to find out exactly what parents need and then from there we can coordinate times and then find out exactly what's on the heart and mind of our parents and then from there make the tough decisions, you know, how to involve them or how to better involve them in the school. (January 21, 2014, Transcript)

Ms. Simiyu, a second grade teacher, similarly mentioned that it would be good to "ask parents what they wanna do and then we do that and we'll see how many parents we get" (February 17, 2014, Transcript). Ms. Simiyu seemed to think that talking to parents about how to improve parent involvement programming would help to draw more parents to Roosevelt.

Mrs. Calder, the other Kindergarten teacher, offered that a more permanent

structure like a parent advisory board should be established so that parents could have input into Roosevelt's programming. Mrs. Calder said, "I think there should be a parent component to the board...like an advisory board, and maybe they have one voice. But there should be, like that's what I would like to see, a parent advisory board. Because I think, like, like sometimes parents come up with things that I don't think of" (January 25, 2014, Transcript). Mrs. Calder recognized the benefits of having different points of view advising the school, and she wanted parents to be a part of the school's leadership.

Summary

The teachers interviewed at Roosevelt acknowledged that parent involvement was an important aspect of their students' education. In particular, they felt that parent involvement communicated to students the importance of an education, which helped students to remain focused amid everyday distractions and which helped to promote students' academic success. In an effort to ensure parent involvement, teachers at Roosevelt used many traditional forms of parent involvement mentioned in the research literature and used across schools, including phone communications, written communications, homework, an open door policy, and other personal touches to reach out to parents. Although teachers differed in which efforts they used and in the manner in which they implemented them, all interviewed teachers attempted to reach out to parents in at least one of these ways.

Despite their outreach efforts, the interviewed teachers seemed somewhat disappointed in the results of their efforts. The interviewed teachers at Roosevelt mentioned that they would like for parents to ideally be responsive to teachers' requests for support, to help their students with homework, and – to a lesser extent – to advocate

for their students. All of these are expectations are in keeping with Lareau's (2011) concept of "concerted cultivation" favored by middle-class parents, whereby parents take an active role in managing their children's lives. While this seemed to be what the teachers at Roosevelt desired, many of the teachers interviewed at Roosevelt found that many parents at the school did not meet their expectations for involvement.

Teachers offered a variety of reasons for why this might be the case, sometimes placing responsibility with the parents and sometimes placing responsibility with the school. Some teachers mentioned that parent involvement varied based on parent characteristics, including their students' age, whether parents lived in the school neighborhood, and even parents' ethnicity. Some teachers also mentioned that some parents simply didn't believe that education was important for their child, or they faced logistical challenges, such as transportation or work challenges to their involvement. This is in keeping with the literature that examines variation in parent involvement based on parent characteristics.

However, teachers also acknowledged that the school contributed somewhat to differences in parents' involvement. A couple of teachers mentioned the importance of experience in helping them to build relationships with parents, as some teachers had worked with students in the same family for several years. Other interviewed teachers mentioned that they struggled to maintain good parent involvement efforts among their many other responsibilities, and still other teachers worried that the school's policies around parent involvement were unclear. They worried that disorganization and a lack of accountability on the part of the school's administration might weaken Roosevelt's parent involvement efforts. This focus from teachers on the logistical and organizational aspects of maintaining parent involvement efforts is largely absent from the research literature,

which seems to focus more on the lack of intent on behalf of schools to reach out to minority or low-income families. Most of the interviewed staff at Roosevelt, including teachers and administration, seemed invested in the idea of reaching out to their families. However, they faced a capacity issue in making their ideal outreach efforts a reality.

Given some of these challenges to parent involvement, teachers offered several ways that Roosevelt could improve its parent involvement programming. They suggested that Roosevelt could offer more activities with an academic focus, helping parents to understand how to read with their children or how to complete homework with their children at home. These suggestions seemed in keeping with the idea that the parents served by Roosevelt needed to be taught how to interact with their children around academics. Teachers also offered that more informal opportunities for interaction among students, parents, and families could help to strengthen the Roosevelt community and to draw parents on the campus. Finally, some teachers mentioned that it would be worthwhile to try to get feedback from parents about Roosevelt's parent involvement programming so that Roosevelt's parent involvement activities were responsive to parents' needs and wishes. These teachers seemed to think that it was important for Roosevelt to gain direct input from parents rather than making assumptions about what the parents at Roosevelt wanted in terms of parent involvement programming.

Despite interviewed teachers mentioning that they wanted more involvement from parents acknowledging the school's responsibility in improving parent involvement, teacher interviews and my observations suggested that Roosevelt's staff seemed largely ambivalent towards parents' involvement. For example, as parent liaison, I circulated to 26 teachers to determine their interest in hosting volunteers in their classrooms. While most teachers were open to having volunteers in their classrooms, ten teachers specifically

requested college volunteers *only*, meaning that they did not want to have parent volunteers in their classrooms. When asked if they desired more parent involvement, two teachers responded that they were unsure if they wanted more parent involvement in their classrooms because their classrooms were the domains of the teacher, and it depended upon what the parents were expected to do. Further, some interviewed teachers talked about the fact that Roosevelt had an open door policy and that parents could simply come into the school – as long as they came at an appropriate time that did not interrupt instruction and they checked in at the front of the school. These are not necessarily burdensome hurdles for parents, but timing and checking in do complicate the notion of a supposedly open door policy, and calling the classroom the domain of teachers does seem to conflict with the professed sentiment that teachers wanted parents more involved at the school.

These conflicting statements and behavior suggest that Roosevelt's teachers believed that they wanted more parent involvement. However, they seemed to want parents involved in particular ways that were not always clear or explicitly communicated to parents and might even have been unclear to the teachers themselves. This lack of clarity made it difficult for parents to succeed in meeting teachers' expectations although parents themselves differed in what they believed made strong parent involvement.

How did parents feel about Roosevelt's parent involvement efforts? What were their opinions about involvement? Next, we turn to understanding parent involvement at Roosevelt from the perspective of parents.

CHAPTER SIX:

PARENTS' VIEWS ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT ROOSEVELT

Many studies of parent involvement in schools have focused on either the perspectives of teachers or parents. One of the affordances of a case study like this one is the opportunity to collect and analyze data that permit the understanding of parent involvement at Roosevelt from multiples perspectives. In this chapter, I describe parent perspectives about parent involvement at Roosevelt, adding to those insights provided by teachers.

As described in Chapter Three, in order to collect information about parents' perspectives on parent involvement at Roosevelt, I distributed a survey to all parents at Roosevelt, and I interviewed a subset of 16 parents. This approach allowed me to understand the perspectives of a wide range of parents while being able to dig deeper into the opinions of a smaller group of parents.

Roosevelt distributed the survey for students' parents in May 2014 in an attempt to gain parents' feedback and insights about their satisfaction with Roosevelt, their involvement with their child's education, their communication with the school, and the services and workshops that they'd like to see offered for both adults and children at Roosevelt. (See Figure 2 on p66-68 for a copy of the Parent Survey.) Because the surveys were not mandatory, there is an element of self-selection regarding survey respondents, and they may not be representative of the larger population of parents at Roosevelt.

Two hundred and four (204) surveys were collected, representing 37% of students

at Roosevelt. Given Roosevelt's incentive to students to return the survey, some parents filled out more than one survey for each of their children, so some survey responses might be repetitive although it was impossible to tell which ones since the surveys were anonymous. The vast majority of survey respondents were mothers, and most respondents had on average two students attending Roosevelt. Parent respondents represented students spanning across all grade levels at Roosevelt with first, second, and third grades representing the highest proportion of respondents.

In order to supplement the survey data, which provided information about a broad range of parents, with more in-depth parent perspectives about parent involvement at Roosevelt, I interviewed 16 parents with students across grade levels. These interviews included 8 in-person interviews and 8 phone interviews with parents referred by teachers or whom I had observed throughout the year. During these interviews, I asked parents about their views on Roosevelt and their involvement with their children's education at home and at Roosevelt. The in-person interviews typically lasted 30-60 minutes. The phone interviews were much shorter, usually lasting 10-20 minutes, due to using an abbreviated interview protocol. (See Appendices C and D for the In-Person and Phone Parent Interview Protocols.) Much like the parents who responded to the survey, interviewed parents did not seem to be representative of all parents at Roosevelt, especially since they were recommended by teachers, usually as examples of parents who more motivated in their involvement.

This chapter is structured parallel to the chapter describing the findings from the teacher interviews. Using parent survey and interview data, I open the chapter by describing why parents think that parent involvement is important. Parents offer that their involvement is important from both a practical standpoint and also as role models for their

children. The chapter then describes teachers' efforts to involve parents, which echoes much of what teachers offered as the ways that they try to involve parents – through phone and written communications and school meetings like RFA and Rhino Guardians. Next, the chapter discusses how parents described their own involvement with their children, which seemed to focus more on types of parent involvement at home than involvement at school. I close the chapter by showing the reasons that parents offered for variation in their involvement. These reasons are similar to many of those offered by teachers, such as their students' ages, the neighborhood status, familiarity with English, and logistical barriers. Parents seemed to place less responsibility with the school than the teachers did, so they offered few suggestions for improvement. Rather, they simply hoped to see more and more parents attending school events and participating with school activities.

Parent Involvement Is Important

Teachers viewed parent involvement as important because they thought that it was an instrumental mechanism for parents to communicate the value of education to their children. They believed that this in turn helped to promote student success. While interviewed parents did view education as important as well, they seemed to take a two-pronged view about the importance of their involvement. Some parents viewed their involvement in a practical light, stating that their involvement was important so that they could stay informed about what was going on at the school and with their child's education. Other parents, particularly two fathers, talked more about the importance their involvement as role models for their children and to express to their children that they cared about their upbringing.

Many interviewed parents talked about the importance of their involvement as a

way to keep abreast of what was going on at Roosevelt and with their child's academic progress. During a phone interview with one retired grandmother, Renee McAllister, Ms. McAllister talked about her attendance at RFA meetings and report card conferences as important to informing her interactions with her two grandchildren who were in the 2nd and 5th grades.

Renee says that she thinks that the RFA meetings are great and informative. She thinks that if parents were more involved in things like that, they could get to know more about the school. Renee says that it's a good opportunity to get to know the teachers, which you wouldn't necessarily be able to do unless you make an appointment...I ask Renee if she's attended Report Card Conferences, and she responds that that's one of the key factors of her involvement. She thinks that it's very important to have the time to talk one on one with the teacher and to find out what is going on with her grandkids. She can find out what the kids are doing and not doing, how the kids can improve, and what she as a grandmother should do to improve. It's an opportunity for Renee to learn what they need to do that they're not doing now, and she can get that information from the teacher one on one, so it's a good idea. (June 24, 2014, Fieldnotes⁵)

Ms. McAllister felt that her presence at the school was important because it provided her with practical, actionable suggestions to help her grandchildren academically. Sheana Kilroy, the mother of a young boy in Kindergarten, agreed with the sentiments expressed by Ms. McAllister. Ms. Kilroy noted that

parent involvement is good because it tells you, shows you where your kid is and where they need to be. It provides first-hand experience on what goes on in the classroom, which is important because it gives you a view of the teacher's teaching styles and how they react to kids...Sheana explains that that's important because Sheana learns and it gives her an approach on how to help [her son] more and what to do with him at home. (May 16, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Ms. McAllister and Ms. Kilroy felt that their involvement at school provided them with

⁵ All phone interviews are presented as fieldnotes because these were recorded manually. Although Ms. Kilroy and another parent, Mr. Manship, participated in in-person interviews, they requested that their interviews not be audio-recorded. Thus, their interviews are also presented as fieldnotes rather than transcription.

specific feedback and ways to be able to help their children at home where they hoped to support what students were learning at school.

In addition to several interviewed parents who mentioned parent involvement as important because it allowed them to support their students academically at home, two fathers expressed the importance of their involvement to let their children know that they cared about them as individuals and as students. Mr. Yost, who had four children attending Roosevelt, explained during his interview,

I grewed [sic] up in a household with a single mom, no dad, so I experienced it firsthand far as not having a father, and so I always said when I have boys I didn't want them to grow up and feel like, what they did to deserve not to have a father or a dad, so that's why I try to be there. I'm not the best, you know what I'm saying, or nothing like that, but I try and I do what I can, and that's all I want them to see. You know, my daddy couldn't buy me a Mercedes, or he couldn't buy this, but my daddy cared. He walked us to school, or, you know, I just want them to remember the small things, you know what I'm saying? (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

Mr. Yost walked his children to school on most days, and he picked them up in the afternoon. He also attended a number of Rhino Guardian meetings and report card conferences. He was a regular presence at the school because he felt that it was important for his children to know that he cared, even if he couldn't always provide for the material things that his children might want.

Another father, Mr. Jenkins, extended Mr. Yost's idea to being a role model for other students as well. When I asked Mr. Jenkins why his participation with the Roosevelt Rhino Guardians was so important to him, Mr. Jenkins responded,

My father, he wasn't, you know, he was in and out. I'm familiar with him, but I had to create my own roadmap, you know, and it wasn't easy, so I guess being on the other end of it now, not only do I wanna be in, relevant in [my sons' lives], but I wanna be able to help other fathers to put them in that same space, that same frame of mind so they can also continue to help and build their families, and it's probably a lot of the same guys that have

been through the same thing I have...I really want to break the cycle.
(May 20, 2014, Transcript)

Both Mr. Yost and Mr. Jenkins, who had a son in Prekindergarten and one who was one year old, drew upon their personal experiences with their own fathers and used those experiences to inform how they wanted to be involved with their children. These fathers' conceptions of involvement extended beyond simply helping with academics, but also included helping their children to build "roadmaps" for their life, to understand what it took to be a successful community and family member and how to get there.

This use of personal narratives to support students of color is well-documented in the research literature about parent involvement among African-American and Hispanic parents (Auerbach, 2007; Knight, Norton, Bentley, and Dixon, 1004; McKay et al, 2003), and some of the fathers at Roosevelt extended these discussions beyond their own children. Mr. Jenkins and other fathers had similar discussions with male students at the Boys II Men luncheon described in Chapter Four. During the Boys II Men luncheon, Mr. Jenkins and several other Rhino Guardian fathers spoke with middle school boys about their adolescent experiences, encouraging the boys to learn from their mistakes and to choose different paths. These stories were an important type of parent involvement that seemed geared specifically towards translating values to their children, values about school but also more broadly about life.

Teachers' Efforts to Involve Parents

Overall, interviewed and surveyed parents felt that the school was putting forth strong efforts to include parents and that it was up to parents to take the school up on its efforts. In particular, many parents mentioned the many ways that the school used to

communicate with them about upcoming events at the school, either through Roosevelt's phone tree system, teacher phone calls, newsletters, or fliers. A couple of parents also mentioned Roosevelt's outreach to recruit parent volunteers, as well as the school's RFA meetings and the Rhino Guardians program. Finally, three parents mentioned the ways in which teachers had offered specific recommendations for them to help their children academically. Most of the parent outreach efforts identified by parents were in keeping with traditional parent involvement activities around communications, and interviewed parents also tended to focus their involvement efforts more on parent involvement activities at home.

School Communications

Interviewed parents mentioned a number of ways that Roosevelt attempted to communicate with them. They mentioned that the school communicated via phone calls and newsletters in order to let parents know about upcoming events and opportunities. As Mr. Manship mentioned, "Roosevelt reaches out and actively tries to get all of the information out there to parents. [The school goes] out fishing, and then it's up to parents to get here, but the school does get the information out there." (May 21, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Survey results supported these interview statements about Roosevelt's outreach to parents. Based on the survey results, respondents agreed that Roosevelt communicated very well overall, sending home news about things happening at the school in a format that was easily understandable. (See Table 14 for survey results about Roosevelt's communication efforts.) Furthermore, survey respondents felt that Roosevelt was doing a good job communicating about their child's performance in school – whether they were having problems or if they had improved.

Table 13. Survey Results about Roosevelt Communications Efforts (1 = Does not do, 2 = Could do better, 3 = Does well)	
Sends home notices that I can understand easily	2.88
Sends home news about things happening at school	2.87
Contacts me if my child is having problems	2.77
Tells me how my child is doing in school	2.72
Contacts me if my child does something well or improved	2.63
Provides information on community services that I may want to use	2.48
Asks me to volunteer at the school	2.33

Two interviewed parents provided examples of how the school had reached out to them to suggest ways for parents to help their children with academics. Based on their children’s academic levels, both parents decided to enroll their children in tutoring programs – one at Roosevelt and another at a Saturday morning program at a local church. When I interviewed Mrs. Yost, whose daughter participated in the church’s reading tutoring program, she mentioned that she took her daughter to a tutoring program on Saturday mornings. I asked her how she had decided to take her daughter to that tutoring program, and she responded,

The school, it came from the school really. I did it as well last year for [my older daughter] and when they, I guess go through the reading levels to see whatever the reading level is, they have this program where you can send them over there on Saturday mornings at this church, and I just take them to see if it improves because I don’t wanna be the parent that they gave me an opportunity to do something, and I didn’t take the time to do it. (May 17, 2014, Transcript)

For Mrs. Yost, the school’s outreach was important on two levels. First, it informed her that her child was struggling with reading and involved her in implementing a solution for her child’s reading. Second, the school informed her that the tutoring program existed.

Given that information, Mrs. Yost was then able to take action to help her daughters' reading levels, and both Mr. and Mrs. Yost noted that they had seen improvement in their daughters' reading comprehension.

Another parent mentioned another concrete way that Roosevelt reached out to parents so that parents could support academic efforts – through newsletters. I interviewed Mr. Jenkins and Mrs. Rotolo, whose son was in Prekindergarten, together, and they talked about the class newsletters created by their son's teacher that provided specific information about what parents should review with their children on a weekly basis. As Mrs. Rotolo explained,

MR: There's a packet they send home at first, and they say, Okay, there are the number chart, alphabet, vowels or whatever...Sight words

AJ: Sight words.

MR: Color of the week.

AJ: Mm-hm. There's a color, shape.

MC: Those are weekly packets that they give?

AJ: Those packets are pretty thick, too. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

These forms of communication kept parents up-to-date about what their children were learning, even if parents were not able to regularly make it to the classroom. As mentioned in the previous chapter, however, these newsletters seemed to exist only at the lower grade levels.

Two parents mentioned that Roosevelt's volunteering efforts could be better publicized and organized. Mrs. Black, the regular parent volunteer whose schedule was altered when the 3rd grade decided to shift around its literacy block scheduling, mentioned that Roosevelt had done a good job with conducting a drive for volunteers. However, Mrs. Black and Mrs. Yost mentioned that it would be a good idea for Roosevelt to develop a standing list of volunteer and help opportunities for parents so that parents who had unexpected free time could

come to the school without needing to coordinate schedules beforehand. This is in keeping with one of the challenges to parents' involvement, their work schedules, which are discussed again later in this chapter. Survey results also suggested that Roosevelt could improve with asking parents to volunteer at the school (mean = 2.33).

Finally, one parent mentioned that Roosevelt had communicated poorly with her surrounding a particular incident with her son. According to Ms. Fiore, her son was involved in a lunchtime altercation with another student, and the school failed to inform her about the incident. She said that

[Her son] got into something at the school with another student, and [he] is the one who told her about the incident. She says that there was no paperwork that came home from the school about the incident, but he got into an incident with a student at the end of the school year. She says that when she came to [Roosevelt] talk about it, the social worker told her that someone got roughed up, which Ms. Fiore thought was very unprofessional.

I ask Ms. Fiore what kind of response she wanted from the school, whether it was a parent meeting or something else. She responds that she was looking for some type of meeting, not necessarily a parent meeting, but something more than [her son] coming home to tell her about the incident. She says that she doesn't remember a phone call, but her phone had been turned off around that time, so she can't say that they didn't call. She's just not sure about it. Her phone had been off for a couple of weeks around that time, but the school had emergency numbers, and none of her emergency numbers contacted her to tell her that the school had called. She says that she was just "looking for more." (June 18, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Although Ms. Fiore acknowledged that her phone situation might have been a challenge for the school, she knew that she had put back-up measures in place, and she was disappointed with the school's efforts to make her aware of the incident that had occurred with her son. She did not receive any communication from her emergency contacts or in written form, and she felt frustrated when she tried to reach out to Roosevelt to discuss the incident. Although most interviewed and surveyed parents seemed satisfied with

Roosevelt's communication efforts overall, Ms. Fiore's experience illustrates that there were also instances where Roosevelt's communication faltered.

Roosevelt Family Association Meetings

Several interviewed parents mentioned that Roosevelt offered the opportunity for families to become involved through Roosevelt Family Association meetings. Many of the interviewees explained that while they were not able to attend every RFA meeting, they tried to attend some of them, and they enjoyed the meetings when they were able to attend. They found the parent workshops, performances, and school information helpful for working with their children and keeping up-to-date with happenings at the school.

Mrs. Rotolo described why she liked the RFA meetings,

I like to get together with the parents. The last official [RFA] I was at, we made ranch dip, and, you know, you break out into groups, and we were at a table with a Hispanic parent and their kids, and I think that's it, the teamwork, and if we put that, if we continue this throughout the community, I mean, we can be great. Like, awesome. Awesome, awesome, awesome, awesome. And that's why I love them. I love them because we get the parents there to come watch their kids perform and then after the kids perform, let's break into groups, and let's do this activity together because some kids don't do activities at home at all and don't know how to make ranch dip, something we can take away and it's always every, every, every one of those meetings, you can take something away from that and go home and apply it. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

Mrs. Rotolo liked that RFA meetings provided the opportunity to interact with other parents in a family-oriented setting, and she appreciated that the activities were specifically designed for parents to be able to implement them again at home.

Another mother, Ms. Kilroy, mentioned that RFA meetings provided an opportunity for her to gather insight about what the students were doing at school. She explained that the meetings "were fun. She liked painting what a family means to you on

the paper plate [an activity at one of the meetings], and she enjoyed seeing pictures of what the kids do in class” (May 16, 2014, Fieldnotes). RFA meetings thus provided an opportunity for Roosevelt to create a sense of community at the school while also providing parents with insight into the academic happenings at the school.

Despite the popularity of RFA meetings among the interviewed parents, the survey results suggested that fewer parents across the school attended RFA meetings on a regular basis. Survey respondents were most likely to reply that they had attended RFA a few times or never. Interview data from parents who wanted to attend more RFA meetings suggest that a lower rate of RFA attendance might be because attending RFA meetings required extra effort on behalf of parents who were working or who had trouble getting to the school at the end of the day. (More discussion of attendance at RFA and Rhino Guardian meetings follows later in this chapter.)

Roosevelt Rhino Guardians

The three fathers who were interviewed mentioned that Roosevelt offered the opportunity for fathers to become involved with the Roosevelt Rhino Guardians. One father in particular also mentioned the importance of Ms. Banks and me being involved with the active recruiting of fathers to participate in the program. When I asked Mr. Yost how he chose to become involved with the Rhino Guardians, he answered, “Actually, they chose me to be honest. I really didn’t even know about the program, but that Ms. Elizabeth Banks, you know what I’m saying, she’s one of those people I can’t say no to, and she chose me, and I just went with it. It’s been a real good experience” (May 20, 2014, Transcript).

Parents' Involvement at Roosevelt

Both interviewed and surveyed parents described their involvement both at home and at school. Parents mentioned that at home they regularly helped their children with their homework, monitored their academic progress, provided learning opportunities outside of school, and had conversations about school with their children. Some parents also mentioned that at Roosevelt they attended RFA and Rhino Guardian meetings, as well as volunteering once in a while. Parent involvement activities at home seemed to occur more frequently than parent involvement activities at school. (See Table 15 for more information about parents' reports of their involvement.)

Table 14. Survey Results about Families' Reported Involvement (1 = Never, 2 = A few times, 3 = Many times)	
Tell my child how important school is	2.94
Talk to my child about school	2.88
Help my child with homework	2.84
Help my child practice skills before a test	2.67
Read to my child	2.63
Take my child to special places or events in the community	2.44
Talk with my child's teacher at the school	2.34
Take my child to the library	2.24
Visit my child's classroom	2.17
Talk with my child's teacher on the phone	2.15
Go to special events at the school	2.11
Attend RFA meetings	1.88
Volunteer at school or in my child's classroom	1.55
Participated in the Roosevelt Rhino Guardians Men's program	1.36

Involvement at Home

Helping with homework. Almost every parent interviewed mentioned that they helped their children with homework at home or that they checked over their children's homework to ensure that it was done. This is supported by parents' survey results, which indicated that parents often helped their child with their homework (mean = 2.84). Ms.

Castillo, who had a daughter in Mrs. Reynolds' Kindergarten class, explained that she was much more involved with helping her daughter complete her homework towards the beginning of the year. However, as the year progressed, Ms. Castillo found that her daughter's confidence grew and Ms. Castillo simply had to monitor her daughter's homework completion.

Ms. Castillo says that she helps [her daughter] do all of her homework. Especially in the beginning when [her daughter] found the homework hard to do, Ms. Castillo would have to tell her what to do, but [her daughter] started learning more. [Her daughter] now says, 'Let me do it!' So [her daughter] now does her homework on her own, and then Ms. Castillo reviews it. (June 19, 2014, Fieldnotes)

The fact that Ms. Castillo had shifted more to a monitoring role with homework did not mean that she was not also actively looking for ways to enrich her daughter's learning. Towards the end of the academic year, Ms. Castillo attended an RFA meeting where parents were introduced to Khan Academy and encouraged to it on their phones, tablets, or computers at home. The day after the RFA meeting, Ms. Castillo came to the school, and she asked me how to register for and use Khan Academy on her phone so that her daughter could use it later (May 1, 2015, Journal).

Parent involvement with homework similarly occurred in the upper grades, though parents in those grades focused more on simply ensuring that their children had completed their homework. Ms. Jefferson, the mother of a 6th grader, stated that she "comes home and asks him about his homework, saying 'Let me see your homework.' She can't keep up with some stuff in his homework, but most of the time she can tell whether or not it's right" (June 20, 2014, Fieldnotes). While parents of older students like Ms. Jefferson seemed to take more of a monitoring role with their children's homework,

parents of younger students like Ms. Castillo seemed to be involved more directly with their children's completion of homework and maintaining academic activities for them.

Monitoring academic progress. Parents were also involved with their children's academics beyond simply helping with homework. Many parents mentioned the ways that they monitored their children's academic performance, whether through regular conversations with the teacher or through progress reports and report cards. Ms. Carter, whose daughter was in the 5th grade, mentioned that she talked to the teachers

probably twice per week during the school year. I asked her if she mostly called them or if they called her, and Ms. Carter responded that it went both directions. Probably once per week she called them, and once per week they called her. She said that she really asked them for it because she asked the homeroom teacher for regular updates (June 18, 2014, Fieldnotes).

Similarly, as described in an earlier section, Ms. McDonald used report card conferences as a way to keep up to date on her grandchildren's progress and to touch base individually with teachers. Parents who wanted to be aware of their children's progress took action to make sure that they regularly interacted with teachers or were able to monitor their children's progress regularly. These parents did not necessarily wait for the school to initiate outreach. Rather, they used a variety of ways to actively pursue knowledge about their children.

Academic activities outside of school. In the survey, respondents mentioned that they sometimes took their children to special places or events in the community (mean = 2.44) or took their children to the library (mean = 2.24). Interviewed parents supported the assertion that many parents engaged with activities outside of school that promoted students' learning both because these activities were enjoyable and because it was important for students to notice what they were learning in everyday life.

The Rosa Parks Community Center was an important pillar of the Central Community, and some interviewed parents who lived in the neighborhood mentioned that they took their children to the library. In addition, parents mentioned that they took their children to special places to celebrate their successes at school, because they were educational experiences, or simply because they were fun. For example, Ms. Kilroy explained that outside of school, she and her son “go to the park and to the aquarium...I ask her why she takes them to these things, and she responds that she takes him to the aquarium to teach him about animals and to learn about the environment. She also thinks that the animals are really cute to look at” (May 16, 2014, Transcript). For Ms. Kilroy, activities outside of school accomplished the dual purpose of learning and creating an opportunity for mother and son to share an enjoyable time.

Mrs. Black also described learning activities that she did with her boys at home. They did not necessarily go out to places so as much as find learning in everyday activities at home.

AB: I quiz regularly, just, you know, anything, if they ask me a simple question like, you know, How many blah, blah, blah should I, you know, or how come there's nuts on that much of the brownie? And I'm like, well, How much of the brownies do you think have nuts, just to factor it in to every day. You know, is that half or, you know, just, and we read. [My older son] likes magazines, and that's his focus right now, and as long as he's reading, Also, he's like a figure head, so any sports stats, he's just, you know, he feels like he doesn't have to do math his summer because he's just gonna deal with his stats, and that's division and fractions and, so, well, at least if you're keeping it flowing or whatever, so, and, and [my younger son], we're working on being quick and ready with just division and multiplication and things like that. We'll work like on maybe a little goofy science experiment. Nothing major, just something, but putting baking soda and vinegar filling the canister and watching it.

MC: Why do you think that's important?

AB: I think just to keep them interested and to let them know that everyday life and fun kind of applies, those things have, they're relevant

across the board in everyday life. It's not just school and when are you ever going to need this again. It's kind of like, Oh, look, it's science at work, and we're having fun with it now. Just to make it interesting, I guess. And not be work. (N/A, Transcript)

Mrs. Black felt that it was important that her sons understand that what they were learning at school was relevant to everyday life. Further, she did not want them to associate learning with drudgery. Rather, she wanted her sons to develop an interest in learning that could sustain itself beyond school.

Talking to their children about academics and the future. In addition to helping with or monitoring their children's homework and engaging with learning activities outside of school, another way in which parents were involved was by speaking to their children about school. This was the most popular parent involvement activity according to results from the parent survey (mean = 2.94), and there is evidence from the parent interviews to support the importance of this type of involvement to Roosevelt's parents.

Mr. Jenkins and Mrs. Rotolo described how they had talked to their Prekindergarten son after his performance at the Roosevelt Annual Cook-Off. Their son had performed with the afterschool martial arts group. Mrs. Rotolo explained,

I was kind of disappointed in him because he didn't do it to his full potential that I know he can and so he was, he told [the coach]. [The coach] was like, You did a good job. He was nervous, and I said, Yeah, I know. And so we got in the car, I said, [Son], I said, if you do something, you do it to the best of your ability. You know, you don't just half do anything. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

Mr. Jenkins agreed with what Mrs. Rotolo had said to their son. They both believed that it was important for their son to know that giving 100% in everything that he did – whether academic or extracurricular – was important.

Mrs. Yost also talked to her children about the importance of trying in school. In particular, she talked to them about their behavior, making sure that they understood that there was a time to play and a time to work.

You know your kids. You're gonna play. I know that, but I need you to start determining the difference between when it's time to play and when it's time to work. I'm quite sure at school they get time out to go play, even if aftercare. You get time to play, but when you're in the class, that's all I ask you to do, is pay attention to what the teacher is telling you so you can get what it is they're, you're doing. I mean, that shouldn't be that hard. You know, and I tell them all the time, y'all always asking me, Momma, buy me this. Buy me that. And I just do it. You know, but I'm like, I'm asking you to do this for me. Be in school. Pay attention so you could get good grades. (May 19, 2014, Transcript)

This piece of advice from Mrs. Yost to her children applied beyond the classroom. It was an opportunity for Mrs. Yost to talk to her children about her responsibility as a parent trying to provide for her kids. It was also an opportunity to express that learning when it was time to work versus time to play was an important skill for life. This would not end when her children graduated from school.

In his interview, Mr. Yost also talked about the conversations that he had with his children about issues that affected them but which also went beyond schooling. In particular, he talked about the different types of conversations that he had with his older children.

Actually, we at that stage right now where [my older son] is, he about to make twelve this year, and he ready for girlfriends and certain stuff, you know what I'm saying, and I been trying to take it slow with him and talk to him. His momma [Mrs. Yost] feel as though he not ready, but like I told her, he'll never be ready let you tell him. You're his momma. But you gotta make him ready because he living out here in the world every day. The world not gonna wait and say, Well, he not ready. They going to expose it to him, and they ain't gonna care how they expose it to him, so that's why you gotta be on your game and make sure that you prepare him and have him ready. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

Mr. Yost talked often during his interview about the difficulties that he and his family faced in the world, even describing every day as a “challenge.” Mr. Yost was acutely aware of these challenges, and he tried to walk a line between being sensitive to his children while preparing them for his view of the real world. When I probed Mr. Yost and asked whether these challenges were specifically related to race or something else, he responded,

That too, but you know... I'm just saying far as it's race, but I'm saying far as being a man in America. It's hard. You know what I'm saying? You know, we amongst a thin and a narrow breed first of all. We don't have too many men that take interest in the kids and this, that, and the other, so that's what I'm saying, too. I'm not just focused on race because I could care less about the color, you know what I'm saying. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

Mr. Yost seemed to believe that some of his daily difficulties were related to race, but he seemed more attuned to the challenges and responsibilities that arose from being an African-American man, and he wanted his children to have a good male role model, so he talked to them about his role as a father and making sure that they felt his love.

Just like Mr. Yost talked to his older son about relationships, he also was trying to figure out how to talk to his daughter navigate another challenge – her physical development - caught between what felt comfortable to Mr. Yost and trying to handle the conversations as constructively as possible.

Now with that, my [oldest daughter] is coming to her little age where she starting to develop, you know what I'm saying, and by me being a man, she being a girl, I be feeling uncomfortable with that, so I really don't know how to address that, so my solution to that problem is, I try to let her momma handle that, you know what I'm saying, but my sister and them been telling me that's not good neither, that I need to have some kind of chain of communication where I can at least talk to her if not directly about certain things, just let her know that, that the line is open, that she can. So I'm kinda torn in between that right now because I really don't know how to, you know, to handle it or whatever, and I don't want my

daughter to feel shame or feel like I can't say this or that around daddy because he gonna look at me this way or that, you know, and it's not like that, you know. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

Mr. Yost's conversation demonstrates that parents obviously faced parenting issues like relationships and physical development that extended beyond academics in the classroom, but that also ultimately affect students' progress. Mr. Yost had mixed feelings about his preparedness to engage in these important conversations, especially those with his older children, but he, like other parents, was attempting to navigate that space. Keeping the lines of communication with his children open was an integral part of his involvement as a parent.

Involvement at School

In addition to their involvement at home, some interviewed parents mentioned the importance of becoming involved at school. Some parents mentioned that they walked their children to school every day or regularly stopped in at Roosevelt to become familiar faces with the staff. A smaller number of parents also mentioned that they attended RFA and Rhino Guardian meetings. Finally, three parents mentioned volunteering in their children's classrooms.

Visiting School. Several parents, particularly those who lived in Roosevelt's neighborhood, mentioned that they or someone else in their family walked to school with their children to drop them off in the morning or to pick them up in the afternoon. This was particularly true for parents of younger students, as older students were able to walk to school by themselves.

Some parents were not able to drop off or pick up their children at school, but they still found opportunities to swing by the school during the day for meetings with teachers

or just to check in on their children. These parents noted the importance of their presence at Roosevelt for developing good relationships with the school staff. For example, when I asked Ms. McAllister which special events she attended at the school, she responded that

She pops in occasionally anyway to check on her grandkids. She doesn't just wait for special events. Ms. McAllister says that she has a good relationship with the kids' teachers, and the teachers have a good relationship with her because they know that they can call her anytime...She thinks that's a good thing, to have the open feeling with the teacher because the teacher knows that she's not going to scream at her for doing something, so it takes some of the fear out of what going Ms. McAllister would do if the teacher corrected her child. (June 24, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Ms. McAllister recognized that her physical presence at the school created a positive relationship with her grandchildren's teachers, which was essential to maintaining open lines of communication. This way, Ms. McAllister could keep up-to-date about her grandchildren's progress. Another parent, Mrs. Simmons, who had two sons in 2nd and 8th grades, expressed a similar sentiment as Ms. McAllister, linking her presence at the school with good relationships with school staff and a better experience for her children. She noted "that she's always at the school, so they know her and she doesn't have any problems" (June 24, 2014, Fieldnotes). For Mrs. Simmons and Ms. McAllister, being known by the staff at Roosevelt and having a good relationship with them was an important way for her to circumvent any issues that might arise with her children.

RFA and Rhino Guardian Meetings. As described earlier, several interviewed parents mentioned that they liked to attend RFA or Rhino Guardian meetings, though the parents interviewed seemed to attend these events more frequently than parents at Roosevelt as a whole. Survey respondents indicated that they sometimes attended RFA meetings (mean = 1.88), and few respondents attended Rhino Guardian meetings (mean = 1.36). Those interviewed parents who did attend RFA and Rhino Guardian meetings

stated that they enjoyed the events as an opportunity to get to know other parents and to gain information about the school.

Volunteering. Although volunteering was not popular with survey respondents across Roosevelt (mean = 1.55), some of the interviewed parents mentioned volunteering at Roosevelt in three different ways – as chaperones for field trips, for one-time special events, and as a regular classroom volunteer. Most interviewed parents helped with field trips as their work schedules allowed. A smaller number engaged in volunteering for special events – for example, setting up Fall Fest – or regularly in the classroom.

When I asked her how often she volunteered, Ms. Earl, who had three daughters at Roosevelt, responded,

I used to volunteer a lot, so I've been volunteering since they started here. I don't do it as much as I've been wanting to do it because I be trying to look for work, but if I could do it, I go on they field trips with them. Or I'll sit in they class and I'll help them out, and sometimes if I don't have nothing to do, I'll go help the teacher or ask them what they need help with. Like with Ms. Smith, one day she was on break, and she was like, Oh my god, I didn't know you was coming, so I helped her and I fixed her shelf or something because she didn't really need no help. She had everything fixed. So I just went, organized her little books for her and then I went and helped [another teacher] with making her copies or something she needed. (May 14, 2014, Transcript)

Ms. Earl's response spoke to her enjoyment of volunteering and also to the challenges of coordinating volunteers at Roosevelt. Ms. Earl was unemployed – though she was in the process of looking for work – and lived across the street from Roosevelt, so she was able to come to the school more easily than other parents. Ms. Earl sometimes visited the school unexpectedly whenever she felt like it. Ms. Earl enjoyed these visits, and they provided great potential for Roosevelt to be able to capitalize on her time. However, Roosevelt was not always prepared for her. One time when she came in Ms. Smith, the second grade

teacher, was caught off guard by Ms. Earl and did not have anything for Ms. Earl to do. Luckily, Ms. Earl felt comfortable enough at the school to be able to talk to and assist other teachers to fill her volunteering time.

Ms. Kilroy also enjoyed volunteering at Roosevelt. Ms. Kilroy tried to regularly volunteer in her son's Kindergarten class,

and she says that she's really enjoyed volunteering. She wants to start volunteering every year. She likes the kids, especially the kids who aren't hers. Every time she enters the room, the kids say, Hello, [her son's name]'s mom. She says that that's her name for them. She says that she wouldn't change anything because mostly she just helps the kids with the projects, freeing up the teachers to do their reading groups, so she helps the teachers. (May 16, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Ms. Kilroy enjoyed the satisfaction of being recognized by her son's classmates and feeling like she was able to help the teachers to attend to the needs of students. Ms. Kilroy was also interested in pursuing an early childhood education degree, so she found her time volunteering helpful as preparation for pursuing her degree.

Surveyed and interviewed parents at Roosevelt thus engaged with their children in a variety of ways both at home and at school. While these parents seemed most likely to help with their children's academics at home, several parents also mentioned their involvement at school and its advantages, namely the opportunity to develop stronger relationships with school staff, which resulted in fewer issues for their students, and the personal satisfaction and fulfillment that parents received from their participation.

Explaining Levels of Parent Involvement at Roosevelt

Similar to teachers, interviewed parents also attributed variation in parent involvement to various parent-related and school-related factors. Parent-related factors included different types of involvement based on children's age, proximity to Roosevelt, language barriers, and logistical challenges to their involvement. Parents also talked about the role of school-related factors, namely their prior experiences and interactions with teachers.

Parent and Child Characteristics

Children's age. Although parents engaged with many of the same types of activities with their younger and older children, the nature of the interactions during these activities shifted as children became older. For example, in the earlier discussion of Mr. Yost's conversations with his two older children, he talked about the importance of beginning to explore relationships and physical changes and what that meant for his older children. With their younger children, Mr. and Mrs. Yost were more likely to talk about when was the appropriate time to engage with work versus play.

Ms. Jefferson's explanation of how she engaged with her son's homework also illustrated how her involvement had shifted as her son had grown older. Ms. Jefferson explained that "now that [her son] is older [in 6th grade], he doesn't need as much supervision. In the earlier grades, she would need to sit down next to him right by his side [when he did his homework]. Now, she can just talk with him to figure out what he's struggling with" (June 18, 2014, Fieldnotes). Ms. Jefferson still monitored her son's homework. That monitoring simply looks different now that her son was in middle school.

Results from the parent surveys also seem to support the idea that parents were involved similarly across grade levels, though given the limitations of the survey the results are only suggestive. Parents were similarly likely to help their child with homework, help their child to study, take their child to special events in the community or at school, and talk to their child’s teacher on the phone regardless of their child’s age. The survey results also suggest that parents of older students may visit the school – visiting their child’s classroom or talking to their child’s teacher in person – less frequently. Predictably, middle school parents were also less likely to read to their children, probably because middle school children are generally already able to read.

Table 15. Survey Results about Families’ Engagement with Different Parent Involvement Activities (1 = Never, 2 = A Few Times, 3 = Many Times)				
Family Involvement	Average	PK-2nd	3rd-5th	6th-8th
Tell my child how important school is	2.94	2.93	2.92	2.92
Talk to my child about school	2.88	2.96	2.87	2.85
Help my child with homework	2.84	2.93	2.78	2.77
Help my child practice skills before a test	2.67	2.69	2.71	2.68
Read to my child	2.63	2.79	2.56	2.52
Take my child to special places or events in the community	2.44	2.47	2.41	2.41
Talk with my child's teacher at the school	2.34	2.47	2.32	2.3
Take my child to the library	2.24	2.24	2.2	2.19
Visit my child's classroom	2.17	2.33	2.08	2.11
Talk with my child's teacher on the phone	2.15	2.23	2.16	2.14
Go to special events at the school	2.11	2.12	2.1	2.19
Attend WFA meetings	1.88	1.93	1.99	1.93
Volunteer at school or in my child's classroom	1.55	1.58	1.58	1.58
Participated in the Protectors of the Pack Men's program	1.36	1.31	1.39	1.26

Neighborhood status. Many of the interviewed parents stated that they chose to send their children to Roosevelt because the school was located nearby their house. Some of these parents had attended Roosevelt themselves, and others had had cousins or other family members who attended the school. This proximity to and familiarity with the school facilitated neighborhood parents' attendance at school events and their interactions with school staff.

Ms. Earl, who had three children attending Roosevelt in the 2nd, 4th, and 6th grades, stated that the school was "more convenient because we just across the street" (May 14, 2014, Transcript). She found that it was easier to attend school events with her children because she would just drag them to the event. "Once [my son] come home, he just like, I ain't going nowhere else. He like, walking down the street, but he came. I said, Come on, you gonna come anyway, so I took them. He came over here for the [RFA] meeting, and he like it" (May 14, 2014, Transcript). Living across the street allowed Ms. Jefferson to negotiate attendance at school events with her son in a more informal fashion than if she had had to load everyone up in the car, drive over to the school, attend the meeting, and then drive back home.

Mrs. Black felt similarly about the flexibility that living across the street from Roosevelt afforded her. However, she found that her proximity to the school also made it more difficult to interact with other parents.

It's funny because, you know, I compare it to my, because that's the only other school we've been to, is in San Francisco because we took a bus, or I'd have to go to school to pick them up, you'd kind of stand around and you chit-chat a little bit and that kind of thing, but because the boys live right across the street, I don't spend as much time seeing other parents, you know. I don't get that social [interaction]. (N/A, Transcript)

For Mrs. Black, living nearby the school also had drawbacks when it came to her interaction with parents. While making it easier for her to become involved at Roosevelt, she also had fewer opportunities to get to know other students and their parents.

Language. Unlike most other parents, Spanish-speaking parents at Roosevelt faced the added challenge of having difficulty understanding or communicating in English. Although both teachers and parents stated that this posed challenges, the three Spanish-speaking interviewed parents noted that the school did attempt to translate their communications. As Ms. Castillo, who volunteered in her daughter's Kindergarten classroom noted,

she talks to the teacher directly, and Sister Willow has been extremely helpful in translating things to Spanish. If something comes up in a newsletter or with homework, Sister Willow puts it in Spanish, so she's been a great help. Ms. Castillo says that 'thank goodness' she can also understand a lot that Mrs. Reynolds says directly. (June 19, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Mr. Aldana, who had two boys in Kindergarten and 8th grade, agreed that the school often attempted to record Spanish-language phone tree calls, which he found helpful.

Despite these efforts on the part of the school, however, one Spanish-speaking parent noted that she tended to restrict her interactions with teachers to those who spoke Spanish. She didn't know all of her children's teachers because she didn't speak English, and "if she goes to a class, it's her [youngest daughter's] class because [one of her teachers] speaks Spanish" (June 19, 2014, Fieldnotes). This parents' experience illustrates that some Spanish-speaking parents may have limited their involvement because they felt uncomfortable interacting with

teachers who only spoke English, despite Roosevelt's efforts to translate for Spanish-speaking parents.

Work schedule challenges. Interviewed parents often cited their work schedules as a challenge to their involvement. Ms. Kilroy and Ms. Jefferson noted that their volunteering schedule had to be reduced once they found employment. Other parents also noted that work interfered with their ability to participate with school events. Sometimes this was because their work schedules were unpredictable. For example, when I asked Mr. Manship, a single father, if he had been able to chaperone a field trip this year, he replied that "he hasn't because it's just too tough. His work schedule varies from day to day, and things always seem to pop up, so he never knows what his schedule will be like" (May 21, 2014, Fieldnotes).

However, other parents who had more predictable work schedules still struggled to balance the expectations of their work with their parent involvement at school. Ms. Mitre, who had two sons in 2nd and 4th grades, noted that

She likes to come in for field trips if she can make it, but she was able to make only one this year because work has gotten in the way with her schedule. She says that she would like to do more, but with her work it's hard. I ask her what she does for work, and she says that she's a district manager for a company...I say that it must keep her busy, and she says that her work starts at 9am until whenever she's done in the field for five days per week. She oversees 10 stores, so "you can imagine, it's very busy." (N/A, Fieldnotes)

Ms. Carter similarly noted work schedule challenges, though she tried to use her days off to go to Roosevelt to check in on her daughter's progress. She explained that

lately she hasn't been involved in the school because she's been working [in the kitchen at a local university]. When she's not working, she goes to RFA meetings and talks to the teachers. She likes to drop in anytime on her day off and go in to ask the teachers questions about how [her daughter] is doing in class. (June 18, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Working parents tried to juggle their responsibilities at work with their desire to

participate with parent involvement activities at Roosevelt, but the logistics of managing competing interests for their time were complicated.

In order to counteract some of these work challenges, some interviewed parents did mention that they had assistance from family members to help with their children. When parents were unable to get off from work in time, they could often call a family member to assist with picking up their children, or they placed their child in the school's aftercare program. This help from close friends and family members often helped to mitigate some of the challenges that parents faced with their involvement.

Teacher and School Characteristics

In addition to the personal factors that contributed to parents' different levels of involvement, some interviewed parents also mentioned aspects of the teachers or school that contributed to their levels of involvement.

Experiences and interactions with Roosevelt staff. As noted in the literature review, parents' prior experiences with school staff and with parent involvement helped to inform their current involvement. This was also true for the surveyed and interviewed parents at Roosevelt. Overall, surveyed parents had a positive association with Roosevelt, indicating that they were satisfied with Roosevelt. In particular, they noted that they felt welcome at the school (mean = 3.51) and that the school viewed parents as important partners (mean = 3.44). Interviewed parents supported this sentiment for the most part. (See Table 16 for more information about parents' satisfaction with Roosevelt.)

Table 16. Survey Results about Families' Satisfaction with Roosevelt (1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Completely Agree)	
The teachers care about my child.	3.53
I feel welcome at the school.	3.51
My child talks about school at home.	3.49
The community supports this school.	3.48
This is a very good school.	3.47
This school views parents as important partners.	3.44
I am satisfied with the school leadership.	3.36
My child gets sufficient homework.	3.36
This school is one of the best schools for students and parents.	3.32
This school is known for trying new things.	3.29
I am satisfied with the extracurricular programs.	3.29
The school and I have different goals for my child.	2.55

When asked if they felt welcome at Roosevelt, most interviewed parents responded that they did feel welcome. When the interviewed parents were asked what made them feel welcome at Roosevelt, five parents mentioned that someone always greeted them at the school. They felt that the school staff was nice and attended to them. Six parents offered that they felt welcome because teachers recognized them, and the fact that teachers recognized them signified a good relationship between the parent and the teacher. Finally, one parent mentioned that the school was open to her coming to sit in her child's classroom whenever she wanted.

Four parents also mentioned the importance of parents recognizing regular school staff members. Two parents made reference to Mrs. Calder's long-time employment at Roosevelt. Because she taught Kindergarten, many parents had had their children in her classroom when they were young. As their children got older, these parents mentioned that Mrs. Calder remained a consistent figure at the school to whom they could reach out with questions or for other information. Mr. Jenkins and Mrs. Rotolo spoke similarly about Ms. Banks, offering that they had seen her at the grand opening of the local library.

MR: I seen her, and I thought she was the director because I seen, she was just all over, and the next event was like, Hey, she was, Her face is-

AJ: Everywhere.

MR: Everywhere, and that's wonderful. (May 20, 2014, Transcript)

This consistency of staff across events and over time was important for making parents feel like they had long-standing relationships with staff and allowed them to feel more comfortable and welcome.

Two of the mothers interviewed were more equivocal about feeling welcome at the school. When asked if she felt welcome at Roosevelt, Ms. Jefferson, whose son was now in the 6th grade, said that “now she feels welcome at the school...but she didn't feel like that in the beginning with other staff [before Principal Byrd arrived]. Now, she does feel [welcome] more, and her son is a little happier, too” (June 18, 2014, Fieldnotes). Ms. Jefferson went on to recount how her son used to get into a lot of trouble in the 1st grade “for stupid stuff,” and this seemed to color her view of the school. Ms. Jefferson seemed cautiously optimistic about the direction of the school and its attitude towards her.

As described earlier in this chapter, Ms. Fiore had a son in the 7th grade who was involved in an altercation with another student. She felt that the school had poorly handled the incident and its communication with her, so she was already frustrated with Roosevelt staff. She stated that she also sometimes felt targeted by Roosevelt's staff. Ms. Fiore stated that

sometimes she does feel welcome at Roosevelt and sometimes she doesn't. I ask her to tell me more about that, and she says that the security officers sometimes go in when she might be talking to somebody else, “not even talking loud or being disrespectful,” and here comes security officer for no reason. She says that the security officer “comes off kind of rude.” (June 18, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Similar to Ms. Jefferson's experience with her son, Ms. Fiore was frustrated with Roosevelt, and she made her frustration known to the school. This may be one reason that she felt more closely monitored by the school and school security officer.

The reluctance that Ms. Jefferson and Ms. Fiore felt on the part of Roosevelt was not unfounded. Although Ms. Boudreaux identified Ms. Jefferson as a highly involved parent, she also described Ms. Jefferson as an overprotective mother who was always present at the school and resulted in other students bullying her son. Ms. Boudreaux seemed to think that Ms. Jefferson went overboard with her son, and Ms. Jefferson may have sensed this somewhat condescending attitude on the part of Ms. Boudreaux or other teachers.

Similarly, Ms. Fiore was also identified as a highly involved parent but one who gave teachers a "headache." According to Mr. Alvarez,

MA: [Ms. Fiore]. She's given everybody a headache. That's-

MC: What's, what's been her involvement?

MA: That's the one with the altercation, physical altercation, but she's always like being on field trips, and we have, we give the kid like a whole week clean slate, like, hey, if you behave, you can go on the field trip. And then the day of the field trip, she's here, Why can't my kid go? It's like, Really? I mean, it's just a headache... (Transcript, May 20, 2014)

Ms. Fiore's feeling unwelcome at the school thus seemed to have merit. She likely sensed that the teachers viewed her as a "headache" when she went to the school on behalf of her son. While Ms. Fiore viewed herself as trying to help her son who was being unfairly singled out for the altercation incident, Mr. Alvarez and other teachers seemed to view her as confrontational and unaligned with the school's behavioral incentives.

Improving Parent Involvement at Roosevelt

Because most interviewed parents seemed satisfied with parent involvement programming at Roosevelt, most of them did not offer concrete suggestions for improving parent involvement programming. Instead, most interviewed parents placed the responsibility of improving parent involvement activities squarely with parents. Three parents specifically mentioned that they would like to see more parents participate in Roosevelt's parent programs, though they did not necessarily place that responsibility with Roosevelt.

When I asked Ms. Castillo how she would improve RFA meetings, she responded that she doesn't know. She's truly been satisfied, so she would have nothing to add to the events. She thinks that maybe more parents could come, but she says that that's not on the school. That's on the parents, and she would like to have more parents come to the events and the meetings because she has gone a lot. (June 19, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Mr. Manship, who participated intermittently with the Rhino Guardians expressed a similar sentiment. He made the effort to attend Rhino Guardian meetings and other school events, but he stated that he had not see other men doing the same.

I ask Mr. Manship what he thought about the Roosevelt dads group, and he says that he thinks that it's informative. He hasn't seen anything implemented yet, but they are able to give a lot of feedback. He thinks the implementation could improve, and he would like to see more people involved. That's it. He would like to see more people implementing. He sees a lot of men at the meetings, but when he picks up the kids, he doesn't see any of the men, not one. (May 21, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Ms. McAllister agreed that she would like to see more parents attending various activities at Roosevelt. However, she acknowledged that parents' schedules might cause them issues. When I asked Ms. McAllister how she would improve RFA meetings, she responded

that she doesn't think that there's anything that she would improve, that the school is doing a good job. Ms. McAllister says that it would be nice if there were more parent turnout, but she says that she knows that of course parents work and many work late hours. She's retired now, so she can go to all of these things, but it would be a great thing if more parents could come. (June 24, 2014, Fieldnotes)

Overall, it seemed like parents were satisfied with Roosevelt's parent involvement efforts, though a few parents wanted to see increased attendance at the events. These parents felt that the school was accomplishing its outreach efforts and so it was the responsibility of parents to make time to attend parent activities at Roosevelt.

In addition to asking interviewed parents how they would improve various parent involvement activities at Roosevelt, in the survey I also asked parents what workshops and services they would like to see the school offer for parents. (See Table 17 for the results of the survey regarding parent workshops and services.) Survey respondents indicated that the workshops that they would prefer were: "Helping Children Succeed in School" (54.14%), "Healthy Habits" (40.13%), "Positive Behavior Support" (38.71%), and a "Mother's Group" (38.22%). The Grandparents Group and Fatherhood Group were the least popular, though this is not surprising given that the vast majority of respondents were mothers.

Roosevelt also surveyed parents to see what parent-oriented services parents would like to have offered at the school. These were activities that would be personally fun or useful for parents without necessarily being linked to their children's learning. The most popular service mentioned by parent survey respondents was Fitness Classes (46.45%).

Table 17. Percent of Respondents Who Desired Workshops and Services for Parents	
Parent Workshops	
Helping Children Succeed in School	54%
Healthy Habits	40%
Positive Behavior Support	39%
Mother's Group	38%
Bullying	34%
Standardized Tests	31%
Single Parenting	26%
Parenting and Technology	25%
Making the Most of Parent-Teacher Conferences	19%
Managing Feelings	18%
Fatherhood Group	9%
Grandparents as Parents	9%
Parent Services	
Fitness Classes	46%
Cooking Classes	34%
Computer Classes	34%
Financial Planning	32%
Job Training and Resume Writing	25%
Art Classes	25%
Family Counseling	24%
English as a Second Language	18%

Summary

The parents interviewed at Roosevelt saw parent involvement as an integral part of their responsibilities as parents. They viewed their involvement as important from a practical point of view, as it helped them to be able to support or intervene with their children when the need arose. Some parents also mentioned the importance of their involvement in beginning to shape their children as young men or women in a world that was often challenging.

Both surveyed and interviewed parents were overall very satisfied with parent involvement outreach efforts made by Roosevelt. They highlighted Roosevelt's communication systems – the phone tree, phone calls from teachers, and newsletters – as ways that they were able to stay informed about what was happening at the school.

Consistent with the parent involvement research about levels of parent involvement, a smaller number of parents indicated that they were involved at school, regularly attending RFA and Rhino Guardian meetings or volunteering at the school for special events or on a regular basis. On the other hand, parents were very involved at home with homework and in making sure that they had regular conversations with their children about the importance of school.

Parents offered different reasons for their levels of involvement. Some parents cited challenges with their work schedules, and Spanish-speaking parents also noted that they faced some challenges when trying to communicate with teachers who could not speak Spanish. Other parents talked about the shifting nature of their involvement as their children got older. In contrast to findings in research that indicate that parents' involvement declines as students get older, all interviewed parents noted that they did not become less involved as their children aged. Rather, the nature of their involvement shifted to more of a monitoring role instead of direct involvement. These results seem supported by results from the survey as well.

Two factors could explain the discrepancy between teachers' and parents' perceptions of parent involvement as children age. First, the nature of parents' involvement does seem to change as children age, as parents may become more involved in the home domain and more concerned about their child's social-emotional development and interactions with peers. Teachers could misinterpret this as lower levels of involvement. However, it is also possible that the teachers could be inadvertently encouraging this trend as well. As stated in an earlier chapter, upper elementary and middle school teachers were much less likely to use a variety of parent involvement methods. Middle school teachers at Roosevelt seemed to rely mainly on phone

communications to interact with parents unlike the teachers of younger students, who also used newsletters and daily reports. If teachers of older students were providing fewer opportunities for parent involvement, then it could be unsurprising to see lower levels of involvement among those parents.

Finally, prior experiences with school staff did seem to inform the degree to which parents became involved at Roosevelt. While most parents mentioned that they had positive relationships with most school staff at Roosevelt, two parents talked about troubles they had had with school staff. This seemed to color their view of the school, and their views were supported by interviewed school staff who found these two parents to be troublesome.

Given that surveyed and interviewed parents seemed mostly satisfied with Roosevelt's parent involvement efforts, they offered few ways that Roosevelt could improve its parent involvement programming. Unlike the teachers, interviewed parents seemed to place the responsibility for improving parent involvement efforts with parents and their participation. A few parents mentioned that they would like to see more parent participation with Roosevelt's parent involvement activities. They felt that Roosevelt was already making good outreach efforts and did not believe that the school should be responsible for any further outreach. Roosevelt's teachers were more familiar with how parent involvement activities at Roosevelt were organized, which might explain why parents seemed to focus less on the responsibility of the school. Parents were simply unaware of the inner workings of parent involvement programming at Roosevelt and so they focused on what they seemingly had more control over – their own participation.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the parents who were interviewed and surveyed for this case study were not a perfect representation of the broader parent

population at Roosevelt. In fact, it is likely that this group represents a more involved subset of parents. However, their insights still provide a diversity of opinions, and they provide perspectives that complicate those offered by teachers and which create a more robust picture of parent involvement at Roosevelt.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSION

Roosevelt made an interesting case study site due to its reputation for strong parent involvement. Roosevelt's willingness to experiment with parent involvement programming and the consideration that school staff gave to constantly improving Roosevelt's parent involvement programming made it a dynamic place to study how the school provided opportunities for parent involvement and how parents responded to those opportunities. Ultimately, both teachers and parents believed that parent involvement was important. However, teachers and parents conceptualized parent involvement in different ways, and they emphasized different reasons for the importance of parent involvement. These differences in perception resulted in persistent gaps that should be addressed in order to result in more cohesive parent involvement programming and better student outcomes.

Roosevelt's Investment in Parent Involvement

Schools across the country are faced with the challenge of providing high-quality educational opportunities with limited resources. At Roosevelt, strained resources both necessitated and complicated parent involvement. Many teachers and staff members indicated that an important aspect of parent involvement was to support the teacher, as teachers were often overworked and stretched thin. Sometimes, parents could help by contributing physical resources, such as supplies for the classroom, or through providing

additional supervision, such as volunteering during field trips. Many interviewed teachers mentioned that they had limited time during the school day with individual students, so they depended on parents to support their children academically at home and to raise any issues of concern with the teacher.

Teachers thus wanted parents involved in ways that supported them, but the school faced challenges in involving parents in these ways because parent involvement efforts required a resource investment from Roosevelt's already limited resources. The wide range of existing opportunities for parent involvement, including the phone tree, newsletters, and RFA and Rhino Guardian programs, required the use of Roosevelt's money, facilities, and staff time. For newer programs, the school struggled to find regular staff and time to get these programs for parents off the ground. These resource challenges made it difficult for Roosevelt to truly invest in parent involvement at the needed levels.

Given the limited resources that Roosevelt had to invest in parent involvement, the school could have chosen to divert some of the resources that it invested in activities like RFA meetings, which have been less clearly linked to positive student outcomes, and instead to invest more in parent involvement activities like volunteering or attendance at school events since volunteering and attendance at school events have been more clearly linked to positive student outcomes in other studies (Arnold et al, 2008; Bogenschneider, 1997; Gutman and Eccles, 1999; Miedel and Reynolds, 2000). Instead, Roosevelt seemed to put forth less coordinated efforts around these types of opportunities for school-based parent involvement. This may have been because organizing events like RFA meetings required less coordination than other parent involvement activities because RFA meetings were mainly driven and organized by Ms. Banks. Organizing volunteers for teachers' classrooms, on the other hand, was an intensive effort that required coordinating

individual teachers' classroom schedules with parents' availability in an environment where some teachers mentioned that they did not want parent volunteers in their classroom at all. As parent liaison, the combination of teachers' schedules, parents' schedules, and some teachers' reticence to include parent volunteers in their classrooms made it difficult to recruit and place a large number of parents as volunteers. One result of these difficulties is that a small number of parents regularly volunteered in Roosevelt classrooms, though a slightly larger number volunteered to help with special events or field trips.

Explaining Variation in Parent Involvement

The results from the Roosevelt case study suggest that a myriad of complex factors feed into parents' decisions to become involved. Parents differ in their capacity to engage with schools, and they vary in the number of factors competing for their attention. The research literature suggests that differences in parents' resources, beliefs, and experiences can help to explain some of this variation, and my results are consistent with the idea that these factors act upon parents' involvement (Green et al, 2007).

Work schedules seemed to be one of the biggest barriers for interviewed parents' school-based involvement. Most of the parents who regularly volunteered at Roosevelt were unemployed or worked part-time, and those whose employment situation changed mid-year had to adjust their volunteering schedules – and some stopped volunteering altogether – in order to accommodate their new work schedules. Parents who worked full-time were able to help on an ad hoc basis, but they struggled to juggle all of the demands on their time.

Some parents were able to work around logistical challenges to their involvement by coordinating help from family members or neighbors. Some of the interviewed parents mentioned that their partner or grandparents often helped to monitor the children's homework and to take their children to and from school, especially when they had to work late. Those parents that did not have this kind of help – for example, Mr. Manship who was a single father with a very elderly mother or Ms. Fiore whose husband's work took him away from home for weeks at a time – expressed being overwhelmed by the stress and exhaustion that came from managing their children, work, and involvement largely alone (Green et al, 2007).

Despite these stresses, some of these parents attended school events as much as possible, though the nature of their involvement tended to be slightly different. Parents without social support were usually involved in shorter spurts or for major events only, and their involvement was much more practical in nature. These results coincide with the parent involvement literature that finds that married parents – those parents who have regular support – are more likely to be involved than those who are not (Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein, 2008).

Another factor that contributed to the frequency and nature of parents' involvement was parents' perceptions of their children (Green et al, 2007). For example, Mrs. Black became more involved with her son because she viewed him as smart and unchallenged by Roosevelt, so she worried about him becoming complacent. The changes that she feared in her son led her to create learning opportunities for him outside of school.

Children's ages were also related to parents' perceptions of their children and the type of help that their children needed. Interviewed parents mentioned that they were

involved differently for their younger and older children. However, for the interviewed and surveyed parents this was not a matter of their frequency of involvement, but rather the nature of their involvement. Many interviewed parents noted that they had conversations with their younger and older children, though the content of those conversations was different, perhaps about the importance of good behavior with a younger child while talking to an older child about physical development. Similarly, although parents worked with their children on homework regardless of their children's age, parents of older students were more likely to monitor homework completion while parents of younger students helped more directly with homework completion. Parents viewed their younger children as needing more direct, hands-on assistance while older children needed more monitoring and guidance.

Parents' beliefs about their children's strengths and weaknesses were another factor that seemed to drive them to become more or less involved. A few interviewed parents mentioned that they knew that they had playful children, so they regularly talked to their children to prevent or address misbehaviors and more closely monitored their academic progress. This was also true of parents who believed that their children were struggling academically. For example, once the teacher highlighted the need for the Yosts' daughter to receive supplemental tutoring for reading, the Yosts immediately took advantage of a local tutoring program and noticed their daughter's progress due to her participation. These results encouraged them to do the same with another daughter as soon as they noticed her struggling in reading as well. Parents' perceptions about their children were thus an important driver in frequency and types of involvement (Drummond and Stipek, 2004; Whitmore and Norton-Meier, 2008).

Teachers at Roosevelt also mentioned the ways in which ethnicity and English fluency informed parents' involvement. The parent involvement research literature notes that parents who speak English are more likely to be involved than those who don't (Blakely, 1983; Ji and Koblinsky, 2009; Klimes-Dougan et al, 1992). However, at Roosevelt teachers seemed to identify the opposite trend. Several teachers identified Hispanic parents – many of whom struggled to speak English and relied on three bilingual staff at the school – as more involved than African-American parents. There are several potential explanations for this trend that were explored inadequately in this case study but deserve to be examined in future work. It could be that language challenges actually pushed Hispanic parents to become more involved at the school as they were unable to read or understand newsletters that were sent home. As a result, some Hispanic parents may have felt that their physical presence at Roosevelt, which had some translators, provided them with a better idea of how their children were doing academically. In cases like this, Hispanic parents in fact may have been involved at higher levels than African-American parents at Roosevelt.

However, it may also be that the discrepancy between Hispanic parents' levels of involvement and trends suggested by the research is a function of teachers' perceptions or biases. For example, teachers may have done a better job of noticing Hispanic parents' involvement because individual Hispanic parents' presence at the school was more visible as Hispanic parents stood out against the mostly African-American student body. Teachers may also have let biases about different groups of parents seep into their understanding of parents' different levels of involvement (Lareau and Horvat, 1999).

Despite the fact that teachers' perceptions about African-American parents' levels of involvement may have been inaccurate, none of the interviewed parents

mentioned issues of racial bias at Roosevelt, though this may have been because they felt uncomfortable raising the issue with me. Only one interviewed parent, Mr. Yost, mentioned race as challenge, but even he focused more on his gender and the scarcity of African-American men taking an interest in their children. Although concerns about race may have informed his desire to become involved at the school, he seemed generally satisfied with how the school worked with his family (McKay et al, 2003; Rowley, Helaire, and Banerjee, 2010).

Rather than talking about negative experiences with Roosevelt in terms of race, parents were more likely to discuss specific negative experiences with the school that emerged from discipline issues with their children. Mrs. Fiore and Ms. Jefferson were dissatisfied with how the school had handled their sons' issues. Ms. Jefferson had had poor experiences with her son in Kindergarten, and though her experiences had improved since a new principal was instated, the experiences led her to become more involved with her son. Ms. Fiore's negative experience with the altercation that her son had had similarly informed her level of involvement. These mothers did not attribute these experiences to racial bias, but their experiences did seem to result in involvement to closely monitor how the school interacted with their children, and their involvement often made school staff and administrators feel uncomfortable, which then resulted in the mothers' feeling somewhat mistreated by the school and excluded. These experiences are similar to those described in other parent involvement research, which suggests that low-income parents with prior negative class-based experiences are more likely to have less trusting interactions and less favorable views of their child's school (Diamond and Gomez, 2004; Howard and Reynolds, 2003; Lamont and Lareau, 1988).

Despite a small number of parents mentioning negative experiences with Roosevelt, the overwhelming majority of interviewed parents viewed themselves as an important partner for Roosevelt, and they viewed their involvement as an important contributor to their child's education. Many of the interviewed parents believed that their involvement helped their children, and if they raised an issue with the school, the school would respond positively.

Gaps in Understanding Parent Involvement

Although parents saw themselves as an important contributor to their child's education, all of the interviewed parents also saw the school as the domain of the teacher, which is in keeping with findings from earlier studies (Valdez, Dowrick, and Maynard, 2007; Wong and Hughes, 2006). Whereas teachers seemed to want parents to be more proactively involved, parents seemed to depend on the teacher to raise issues and solutions concerning academics. For example, Ms. McAllister was ready to intervene with her grandchildren academically, but she depended on the teacher to let her know what issues her grandchildren were having.

This idea that school is the domain of the teacher aligns with Lareau's description of working class and poor parents who believe in the *accomplishment of natural growth* wherein parents tended to view their role more holistically as supporting their child's academic and social-emotional growth, but not necessarily as needing to intervene. Because the Roosevelt parents who were interviewed often balanced these domains of their child's growth with the logistic challenges they faced, they were stretched thin and thus relied on teachers to point out any academic issues. Some of the teachers perceived this as disinterest or passivity on the part of parents, and it seemed to concern the

teachers. However, teachers were also complicit in this communication gap, as they did little to communicate their expectations to parents.

Further, while parents were depending upon teachers to signal any needs for parent intervention, teachers were expecting the same from parents. Several interviewed teachers mentioned the importance of parents bringing any academic issues to the teacher's attention because teachers' attention was shared across a large number of students. Yet parents did not necessarily have the time or knowledge to do this effectively. The mismatch in expected responsibilities between parents and teachers led to a gap in action in which one group waited for instruction for the other before intervening with students who needed it, resulting in little action outside of the ordinary and possible negative consequences for students who struggled and continued to fall behind.

This mismatch is not unique to Roosevelt, and often the results of the mismatch are blamed on parents. However, there are many ways in which schools like Roosevelt contribute to this mismatch as well (Auerbach, 2007; Lareau, 2011; Lareau and Horvat, 1999). Roosevelt played an important role in the breakdown of expectations and communication between home and school.

First, Roosevelt was unclear to parents about the school's expectations for parents' engagement with the school and their children. For example, Roosevelt's staff did not explicitly communicate the fact that attendance at school events was important to teachers. Although several teachers explicitly stated or seemed to allude to the importance of this type of involvement, it was not located anywhere in Roosevelt's Family Handbook or in classroom policies. Thus, despite the potential for the school building and classrooms to serve as an opportunity as a shared space for understanding –

as a coincident boundary object – parents and teachers often moved through the school on independent tracks (Star and Griesemer, 1989). Teachers and parents made their own sense of children’s experience at the school without communicating in detail to each other.

One reason that Roosevelt may have ineffectively communicated a set of parent involvement expectations is that Roosevelt itself had an ambiguous understanding of how their ideal parent should behave. Ideas about how parents should be involved varied from individual to individual, and the school did not have a cohesive policy around expectations. Roosevelt’s lack of common expectations for parents hints at the need for more boundary objects that function as standardized forms, which might have helped to develop consistency across classrooms (Star and Griesemer, 1989).

Roosevelt used some versions of standardized forms as part of their parent involvement programming, including report card and school-wide newsletter templates. However, most parent involvement activities were left to the individual discretion of staff and teachers. Even where some common policies existed, such as required parent volunteer hours in the handbook or biweekly phone call logs required by administration, a lack of enforcement around these policies exacerbated the variation across classrooms and reinforced the boundary between home and school because expectations and communication streams were unclear.

The variation from classroom to classroom at Roosevelt caused some teachers and parents to stand out as boundary spanners who tried to link home and school (Mitchell, 2009). A small number of teachers implemented more innovative activities to involve parents. For example, the Prekindergarten teacher Ms. Stinson hosted a Career Day for Prekindergarten parents, and Ms. Simiyu hosted a monthly Student of the Month

celebration in which the honoree's family was invited. Parents also attempted to link home and schools. Though unsuccessful, Mr. Jenkins, for example, tried to talk other fathers into attending Rhino Guardian meetings.

The work of these teachers and parents demonstrates that despite the lack of definition and alignment on parent involvement expectations and activities, boundary crossing efforts and pockets of successful boundary crossing existed at Roosevelt. In these pockets, Roosevelt engaged in some new and innovative practices that had the potential to result in positive outcomes for the school and the students. However, while some practices taking place at Roosevelt provided a glimpse into exciting possibilities, overall the school's parent involvement programming preserved many gaps between the home and school spheres.

Just as a lack of clear expectations contributed to the gap between home and school, another important factor feeding into the gap was the lack of acknowledgement from Roosevelt staff about parents' existing cultural capital and assets. Interviewed teachers seemed to want parents involved in the ways that the teachers felt was appropriate – to support teachers and their children's academics. This was not just a matter of frequency of involvement. Rather, teachers wanted parents to engage in ways that felt important and comfortable to the teachers. This means that teachers seemed to have specific ideas about the *manner* in which parents were involved, and this was just as important – if not more important – than the level of their involvement. Many of the interviewed teachers wanted parents involved on teachers' terms.

Although individual teachers seemed to be disappointed by some parents' involvement, interviewed and surveyed parents generally seemed satisfied with the opportunities for their involvement at Roosevelt. They enjoyed what the school had to

offer, even if they weren't always able to take advantage of it. Those parents who wanted to be involved at a more intensive level often took it upon themselves to do so by regularly calling the teacher or visiting their child's classroom periodically. These parents didn't necessarily expect the teacher to put forth that effort, so they did it themselves. These parents also seemed to trust that the school and teacher were doing their best for their children.

Unlike teachers, most of the interviewed parents understood their involvement to be important from a more holistic and practical perspective, so they engaged with their children in ways that aligned to these purposes. Many parents mentioned the importance of conversations that they had with their children about school and about life more generally and that they hoped that these conversations served as encouragement for their children to give their best and to persevere. Similarly, many parents also shared their experiences as deterrents or lessons for students.

For example, the Rhino Guardians talked about their prior experiences with drugs, alcohol, and the penal system with young men at Roosevelt through a session during which they shared their own experiences as deterrents of misbehavior by the young men. While these men earnestly shared their experiences, Principal Byrd worried more about the long-windedness of the conversation and the appearance of the young men who seemed disengaged or even bored. This may have been the case during that particular Rhino Guardians event. However, Principal Byrd overlooked an opportunity to hone in on the potential of this group of fathers to offer experiences and mentorship to students at Roosevelt. Rather, Principal Byrd focused on the disorganization of the event, something that was not the responsibility of the fathers.

Just as the Rhino Guardians shared narratives about their past experiences with students, several parents also talked about the importance of persistence in the face of adversity and the importance of hard work. The Yosts' conversations with their children and Mrs. Rotolo and Mr. Jenkins' conversation with their son highlight parents' engagement with these conversations, similar to the concepts of *apoyo* or *consejos* identified in the parent involvement research literature. For parents engaging in this more broad support, parent involvement did not amount simply to help with homework or attendance at school events, but also included narrative advice, teachings, and moral messages (Auerbach, 2007; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994).

Despite parents' extensive use of narratives and conversation with their children as an involvement tactic, interviewed teachers neglected to mention the importance of these forms of cultural capital. Teachers also neglected to mention other resources that parents could bring to their classrooms, including extensive historical knowledge about the Central Community, New Orleans, and local community landmarks and resources. Many parents also had a number of technical skills that could have been shared with students through academic opportunities, but these largely went untapped.

Looking Forward: Roosevelt

Interviewed and surveyed parents offered only one area of improvement for Roosevelt's parent outreach. Surveyed parents responded that the school's communication efforts around volunteer opportunities could be improved, and a couple of interviewed parents agreed. The interviewed parents offered that the school should develop a standing list of volunteer opportunities, which parents could then help with when they happened to have the time.

Interviewed teachers offered a wider array of ideas to improve parent involvement opportunities at Roosevelt. They wanted to see the school offer more events geared specifically towards helping parents interact with their children around academics, including more literacy events for parents or altering the way that grades were reported to parents so that report cards were more explicit about students' specific skill strengths or concerns. Other interviewed teachers mentioned that more relaxed and informal activities, such as sports games or movie nights, could help to build a sense of community at Roosevelt, inviting parents to the school building without any academic agenda.

Many interviewed school staff recognized that they would like for parents to assume more of a leadership role at the school, particularly around parent involvement programming. Teachers suggested that this could take many different forms, including through focus groups or through a parent advisory board. Ms. Banks, the Director of Community Integration, and I also discussed these possibilities, though we remained challenged by limited resources for developing programs and in understanding the progression required to move parents from participants to organizers.

Looking Forward: The Field of Parent Involvement

When I first undertook this case study, I was optimistic about the ability of a school to overcome the boundaries reified by cultural capital differences between the school and home contexts for low-income, minority students. This seemed to be particularly important for low-income and minority students because the research literature suggested that parent involvement could be particularly important for these students and their academic achievement (Bogenschneider, 1997; Domina, 2005; Gutman

and Eccles, 1999; Teachman, Paasch, and Carver, 1997). However, my findings seem to support many of the challenges raised by Bourdieu, Lareau, and other researchers around the entrenchment of cultural capital differences (Abrams and Gibbs, 2002; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Diamond and Gomez, 2004; Howard and Reynolds, 2003; Howard and Reynolds, 2008; Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 2011; Lareau and Horvat, 1999). While Roosevelt seemed committed to crossing the boundaries between home and school through dedicated school staff and innovative parent involvement activities, its practices seemed geared towards having parents meet the school's expectations, rather than aligning expectations or capitalizing on parents' existing capital and resources. At Roosevelt, the power to define appropriate frequencies and types of parent involvement rest with individual school staff members, which meant that the co-construction and coordination of meaning around parent involvement across boundaries was limited. Parents were simply expected to adopt the same expectations as teachers.

One major issue that has arisen from this case study is how little the research community still knows about the mechanisms through which parent involvement practices translates to these better outcomes. Despite Roosevelt's investment in its parent involvement programming, it struggled to achieve an important goal of parent involvement – improving student achievement. At Roosevelt, this goal remained largely unrealized. Student achievement at Roosevelt continued to lag behind other schools in the New Orleans area. At the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, Roosevelt earned an F letter grade on the state's report card system, meaning that fewer than 50% of students were on grade level by the end of the academic year, and the state required a new charter board to take over the school. The new board officially took the helm of the school for the 2015-2016 academic year.

The question then remains about why Roosevelt's parent involvement programming did not result in stronger student outcomes. Is it parents' actual involvement that is related to better student outcomes, or are parents who become involved already different in a way that results in better student outcomes? For example, it may be that parents' presence at Roosevelt during the day (i.e., volunteering, viewing performances) is critical for students. Parents' presence at the school may help parents to better align their involvement with the needs of the classroom because they see how their child's classroom operates or because it leads to more interaction between parents and teachers. It may also be that teachers knowingly or unknowingly treat the students of parents who they see differently. If teachers see parents more frequently or are more satisfied with parents who are involved at the school, this knowledge could translate to better treatment in the classroom, leading to better outcomes for the parent's children. Some of these explanations could provide insight into why the research literature has found home involvement to be less beneficial than school involvement – because it doesn't require interaction with the teacher (Balli, Demo, and Wedmean, 1998; Muller, 1998; Patall, Cooper, and Robinson; Xu and Corno, 2003).

Another potential explanation is that parents who are able to become involved at the school during the day for volunteering, performances, or other events may be different in some way. They may have more resources at their disposal, more flexibility with their time, or cultural capital that is more aligned to the school, allowing them to activate their experiences at the school for the benefit of their child. These parents may possess cultural capital that results in them feeling more comfortable going into the school to coordinate with teachers or to navigate the bureaucratic maze, or they may feel more able to help their children directly with schoolwork (Bourdieu, 1998). Although

some parents may be involved more frequently at the school site, it could be that the benefits of parent involvement for students actually rely on parents' ability to capitalize on those opportunities for the benefit of their children. The mechanisms through which parent involvement translate to improved student outcomes is one area that deserves further study.

Another issue raised by the case study is the benefit of Roosevelt's reputation as a school with strong parent involvement. Improved student outcomes are only one possible positive effect of parent involvement programming. It make also be that Roosevelt's strong parent involvement reputation provided other benefits, such as legitimacy for the school, especially in the face of lagging student performance. Strong parent and community support signaled to parents in New Orleans, who had the flexibility to choose their students' schools, that Roosevelt could be a good option for their child.

Roosevelt's reputation as a school with good parent involvement was also important for accountability purposes. In Louisiana, the state has strict school accountability measures based almost entirely on student performance on standardized assessments. Roosevelt's poor performance on these assessments placed the school's status in jeopardy, but instead of being closed like other schools in New Orleans, the state offered new management to Roosevelt. Recent conversations with Ms. Banks suggest that the parents at Roosevelt were able to take an active role in selecting the new school manager, and the fact that Roosevelt was not completely closed, which has happened to other failing schools, speaks to the parent and community support that Roosevelt had grown over time.

The issues at Roosevelt during and after the case study raise several additional issues for further research moving forward. First, did Roosevelt focus its efforts on the

best types of parent involvement for the purposes of student achievement? Most forms of parent involvement at home – save for parent-child communication about school – are unrelated to student outcomes, as is parent participation with PTA (Gutman and Eccles, 1999; Izzo et al, 1999; Kuperminc, Darnell, and Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008; McNeal, 1999; McWayne, et al, 2004; Muller, 1998; Patall, Cooper, and Robinson, 2008; Stone, 2006). However, other types of parent involvement at school do seem to be more closely linked to student outcomes (Arnold et al, 2008; Domina, 2005; Englund, Egeland, and Collins, 2008; Miedel and Reynolds, 2000; Reynolds, et al, 1996) It could be that Roosevelt may have focused too much energy on types of parent involvement like Roosevelt Family Association meetings (similar to PTA meetings, which have limited associations with positive student outcomes), rather than focusing its efforts more on the promotion of strong parent-child conversations around school.

Finally, rather than focusing on schools with strong parent involvement practices with low-income and minority parents, future studies might start by examining the parent involvement practices at schools with strong student outcomes among this population. This could help to illuminate how schools make use of their limited resources in order to garner strong student outcomes and could also illustrate how cultural capital divisions and boundaries play out in another school setting.

APPENDIX A

Administrator Interview Protocol

Opening Script and Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'm currently a student at the University of Michigan and working on my dissertation. I'm trying to understand how some schools successfully involve parents and how different parents at the school respond to these efforts.

I was hoping that you could help me to understand your experience with parent involvement in your school.

Orienting Questions:

1. What's your name?
2. What's your position?
3. How did you come into your role as assistant principal at Roosevelt?
 - a. How did you enter the teaching profession? Where have you taught prior to this school? What were those schools like? What other grades or subjects have you taught or been an administrator?

Interview Questions for Administrator:

Defining Parent Involvement

1. What do you see as the role of parents when it comes to their children's education?
 - a. Thinking beyond the level of the individual child, do you think parent involvement is important at the school level? Why or why not?

Characterizing Parent Involvement at Your School

2. How would you characterize parent involvement at your school?
 - a. Would you like for it to be more/less? Why or why not?
3. Do you think that your school is good at getting parents involved? Why or why not?
 - a. Can you give me an example of a time when you thought that parents were really involved?
 - b. Can you give me an example of a time when you thought one of your parent involvement efforts was a flop?
4. Are all parents generally involved at the same level, or are there some more involved than others?
 - a. Why do you think this is the case?
5. Your school has a student enrollment that is predominantly African-American and which qualifies for free- and reduced-lunch status. Many would say that these are parents who are the hardest to involve. Do you agree?
 - a. Do you believe that your school does anything different to accommodate this group of parents?

- b. Why or why not?
6. Have you had years when you've had more [or less] parent involvement?
What do you think accounts for the higher [or lower] level of involvement?

Explaining Parent Involvement at Your School

1. What opportunities does your school offer for involvement?
 - a. What does the school as a whole do to involve parents?
 - b. Are these efforts school-wide or classroom-level efforts?
 - c. Which of your efforts have been most successful? How so? Which have been less successful? How so?
2. Are there any formal school policies – for teachers or for parents around parent involvement at your school?
3. What makes your school different from other schools when it comes to the school and its parent involvement?

Identifying Other Interviewees

1. One thing that I'm hoping to do with this work is to understand parent involvement from a variety of perspectives.
 - a. Can you help me to identify teachers who would be a good source of information about parent involvement?
 - i. Why do you suggest *Person X*?
 - b. Can you suggest parents who might be good sources of information?
 - i. Why do you suggest *Person X*?
 - ii. Have there been any parents who have been particularly difficult to involve or work with who might offer a different perspective?

Closing Script:

I'd like to thank you for your time and for allowing me to ask you these questions. I know that you're very busy! If at any point after this interview, you want to hear the tape or see a transcript, feel free to let me know. This is my contact information: _____. Please don't hesitate to follow up with any questions that you might have about this process. Thanks!

APPENDIX B

Teacher Interview Protocol

Opening Script and Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As you may know, while I'm working as Parent Liaison here at Roosevelt, I'm also currently a doctoral student at the University of Michigan. I'm studying parent involvement here at Roosevelt - trying to understand how Roosevelt involves parents and how parents take up that involvement (or not) and why. I was hoping that you could help me to understand your experience with parent involvement in your classroom and at Roosevelt.

Orienting Questions:

4. What grade(s) and subject(s) do you teach?
5. Why did you come into teaching?
 - a. How did you enter the teaching profession? Where have you taught prior to this school? What were those schools like? What other grades or subjects have you taught?
6. (For teachers of younger grades in particular): What's the demographic breakdown of the student in your classes? Gender? Race? Socio-economic status?

Interview Questions for Teacher:

Teacher's Beliefs about Parent Involvement

7. What do you see as the role of parents when it comes to their children's education?
 - a. What do you hope to see on the part of involved parents?
 - b. Can you describe to me your "ideal" parent?
8. How would you describe your philosophy around parent involvement?
 - a. Do you think parental involvement is relevant to you work as a teacher? How so?

Characterizing Parent Involvement in Your Classroom

1. Can you describe a typical day for you? How are parents involved (or not) in a typical day for you?
2. How are parents involved in your classroom?
 - a. Are you satisfied with the level of involvement among parents in your class? Why or why?
 - b. What do you do to involve parents in your classroom? How have those efforts worked (or not)?
3. Can you give me an example of a really positive experience that you've had with a parent and their involvement?
4. Can you give me an example of a really negative experience that you've had with a parent and their involvement?

Characterizing Parent Involvement at Roosevelt

1. How would you characterize parent involvement at Roosevelt?
 - a. Would you like for it to be more/less? Why or why not?
 - b. Do you think that the school is good at getting parents involved? Why

- or why not?
- c. What does the school do to involve parents? (Do you think the school's opportunities (e.g., WFA, volunteering) for involvement are productive?)
 - d. Would you like to see any changes at the school level when it comes to the opportunities provided for parent involvement?
 - i. Do you think that these are worthwhile opportunities?
 - ii. What would you change? Why do you think those school practices should be changed?
 - e. Do you believe that you need to do anything different to accommodate the parents at Roosevelt as compared to other schools?? Why or why not?

Identifying Parent Interviewees

2. One thing that I'm hoping to do with this work is to understand why parents vary in their parental involvement. Some parents seem really active and others appear inactive. Can you help me to identify parents who range along this spectrum of involvement?
 - a. Why would you place *Person X* at that point in the spectrum?

Closing Script:

I'd like to thank you for your time and for allowing me to ask you these questions. I know that it's a lot to think about. If at any point after this interview, you want to hear the tape or see a transcript, feel free to let me know. This is my contact information: ____ _____. Please don't hesitate to follow up with any questions that you might have about this process. Thanks!

APPENDIX C

Parent In-Person Interview Protocol

Opening Script and Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'm currently a student at the University of Michigan and working on my dissertation. I'm trying to understand how some schools successfully involve parents and how different parents at the school respond to these efforts.

Orienting Questions:

1. What is your name? Your birthdate?
2. How many children do you have currently attending Roosevelt?
3. What grades are they in? Whose classes are they in?
4. What are your children's names?
5. How old are your children?
6. Why did you decide to send your children to Roosevelt?
7. Have you been satisfied with your child's experience at Roosevelt? And why is that?

Interview Questions for Parents:

Defining Parent Involvement

1. How do you define parent involvement?
2. What kinds of things do you do to get your child ready for school and for learning?
3. What kinds of interactions do you have with your child around school or their education?
 - a. *Can you give me a specific example of when you...*
 - b. *Why did you decide to... (take that action)?*
 - c. *You've mentioned a lot of interaction initiated by the school. Are there any things that you do on your own that aren't asked for by the school?*
4. Which events at the school have you attended this year? *(Look out for differences between talk about school versus classroom. Do questions need to*

explicitly ask about each?)

- a. *Why did you choose to attend that event?*
 - b. *What did you think about that event?*
 - c. *What did you like about that event?*
 - d. *How could that event have been improved?*
5. So we just talked about your interactions with your child around school, and now we're going to turn to your child's learning in particular. (Provide examples of museum, book stores, etc.) What kinds of things, if any, do you expose your child to outside of school in the hope of supporting their learning?
- a. Why did you choose to engage in those supports in particular?
 - b. Does anyone help you?
 - c. What are some of the challenges that you have around supporting your child's learning?
 - d. Would you like to be involved more? Less? How so?

Factors Affecting Parent Involvement (IF TIME)

1. How would you describe your own educational experience?
 - a. Did you enjoy school? What did you enjoy (or not enjoy) about school? Why do you think that is?
 - i. If says enjoyed, ask for an example of not enjoyed. If says not enjoyed, ask for example of enjoyed.
 - b. How were your own parents involved?
 - i. Are these interactions similar to the ones you have with your own children?
 - ii. How so? Why would you describe them as the same/different?
 - ii. How do you think these similarities/differences/your own parenting style affects your child's learning?
2. Have you been involved differently with your other children versus how you are involved with (name of child)? How so? Why?

Teacher and School Practices

1. Do you feel welcome at your child's school?
 - a. Why? Why not?
 - b. Has there ever been a time that you've tried to become involved at your child's school that you felt *unwelcome* [or were unable to attend]?
 - c. Has there ever been a time that you hesitated becoming involved but something the school or teacher did encouraged you to get involved despite your hesitancy?
 - d. Why? Why not?
2. What does your school do, if anything, to get parents involved in the school?
Probe: formally and informally
 - a. Anything else?
 - i. Use closing sheet to document parents' attendance at school events
 - b. What could the school do to better support your involvement?
 - c. *If appropriate, probe outside of school*
3. Do you think some teachers are better at getting parents involved than others?
 - a. IF YES: Who are these teachers and what do they do differently?
 - i. How could teachers better support you trying to help your child?
 - b. IF NO: How could teachers better support you trying to help your child?
4. Has your participation with the school changed since the name changed? How so?
5. Have you talked with other parents or family members about the new school or their schools? What are they saying?
 - a. Do you agree? Disagree?

So we've talked about how your parent involvement with your child and the school's and teachers' roles. Is there anything we may have missed in this conversation or anything you would like to add? Is there anything you believe I need to understand about your own involvement or about parent involvement more generally at this school?

Closing Script:

I'd like to thank you for your time and for allowing me to ask you these questions. I know that it's a lot to think about. If at any point after this interview, you want to hear the tape or see a transcript, feel free to let me know. This is my contact information: _____, and please do not hesitate to follow up with any questions that you might have about this process. Thanks!

APPENDIX D
Parent Phone Interview Protocol

Hi, I'm calling for _____. Hi, _____, this is Monica Candal, and I work as the parent liaison at Roosevelt. I've been calling a bunch of parents at Roosevelt to touch base about their parent involvement this past school year. Do you mind talking to be for about 10 minutes about your experiences with Roosevelt this past year?

Thank you. Do you mind if I record our conversation so that I can keep an accurate record of it? It will stay completely confidential and not shared with anyone at the school.

Thank you.

1. Can you confirm your full name and its spelling?
2. And you have a child in _____'s classroom. How do I spell their name?
 - Do you have any other children at Roosevelt? (If yes) Whose class are they in?
3. Why did you decide to send your kids to Roosevelt?
4. Have you been satisfied with your child's experience at Roosevelt? Why or why not?
5. And how are you involved with your kids with your kids' learning?
6. What events have you attended at Roosevelt?
 - What did you think about that event?
 - How could that event be improved moving forward?
7. How does the school keep you informed of what's going on with your child or at the school?
 - Did you have any contact with your child's teacher this year? How did it go?
 - What can the school do to improve its communication with you?
8. Do you feel welcome at Roosevelt? Why or why not?
9. Does anyone in your family or otherwise help you with the kids?

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer these questions. It will be very useful moving forward! If you have any additional thoughts, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at the school.

APPENDIX E

Coding Guide

CODING CATEGORIES

Most of the codes in my coding guide are descriptive in nature, though some – such as some of the teacher and parent opinion codes – are more inferential in nature. All codes are meant to help to identify interesting instances in the data that address the questions. Below, I define the groups and relate them to the research questions above.

ACTIVITY: This group of codes describes different kinds of parent involvement activities, including actions taken by individual parents or opportunities for involvement offered or identified by the school. ACTIVITY codes are sub-grouped in two ways.

First, they are sub-grouped according to the individual who names the parent involvement activity, either a school staff member (SS), a parent (P), or myself through observation (O).

The second method of sub-grouping ACTIVITY codes are by the type of activity. Some activities recurred throughout various data types and thus had more in-depth data. Thus, these codes provide more descriptive detail about the following specific parent involvement activities, including information about outreach for the various activities, the enactment of the activities (e.g., parents' interactions with kids, the structure of the activity), and conversations that occurred covered during the activities (e.g., parents talking about personal hardship, Common Core). The ACTIVITY sub-groups are the following:

- Roosevelt Rhino Guardians – the school's Men's Group, geared specifically towards students' fathers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins, and other male guardians
- Orientation – Roosevelt's beginning-of-year sessions for parents; this includes the whole-school Open House, as well as individual orientations that were hosted for the Prekindergarten and Kindergarten classes
- Roosevelt Family Association – monthly meetings hosted for Roosevelt families that included dinner, student performances, and workshops for parents
- Report Card Conferences – parent-teacher conferences hosted three times per year for parents and teachers to meet one-on-one to talk about student progress
- Roosevelt to Washington – a Washington, DC trip for 5th and 6th grade students that required parents to be involved in fundraising and logistical matters
- Graduations and Award Ceremonies – end-of-year ceremonies to celebrate 8th grade and Kindergarten graduations, as well as award ceremonies for individual grade levels
- English as a Second Language classes – after-school classes offered by the Parent Liaison to Spanish-speaking parents
- Volunteering – near-weekly volunteer activities at the classroom level or special event volunteering, such as for Roosevelt's Fall Fest
- Homework

TCHEXP: This group of codes identifies moments when school staff – including teachers, administrators, and other school staff – share their expectations, opinions, and views about parent

involvement in their classroom and at the school and about parent involvement in general. Sub-groups of codes in the TCHEXP category are:

- Level – school staff’s opinions about the level of parent involvement in their individual classrooms and at Roosevelt as a whole
- Why Parent Involvement Matters – school staff’s views about why parent involvement matters to their students and to the school as a whole
- Why Not More – school staff’s ideas about why some parents may not be involved as much as they would like
- Why More – school staff’s ideas about why some parents are involved more than others
- Experience – school staff’s descriptions of specific positive or negative interactions with parents
- Thoughts about Parents – school staff’s opinions about how parents do or should behave and the reasons they behave that way

ORG: This group of codes describes the organizational factors that facilitate and complicate parent involvement at Roosevelt. Sub-groups of this category include organizational supports (ORG-SUPP) for parent involvement, such as school systems and cultural values in favor of parent involvement, and organizational challenges (ORG-CHALL), such as attitudes and actions that inhibit parent involvement at Roosevelt. This group of codes also includes how decisions about different parent involvement activities are made at Roosevelt (ORG-DEC).

PRNTEXP: This group of codes describes parents’ expectations, views, and opinions about parent involvement and related issues. They offer their views about in following subcategories:

- Why Parent Involvement Matters – parents’ opinions about why parent involvement is important and makes a difference for their children
- Academics – parents’ views about the quality of academic programming at Roosevelt
- Behavior – parents’ views about student behavior and discipline at Roosevelt
- Welcome – parents’ discussion about whether they feel welcome at Roosevelt and why
- Supports – parents’ talk about the supports that they have for their involvement at Roosevelt
- Challenges – parents’ talk about the challenges they face to becoming involved at Roosevelt

IMPROVE: This category of codes describes ideas for improving Roosevelt’s parent involvement programming. Sub-groups of this category are based upon who makes the suggestions for improvement. IMPROVE-TCH refers to suggestions for improvement made by school staff, and IMPROVE-PRNT refers to suggestions for improvement made by parents.

PLROLE: This category of codes describes the tasks that I completed as parent liaison at Roosevelt during the 2013-2014 academic year. It also includes some of the tasks of other parent involvement staff, namely the Director of Community Programming.

OTHER: This category of codes covers instances that do not necessarily directly address one of the research questions, but which deserve to be tracked. The predominant code in this category identifies moments in the data where Roosevelt’s parent involvement programming involves partnerships with community organizations and the advantages and challenges of those

partnerships.

CODE DEFINITIONS

ACTIVITY: Parent Involvement Activities	
WHATTHDO: Parent involvement activities conducted by teachers and school staff	
CALLTEXT	Teachers and school staff call or text parents to keep in touch with them.
CLASSNEWS	The classroom distributes a regular newsletter or unit syllabus.
DAILYREPORTS	The classroom distributes daily behavior and/or academic reports for students (usually in the lower grades)
ESL	School staff starts an ESL class for Spanish-speaking parents.
FALLFEST	The school hosts Fall Fest as a school-wide opportunity for involvement, either through volunteering or attending as a family.
FIELDTRIP	Teachers host field trips, and parents may chaperone those field trips.
GRADAWRDS	The school hosts graduation or awards events at Roosevelt.
HOL&PARTIES	School staff host holiday and birthday parties as opportunities for parent participation.
MATHLITNIGHT	The school puts on a Math and Literacy Night as a school-wide opportunity to bring families together around education.
NOTES	Teachers send home notes to parents via the student.
ORIENTATION	The school held an open house held at the beginning of the year for parents, including the Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Orientations.
OTHER	School staff mention other ways for parents to become involved with their child.
PHONETREE	The school makes phone calls using the phone tree system.
PHOTOCLUB	School staff put together a photography club for parents.
RHINO	School staff puts together the father's club as a way for parents to be involved at the school.
REPORTCONF	The school hosts report card conferences as an opportunity for parents to conference with teachers about student performance and behavior.
THANKYOU	Teachers write thank-you notes to parents for gifts or help that parents provide for the classroom or for the teacher.
VOLUNT	Teachers host volunteers in their classrooms regularly, or they offer that parents can volunteer for special events at the school.
WEBSITE	School staff maintain a school website and Facebook page in order to communicate with parents.
RFA	School staff put together the Roosevelt Family Association meetings as an opportunity for parent involvement at the school.
ROOSEVELTTOWASH	The school offers fundraisers and opportunities for parent involvement through the Roosevelt to Washington program.
ROOSEVELTWEEKLY	The school distributes their weekly newsletter, the Roosevelt

	Weekly
WKSHOP	School staff host academic and behavioral workshops that can be hosted for parents.
WHATPRNTDO: Types of Parent Involvement mentioned by parents (RQ2)	
SUPPORT	Parents provide or should provide academic or behavioral support for the school and to their kids.
ADVCHILD	Parents should or do advocate for their child to make sure that their child's needs are being met by the school.
COMMWITHTCH	Parents communicate with the teacher openly and regularly.
DROPPICK	Parents drop off and pick up their kids.
EXTRACURR	Parents support their kids by enrolling them in and attending extracurricular activities for their kids.
FIELDTRIP	Parents chaperone field trips.
FIRSTDAY	Parents attend the first day of school, either dropping their kids off, joining in the celebration, or helping to smooth out logistics (such as bus) for their children.
FUN	Parents describe things that they do with their children for fun.
GRADAWRDS	Parents attend graduation or awards events at Roosevelt.
HOMEWORK	Parents should help or do help their students with their homework.
LOGISTIC	Parents are involved in the logistical aspects of their children, such as dropping off picture or field trip money.
MATHLITNIGHT	Parents attend Math and Literacy Night.
ORIENTATION	Parents participate in the open house held at the beginning of the year for parents, including the Prekindergarten and Kindergarten orientations. This also includes the volunteer orientation at the beginning of the year.
RHINO	Parents attend the Rhino Fathers group.
READSIGN	Parents read and sign papers that are sent home with their child.
REALWORLD	Parents extend their child's learning to the real-world, either by going to the store, looking at a garden, or going to the library.
REINFORCE	Parents reinforce and supplement what students are learning at school by quizzing them on different words or finding websites for their children online.
REPORTCONF	Parents attend report card conferences.
SUPPORT	Parents should or do provide support for the teachers.
TALKTOCHLD	Parents talk with their children about school and what they are learning.
TALKTOTCH	Parents talk to their child's teacher in person or on the phone.
VOLUNT	Parents volunteer with the school either in the classroom or at special events.
RFA	Parents attend the PTO or RFA meetings.
OTHER	Parents are involved in other ways not covered by the activities listed here.
RHINO: Details about the enactment and observation of the Roosevelt Rhino Guardians	
PROJECTMEET	Projects, meetings, or volunteering that the Rhinos do or want to

	do. This may include discussion about the projects, planning about the projects, or observations of the enactment of the projects.
TSHIRT	Rhino t-shirts – why they are important and how they were developed.
INTERWKIDS	Conversations or observations of Rhinos interacting with students, whether their own children or the children of others.
OUTREACH	Outreach to Rhinos about upcoming projects and outreach to the school community about who the Rhinos are and what they do.
LOGISTICS	Planning the logistical components of Rhinos meetings – scheduling, location, food, seating, etc.
TURNOUT	Notes or discussion about the turnout for Rhinos events.
RESOURCES	Notes or discussions about the Rhinos needing resources or providing resources to the Rhinos.
HARDSHIP	Rhinos talk about hardships that they have faced in their lives or in their relationships with their own fathers.
ROLEMODEL	Rhinos talk about being a role model for students
FEEDBACK	Rhinos feedback about various Rhinos projects and meetings.
ORIENTATION: Details about the enactment and observation of Open House, including Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Orientations	
BEHAV	Talk during orientation about discipline or behavioral issues with parents.
ACAD	Talk during orientation about upcoming academic changes with parents.
LOGIST	Talk with parents during orientation about the logistics (e.g., bus routes, uniforms) for the upcoming school year.
RFA: Details about the enactment and observation of planning and execution for the Roosevelt Family Association (RFA)	
PLANNING	Planning meetings or notes for an upcoming RFA meeting.
WKSHP	School staff vision, planning, and execution for RFA workshops.
INCENT	Incentives, such as raffles, offered at the RFA meetings.
CIRCLES	Community circles, a social-emotional curriculum component, offered at the RFA meetings.
PARENTCHILDINTERACT	Conversations or observations about how parents and children interact at the RFA meetings.
PRNTTCHINTERACT	Conversations or observations about how parents and teachers interact at the RFA meetings.
LOGISTICS	Logistics necessary to execute the RFA meetings.
TURNOUT	The number and types of families who turn out for RFA meetings.
PURPOSE	The purpose or lack of purpose of RFA meetings.
PERFORM	Talk about or observations of student performances at RFA meetings.
LASTMINUTE	A decision about an upcoming RFA meeting happens at the last minute.
SCHOOLINFO	Parents get information about things happening at the school

	from the RFA meeting.
REPORTCONF: Details about how parents and teachers interact at report card conferences	
COMMON CORE	Parent information about Common Core and how their kids are doing.
TURNOUT	Parent turnout for report card conferences.
HAPPY	Parents happy during or after report card conferences.
UPSET	Parents upset or angry during or after report card conferences.
INTERWKIDS	Interactions between parents, students and teachers during report card conferences.
ROOSEVELTTOWASH: Details about the enactment and observation of Roosevelt to Washington events.	
INTERWKIDS	Observations of parents interacting with their kids at Roosevelt to Washington events.
LOGISTICS	Observations of parents fulfilling the logistical requirements for their children on the trip, including filling out permission slips and paying for the trip.
OUTREACH	Observations of phone outreach for the Roosevelt to Washington trip.
FUNDRAISE	Observations or comments about fundraisers for the Roosevelt to Washington trip, including the Giant Yard Sale and the Gala.
GRADAWARDS: Details about the enactment and observation of graduation or awards ceremonies	
TURNOUT	Observations of turnout at graduation or awards ceremonies.
DISORG	Components of the graduation or awards ceremonies are disorganized.
TCHINTERPRNT	Observations of parent-teacher interactions at graduation or awards ceremonies.
INTERWKIDS	Observations of parents' interactions with their children at awards or graduation ceremonies.
ESL: Details about the enactment and observation of ESL classes	
TURNOUT	Observations about the turnout for the ESL classes.
VOLUNT: Details about the enactment and observation of parents volunteering	
TSHIRT	Discussion about t-shirts for volunteers.
LOGISTICS	Discussion about logistics or difficulties with logistics for volunteers.
INTERWKIDS	Discussion or observations of interactions between volunteers and kids.
HOMEWORK: Details about how parents do or how parents should interact with their children around homework	
AGE	Age as a factor in how parents help their children.
TIME	Parent time conflicts with helping their child with homework.
TCHEXP: Teachers' expectations, opinions, and views around parent involvement in the classroom or at the school	
LEVEL: Teachers' opinions about the level of parent involvement in their classrooms or at the	

school	
GOOD	The current level of parent involvement is good or great.
COULDBEBETTER	The level of parent involvement could be higher.
REGPARENTS	Roosevelt has a core group of families who are regularly involved.
IMPROVING	The level of parent involvement at the school is improving.
COMMSCHOOL	Roosevelt is a community school with events that engage parents in the community.
OKAY	The level of parent involvement at Roosevelt is in the middle or okay.
NOTINVOLVED	Parents at Roosevelt are not involved at all in their classrooms or the school.
TOOMUCH	Some parents are at the school too much.
VARIES	Parent involvement varies according to the parent.
WHYPI MATTERS: Teachers' opinions and views about why parent involvement matters	
ALIGNSAMEPAGE	Parent involvement allows parents to align their expectations to teachers and for the teacher and parent to operate on the same page.
EDVALUE	Parent involvement communicates the importance and value of education to students.
TCHPRNTRELATIONSHIP	Parent involvement allows parents to develop relationships with teachers.
CLASH	Without parent involvement, there can be tough culture clashes between home and school.
CHILDDIFFLIGHT	Parent involvement allows the parent to see the child in a different light.
PRNTDIFFLIGHT	Parent involvement allows the child to see the parent in a different light.
PRNTCUESSTUD	Strong parent-teacher relationships and parent involvement is important because students takes their cues from parents.
PRNTINLOOP	Parent involvement is important because it keeps parents in the loop about their child and what's going on at the school.
IMPROVE	Parent involvement could help to improve the school because parents would find certain things unacceptable.
SUGGTOPRNT	Parent involvement is important because it allows for the opportunity for teachers to make suggestions to parents about their children.
HELPTCH	Parent involvement can help the teacher in the classroom.
WHYNOTMORE: Teachers' ideas about why parent involvement in their classroom or at the school is not higher	
ROLECONF	Parents are either confused about their role with their child's schooling or they don't believe that it is their job to get involved with the school.
LOWEDVALUE	Parents don't place high enough value on education.
TCHONSPOT	Teachers may not want parents in the classroom because it puts the teachers "on the spot."

PRNTDISRUPT	Parents may disrupt the learning in the classroom or be disrespectful to school staff.
LOSECONTROL	Teachers feel like they lose control if another adult is in the classroom.
TECHNOLOGY	Being on technology all the time inhibits parent interaction with their kids.
NOACCTABILITY	School doesn't hold parents accountable for their involvement, from getting children to school on time to supporting behavior.
DONTKNOW	Parents don't know about events or they don't know about how their children are performing.
UNCLEARPOLICY	The school's policies about parent involvement are unclear or unknown.
PRNTSBUSY	Some parents are too busy to become involved, and that poses a challenge to their involvement.
WHYMORE: Teachers' ideas about why certain parents are involved more often than others	
YOUNG	Parents are more involved with younger children for whatever reason.
EXPERIENCE: Teachers describe their experiences with parents in the past	
UPSET	A parent was upset with something that happened at the school.
POSITIVE	"Ideal" or positive interactions with parents.
OUTSIDESCHOOL	Parent involvement outside of school.
PRESENT	Parents who make things for teachers or give them presents.
NOSUPP	Teachers didn't feel supported by a parent, either for the behavioral or academic progress of their child.
VOLUNT	A parent who has helped teachers in the classroom and volunteered with them.
INCONSISTENT	A parent who teachers have worked with who has been inconsistent with their support or volunteering.
INTERESTING	Interactions with parents that teachers have described as interesting.
DRUG	Parents having issues with drinking or drugs.
SSTHINKPRNTS: Teachers and school staff offer their opinions about current parents and parent involvement	
NOBUYINBEHAV	Parents don't buy in into the school's behavioral expectations and processes.
PRNTIGNORECHILD	Parents are ignoring their children when children share information with them about their successes or challenges.
PRNTSDONTKNOWBETTER	Parents didn't learn important and relevant skills or behaviors to help their students or the school.
PRNTSNOTINTERESTED	Parents are not interested in getting involved or won't want to become involved.
PRNTSDISRUPT	Parents will disrupt the classroom.
PARTNERSHIP	Parents should be in a partnership with teachers.
DIVISION	The classrooms is teachers' domain to be in charge of.
HOMEDISTRACT	The home life of students and parents distract parents from their involvement or impacts students' academics and behavior.

SUPPORT	Parents should act as a support for teachers.
WANTBEST	Parents want the best for their child.
PRNTSNEEDTODOMORE	Parents aren't holding their own weight and that schools do too much.
PRNTSBUSY	Parents are very busy people.
OTHER: School staff offers opinions or beliefs about parents that doesn't fall into the above categories	
ORG: Organizational factors that facilitate or complicate parent involvement.	
SUPP: Organizational supports for parent involvement practices	
ADMINPRIORITY	The school administration has made parent involvement a priority.
TCHREQRFA	The school administration requires teachers to assist with the planning of RFA meetings.
OPENDOOR	The school has an open door policy for parents.
PHONELOG	The school has a phone log system to track teachers' communication with parents, and teachers are required to make regular phone calls home.
SCHTRYING	The school's administration is trying to do things to address barriers to parents' involvement.
TCHINVIT	Teachers invite parents into the classroom to get involved.
SSOPEN	The administration and school staff are open to new initiatives to support parent involvement.
PHONETREE	The administration uses a phone tree to help to communicate with parents.
CONSIST	Consistent staff serves as touchstones for families.
SPANISH	There are Spanish resources on staff for Hispanic parents.
RELATIONSHIPS	School staff mentions that good relationships with parents are important.
INCENT	School staff provides incentives for parents at various events.
CHALL: Organizational challenges around parent involvement practices	
TCHACCTABILITY	No consistent accountability around parent involvement practices (particularly around phone call logs).
ADMINUNCLEAR	Expectations for teachers are unclear around different school practices, including around parental involvement.
LITTLENOTICE	Little notice provided for parents about parent involvement opportunities.
TCHPERSONALITY	Parent involvement varies by the personality of classroom teachers.
LACKCOORD	Teachers ignore requests for their support for parent involvement or efforts for parent involvement are uncoordinated between teachers and other school staff.
CAPACITY	The school has limited capacity and resources to dedicate to parent involvement efforts.
WIDERANGE	The school serves a wide range of student ages and types of

	parents, making it difficult to create one catchall parent involvement program.
TURNOUT	The school struggles with driving turnout at parent involvement events.
NOTASKED	Parents didn't know about a parent involvement opportunity, or they weren't asked to participate.
SPANISH	There are limited Spanish resources on staff for Hispanic parents, which makes it challenging to communicate with them.
NOTWANTED	Teachers do not seem to want parents involved in their classrooms.
PRNTLOGISTICS	Parents have logistical challenges to their involvement.
OTHER	Other types of challenges as impeding upon the school's ability to involve parents.
DEC: Decision-making process for parent involvement events	
TCHDOMINATE	Teachers dominate the decision-making and planning process of a parent involvement activity.
PRNTDOMINATE	Parents dominate the decision-making and planning process of a parent involvement activity.
EQUAL	Teachers and parent equally participate in the decision-making and planning process of a parent involvement activity.
SURVEY	Decisions around parent involvement activities are made based upon parent or teacher survey feedback.
ANEC	Decisions around parent involvement activities are made based upon anecdotal conversations with parents or teachers.
TCHFEEDBACK	Decisions about parent involvement activities are made based upon teacher feedback.
PRNTFEEDBACK	Decisions about parent involvement activities are made based upon parent feedback.
ADMINFEEDBACK	Decisions about parent involvement activities are made based upon administrative feedback.
OTHERMODELS	Decisions about parent involvement activities take into account other models of parent involvement activities.
PRNTEXP: Parents' expectations, views, and opinions about parent involvement and related issues.	
WHYPIMATTERS: Parents offer their opinions about why their involvement matters.	
ALIGN	Involvement provides first-hand experience about what's going on in the classroom and helps to align with what's going on at home.
INVOLVEMENT: Parents' opinions about parents' involvement generally	
UPTOPRNTS	It is up to parents to get involved.
ACAD: Parents' views and opinions about academics at Roosevelt	
COMMONCORESUPP	Parents support Common Core.
BOTTOMLINE	Parents want the bottom line when it comes to academics, such as Common Core.

TESTING	Talk about hopes and fears around testing for students.
ACCOMMODATE	Accommodations for parents' children when it comes to academic concerns.
GOODSCHOOL	Roosevelt is a good school for their students.
GOODTCHRS	Roosevelt's teachers are good, are nice, and care about their kids.
SPED	SPED services (or the lack thereof) at Roosevelt and their experiences with them.
TCHGIVEPRNTADVICE	Talk about how teachers give parents specific ways to help their child at home.
BEHAV: Parents offer their opinions about discipline and behavioral policies at Roosevelt	
NEGEXPERIENCE	Negative experiences that parents and their children have had with Roosevelt regarding discipline or behavior.
TALKALOT	Child talks a lot in class or at school.
WELCOME: Parents' views and opinions about how Roosevelt receives them	
SOMETIMES	Sometimes parents feel welcome at Roosevelt.
OPEN	Parents feel like the school does welcome them.
SUPP: Supports that parent have in their involvement in the school	
FAMHELP	Family members or close friends help parents.
NEIGHBOR	Parent(s) live(s) in the neighborhood, which make it more accessible to him or her.
CHALL: Challenges that parents face in their involvement with the school	
FARAWAY	Parent(s) live(s) far away from the school, which can add logistical challenges to getting involved.
LANGUAGE	Parents do not speak English and so sometimes have difficulty understanding things from the school or their child's teacher.
NOHELP	No one else helps parents with the kids.
JOB	Parents' jobs' schedules serve as an impediment to their involvement.
JUGGLINGALOT	Parents are juggling a lot, so they can't be as involved as they would like to be or they can't go back to school like they would like.
OTHER	Parents mention challenges not referred to in any other category.
IMPROVE: Ideas offered by school staff, including me as parent liaison, and parents	
TCH: Suggestions to improve parent involvement offered by teachers and the school staff	
LITNIGHT	The school should offer a math and literacy night.
MOTHERSGROUP	The school should offer a group specifically for mothers.
GRNDPRNTSGROUP	The school should offer a group specifically for grandparents.
PRNTCHAPSTUDENTSER VICELEARNING	The school should offer more service learning experiences for students, which parents should have the opportunity to chaperone.
TALKTOPRNTS	The school should talk to parents directly so that they can see what parents want and what parents think works.
CAPACITY	The school should bring on more people whose role is dedicated

	to thinking about parent involvement.
REQVOLUNT	The school should require parents to volunteer.
FAMILYROOM	The school should a common space for parents to gather to reach a point person.
REFLECT	The school staff should reflect on what has worked with parents thus far.
COORD	Teachers, social service staff, and administrators should collaborate more often and coordinate their efforts.
TARGET	Parent events at the school should be more targeted for parents of specific age groups.
RELEVTOPRNTS	Family involvement events should be relevant to parents, whether because their students are performing or because the event shares useful information with parents.
TRAINPRNTS	Parents should be trained about how to volunteer or get involved.
SPANISH	More materials should be translated into Spanish so that it's easier to communicate with parents.
ACADCLARITY	Parents should be provided with more detail about their students' academic performance.
PRNTOWNERSHIP	Parents should be allowed to take more ownership of various projects and forms of involvement.
PRNTTCHRELATIONSHIP	The school needs to work on developing closer relationships between parents and teachers.
TURNOUT	Teachers would like to improve the turnout to current and existing parent involvement events.
PRNTADVISORY	Teachers would like to see a parent advisory board.
OTHER	Teachers mention other improvements that they would like to see around the school and for parent involvement.
PRNT: Suggestions to improve parent involvement offered by parents	
TURNOUT	Parent turnout at events could be improved.
STUDBEHAV	The school needs to improve student behavior.
SPANISH	Parents would like the school to offer Spanish classes.
TIMING	The timing of a given event could be improved.
OTHER	Other things not mentioned in the codes above could be improved.
PL-ROLE: Activities that the parent liaison conducted as a part of her role	
SPANISH	The liaison translated documents and conversations for Spanish-speaking families.
PHONEOUTREACH	The liaison conducted phone call outreach for parent events.
FLIEROUTREACH	The liaison designed and/or distributed fliers to publicize parent events.
STAFFPLANEVENTS	The liaison attended and helped to plan and staff parent events.
SOUNDINGBOARD	The liaison served as a source for debriefing around previous parent involvement events and for discussion of growing parent

	involvement programming.
MANAGEVOLUNTEERS	The liaison helped to recruit, place, and manage parent volunteers.
MANAGEPOPS	The liaison helped to manage contact information and programming for the Protectors of the Pack.
FAMILYROOM	The liaison staffs and develops the resources in the Family/Resource Room.
RESEARCH	In my role as parent liaison, I also act as researcher and am often asked to share what I have observed.
WKSHOPS	The liaison helps to develop ideas for and to execute workshops and clubs for parents.
PRNTPOV	The liaison provides a point of view from the perspective of parents.
TRAIINTCH	The liaison trains teachers on working with parents and community volunteers.
CALENDAR	The liaison puts together the monthly calendar of family activities at Roosevelt.
RELATIONSHIPS	The liaison works in interacting with parents and developing relationships with parents.
PASSBATON	The liaison works to pass the baton to the new parent liaison, garnering funding, putting together a job description, and working with the new liaison to transition the role.
SURVEY	The liaison creates a survey for parents and helps to distribute and analyze it.
OTHER	Random tasks that fell to me as the parent liaison.
OTHER: Other codes that don't necessarily fit into research questions and/or other coding categories but may help with painting a broader picture	
COMM: Collaborations between community partners and Roosevelt.	

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