

MULTICULTURAL MULTILINGUAL FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS IN HAWAI‘I:
“A BACK AND FORTH RELATIONSHIP”

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To my students' families: Thank you for entrusting your little ones with me. It may take a village to raise a child, but it takes a village to raise a teacher, too.

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ABSTRACT

Family engagement has been shown to support student success; however, many educators wonder how to improve their own family-school partnership skills. This need for partnership becomes even more critical for multicultural multilingual students, who often encounter equity gaps due to differing schooling norms and expectations. Using the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013), I interviewed five multicultural multilingual families and five educators who have worked with those families to understand the experiences of multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships at a Title I school in Hawai'i. Findings supported the literature regarding the importance of family-school partnerships, progressing beyond partnership to relationships, and the need for quality-based measures of family engagement. Recommendations include the need for further multilingualism training in family-school partnerships, pre-service and in-service training in family-school partnerships, and institutional support for family-school partnerships, as well as a focus on family-school partnerships with Asian and Pacific Islander families.

Chapter 1: Introduction

I started teaching at Aloha Elementary¹ in Honolulu as a twenty-three year old, newly licensed teacher. I did my student teaching in a comparatively affluent suburb thirty minutes away, and when I told colleagues about my new job (my first teaching job! Kindergarten! Everything I had ever dreamed of!), they paused upon hearing the location and shared:

“It’s going to be tough, you know.”

“When I was applying, I dodged calls from schools in that complex.”

And then: “The parents won’t be involved.”

My four years at Aloha Elementary have proved that last statement anything but true. I found that the parents--and the larger extended family--are heavily involved in their children’s lives, including their schooling. I always had parents asking if they could chaperone field trips, bring treats in for a special event, or whether there was a new strategy they could try with their children at home. There were some differences between the school where I had student-taught and Aloha Elementary, such as there is no PTA, and we host an annual bingo night, rather than a large fun fair each year--but parents are just as involved, just as committed, and just as caring.

That isn’t to say that each experience with a parent has been successful. Note the difference in the following examples.

I knew I misunderstood the situation when my student’s mom returned the field trip without the emergency contact section filled in, for the third time. I had sent it home with a sticky note the first time, asking that she please fill out this required section. It came back incomplete. I had highlighted the section. It came back blank again. Finally, I talked to her

¹ Pseudonym for the elementary school in this research study.

when she picked up her son at the end of the school day. There were a few other parents who missed filling out bits of information (the field trip site had its own permission form in addition to the standard school one, and the site was notoriously strict about reviewing the forms). I approached this mom as her friends filled out their own forms.

“Can you put an emergency contact in this section, ma’am?” I asked.

“No, I put my number up there.” She pointed to the top of the form.

“Yes, but this section down here is if something happens on the field trip and we can’t reach you at this number. Is there someone else we could call?”

Then the insistent declaration as she handed the form back to me and walked away, her son and daughter in tow: “There’s just me! No one else. Just me!”

To me it seemed straightforward: the student had emergency contacts on his school registration card. She could put one of those individuals on the field trip form. But as I became more aware of the situation, memories clicked together. I recalled the time she had dropped her son off alone for the parent-and-me day of kindergarten orientation and headed to work, or how her son drew a picture of an airplane and said “Daddy in the Philippines.” I realized that her frustration wasn’t about the form at all. This mom was dealing with difficult things, alone, and my insistence on her putting another contact on the form conveyed disinterest at best, criticism at worst.

My obliviousness to her situation was ironic, considering the activity we’d done that first parent-and-me day, when she’d dropped her son off and headed to work. Each parent and child had traced their hands on a piece of construction paper, then cut them out (this was a difficult task for an entering kindergartener to do, so for me it also functioned as an informal gauge of fine motor skills), and glued each hand onto a construction paper tree, next to the words, “It takes

a village.” I hung the giant poster at the entrance of my classroom, where the kids would see it when they first entered and where parents could admire it as they dropped their little ones off. I wanted them to know we were in this together. Somehow, my insistence on getting that permission form filled out hadn’t conveyed that.

Contrast that with the story of another student. At the beginning of the year, we held a parent-student kindergarten orientation day. This student wouldn’t sit at his desk, even though his mom was right next to him. Instead, he ran to the semicircle table at the back of the room and sat there watching everyone. Eventually his mother pulled a chair back to that table and tried to get him to participate in the activity. The session ended with the mother in tears, holding her son’s paper full of half-traced shapes, and apologizing profusely.

The first few weeks of kindergarten were difficult for this student. He wouldn’t speak, except to say his name. We considered whether English was difficult for him, but when another staff member spoke to him in Ilocano (his first language), he responded in English. During naptime, when all of the other children got their blankets and stuffed animals and went to rest, he sat at his desk, completely alert, and looked around. I tried to reassure his mom, telling her that kindergarten was a big adjustment. I told her each time he had made progress. It was slow--three months before he answered a question I asked him, four quarters before he himself volunteered to lead morning business--but it was there.

During that year, we often read *Giraffes Can’t Dance* by Giles Andreae, first as part of a socioemotional lesson, and then later because the students loved the story so much. The main character, Gerald, struggles at the jungle dance every year, until he finds the music that is just right for him. Perhaps this student loved the story because he identified with it, perhaps he just loved animals, but either way, I noticed he borrowed it from the library more than once. At the

end of the school year, his mother wrote me a note thanking me for helping to raise her son. She also gave me--you guessed it--a stuffed giraffe.

What was the difference in my interactions with these two parents? Why could I navigate academic and social difficulties with one family somewhat seamlessly, whereas in another situation something as simple as completing a form became an awkward exchange? Was it the parent? Was it me? Was it both?

Like many educators, I have wondered how to improve family engagement on both a personal and systemic level. How can I become better at handling awkward conversations, like when a child misbehaves? How can I explain the expectations of the school, especially for families whose cultural backgrounds may have different schooling norms? How can I provide strategies for academic support without parents feeling like I am talking down to them?

Years of curiosity and a couple of summers spent at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Early Childhood Summer Institute changed my practice. First I learned that I needed to communicate more often, and more substantially, with families. Second, I learned that family engagement often comes as families connect with other families in the school setting. I am grateful to both Robyn Chun, Julie Kaomea, and Sherilyn Waters for their significant influence on this early part of my career. Robyn organized the summer institute and patiently helped me, an Elementary Education K-6 licensed teacher, to implement early childhood best practices in my kindergarten classroom. Kaomea (2012) eloquently and succinctly wrote about the many forms family involvement can take in Indigenous settings, which caused me to reflect on how those principles might apply in my multicultural classroom. Sherilyn, my district mentor, was the one who, at 3:30 pm on a searing Friday in May 2019 asked me, "What would you do if you could do anything?" I told her I would have breakfast with my students and their families. I

loved these kids so much I *wanted* to be with them outside of school; plus, my mother raised me with the knowledge that love is often shown through sharing food. So I started Family Fri-Yay as an opportunity to build relationships. Note the trifecta: practice grounded in the literature (Dr. Kaomea), time and support in planning (Robyn Chun), and financial and material support (facilitated by my district mentor). Together, those three aspects allowed me to pursue an opportunity to deepen my partnerships with my families.

Doing so was vital for my practice, because the importance of family engagement in children's academic success is well-documented (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005, 2007). Certain aspects of the family-school partnership as well as the individual capacities of each have been shown to have the greatest impact on student achievement (Ma et al., 2016). Sheldon and Epstein (2005) noted that parental engagement is most helpful when it is targeted; that is to say, when parents provide support or gather resources to help their child with a specific skill. Additionally, research has indicated that parents may prefer certain types of involvement (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009), but the effectiveness of each aspect of family-school partnerships varies (Anthony & Ogg, 2016). It is important to note that student achievement does not only refer to academic achievement: El Nokali et al. (2010) found that parental involvement had the greatest impact on social and emotional development, rather than the educational development of elementary-aged students. Although Fan and Chen (2001) found that the effect of parental involvement was greater in terms of global indicators of success (attendance, grade point average) than reading or math scores, the literature still maintains that parental and family involvement is beneficial to student success. Because families and schools often respond to the same student needs, whether independently or interdependently, further research into family-school partnerships is needed (El Nokali et al., 2010).

The importance of family engagement notwithstanding, how to meaningfully and continually engage families remains a question for many administrators and educators. Even teacher educators report minimal confidence in their graduates' ability to work with families (Epstein, 2006). Possible reasons for this difficulty exist in various aspects of education. First, outside of early childhood educator programs, many pre-service educators do not receive formal instruction in family engagement (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Epstein, 2011; Epstein, 2018). Second, family engagement is minimally addressed in educator preparation programs (Epstein, 2006, 2011, 2018). Third, there is little congruity within family engagement research, with many articles in even highly reputable journals lacking either a theoretical or conceptual framework (Yamauchi et al., 2017). Without a strong theoretical backing in the literature, teacher educators are left without preparation materials for their pre-service teachers. Teacher education programs lack content addressing family engagement. Because many current teachers were not trained in family engagement, even in-service professionals may be adjusting to the expectation that such partnerships are essential.

But the mandates regulating family engagement--such as No Child Left Behind (2002) and Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), as well as state initiatives such as the Hawai'i Department of Education 2030 Promise Plan and Nā Hopena A'o (Department of Education, 2015)--exist for a reason. Family engagement is especially critical for multicultural multilingual families, who may have different norms and expectations regarding the roles of families and schools (Housel, 2020). Ratliffe and Ponte (2018) note the importance of inclusive family engagement practices when working with multicultural and multilingual families. Due to differences in how parents of different cultures interact with their child's educational setting, educators partnering with multicultural-multilingual families must approach family engagement

in a multifaceted way (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Family engagement includes both relational and structural approaches (Sheridan et al., 2012). Rather than focusing solely on a structural approach, perhaps in which family engagement is measured simply by a head count of families at a school event, educators partnering with multicultural and multilingual families need to look at multiple aspects of family engagement, including communication, at-home learning, and relationships (Epstein, 2011; Sheridan et al., 2012). In order to improve family engagement, educators must acknowledge the systemic strengths and weaknesses in both approaches.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) combines “research on effective family engagement and home-school partnerships strategies and practices, adult learning and motivation, and leadership development” to address capacity challenges, articulate conditions necessary for effective partnerships, identify the foremost capacity goals for agencies to focus on, and describe the capacity-building outcomes for family and school and program staff (p. 7). Whereas other frameworks focus primarily on family-school partnerships by enhancing the school capacity (Epstein, 2011; Whitaker, 2013; Whitaker, 2019), the Dual Capacity-Building Framework addresses building the capacity of both families and schools. In addition to being studied on the U.S. continent (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013), the framework has also been adopted by the Hawai‘i State Family Engagement Center. This further supports my use of Mapp and Kuttner’s Dual Capacity-Building framework (2013) to understand multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships at a Title I school in Hawai‘i.

The four major capacities the framework recommends addressing first are: (a) capabilities, (b) connections, (c) cognition, and (d) confidence. I will explore these further below.

Capabilities include the human capital, skills, and knowledge needed for family-school partnerships. This means that school personnel need to understand the funds of knowledge of their families and community, and how to build relationships with trust and cultural competence. Families need to be knowledgeable about the school system, their children's learning, and educational advocacy and support.

Connections focus on the important relationships and networks. These relationships and networks should be trusting multicultural venues built on respect. Some of these might include teacher-family relationships, parent-parent relationships, and school-community relationships.

Confidence asserts the need for both school personnel and families to navigate family-school partnerships with self-confidence, comfort, and a strong rapport, especially when working in multicultural relationships.

Cognition reflects the mindset that families and educators have surrounding family-school partnerships, including whether families and educators view such partnerships as important, and whether each party feels capable of contributing to such a partnership. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) asserted that schools need to be committed to partnering with families and recognize those partnerships as essential to student academic success. In turn, families need to construct their role in their children's learning, viewing themselves as essential partners and traversing the many roles that partnership may entail.

In this study I interviewed parents and educators at Aloha Elementary to understand multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships. I used Mapp and Kuttner's model (2013) to understand the nature of the multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships at one Title I school in Hawai'i. The findings from this study may be useful in determining strengths as well as areas in need of improvement.

In doing so, I also explored ways in which the Dual Capacity-Building model applied to Hawai'i's unique multicultural multilingual setting. Although Hawai'i is sometimes referred to as a "melting pot," this term misrepresents the various privileges and issues faced by different ethnic groups. Indigenous Kanaka 'Ōiwi, White settlers who may trace ancestry to the missionary days or be here as transplants, Asian settlers who arrived to work on the plantations, and the somewhat newer wave of Pacific Islanders, each experience different levels of socioeconomic and political capital (Trask, 2000; Halagao, 2006; Okamura, 2009). Even within each group, there is stratification of privilege. For example, within the Asian community, there is a difference between the Japanese, who were the first group of plantation workers to arrive in Hawai'i, trace their ethnicity to a land with an imperial history, and currently hold significant socioeconomic and political power in Hawai'i; and the Filipinos, who were in a later group to arrive to the plantations, have a colonized history, and currently experience significant socioeconomic and political underrepresentation (Halagao, 2006). Micronesians, in particular, face racism and negative stereotypes in Hawai'i (Talmy, 2010; Ratliffe, 2010). The Compacts of Free Association states the US is permitted to have military presence in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and FSM citizens are able to travel freely from the Federated States of Micronesia to the US as "resident aliens." However, Talmy (2010) noted perception and reception of Micronesians "has...largely been negative in Hawai'i, with reports in local media describing overwhelmed schools and health care facilities, and budgets stretched thin by additional outlays for education, health, and social services" (p. 42). The Dual Capacity-Building Framework is intended to leverage parity and partnerships, but educators must be cognizant of how social and cultural history may impact attempts at such. This is especially important for educators to realize, given that the majority of HIDOE public school teachers are Japanese or

White (Hawai'i State Data Handbook, 2018), but the majority of multilingual students are Filipino or Micronesian (P-20 Partnerships for Education, 2019). As a member of a dominant racial group in Hawai'i, I explore my own positionality as a White educator in Chapter 3.

Research Question

Through this study, I examined: What are the experiences of multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships at a Title I elementary school in Hawai'i?

Key Terms

The following are key terms that will be used throughout this study:

Multilingual. Speaking more than one language. Multilingual emphasizes the cultural and linguistic assets of people and recognizes the need for fostering heritage language maintenance and language acquisition broadly, not just English. In this study, *multilingual* includes students and families labeled “English Learners” (EL) in HIDOE public schools.

Family-school partnerships/relationships. This refers to the relationships between families of students and those who represent the school, whether teachers, administrators, or other employees. The focus of this study will be on the family-teacher relationship.

Family engagement. The process by and degree to which families feel engaged, as equal partners, in their children's experience school. Note that the term is not “parent involvement,” which refers to an outdated approach of parents as passive members of the school community, waiting to be directed as to how they could “help,” in addition to limiting the role of the child's support to only parents. Recognizing the nature of the extended ‘ohana in children's academic success, this paper will focus on *family* engagement. This shift in terminology is also reflected in the change from No Child Left Behind (2002), which spoke of “parent involvement,” to the term “parent and family engagement” in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015).

Title I school. A school with “high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families” (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Title I schools receive federal funds that can be used to “support extra instruction in reading and mathematics, as well as special preschool, after-school, and summer programs to extend and reinforce the regular school curriculum” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Title I schools have specific family engagement requirements, including: written family engagement policies; annual evaluation of family engagement policies; a written school-parent compact, which is developed with the involvement of parents; parent-teacher conferences at least annually; and schoolwide plan and program plans (ESSA, 2015). Additionally, Title I schools that receive over \$500,000 in Title I funding must reserve at least 1% of their total funds for family engagement initiatives, with families involved in determining how those reserved funds are spent (ESSA, 2015).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this review of the literature, I examine existing research on family-school partnerships, multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships, and finally multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships in Hawai'i. I begin with an overview of the historical changes to family-school partnerships, including language, and the frameworks most often used in research regarding family engagement. I also provide some common barriers and successful practices as outlined in the literature. I next explore barriers and successful practices through the lens of multicultural-multilingual family-school partnerships.

Family-school partnerships

Parental involvement has been shown to boost academic success (Barnard, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002, Lopez, 2001; Epstein, 2018) and increase social capital and strengthen connections of families (Vidal de Haymes et al., 2019). There are several principles that are hallmarks of positive family-school partnerships, such as communication, welcoming environment, and shared power (National Parent Teacher Association, 2009; Scribner et al., 1999; Epstein, 2011).

Evolving terminology

Formerly known as parent involvement, family-school partnerships or family engagement are the terms most used in the literature today (Yamauchi et. al, 2017). Parent involvement referred to a passive approach, in which family members responded to school-led initiatives and directives (Marcon, 1999). Family engagement, however, refers to an active, reciprocal process with shared power (NPTA 2009; Scribner et al., 1999). This language shift is an attempt to rethink the relationship between schools and families, moving from one that is less school-dominated to a true partnership in which there is shared responsibility and capacity for decision-

making. Family *engagement* further suggests a more equitable partnership, in which the school does not seek to change or correct the family's structure, practices, or customs, but rather views the family as the experts on their child. Additionally, family engagement focuses on a reciprocal relationship, in which both schools and families benefit from the initiatives.

In addition to a shift from involvement to engagement, critics also challenged the limited notion of "parent" involvement, noting that there are many stakeholders in a child's education, and that meaningful relationships can develop not only between the school and the parents, but also between the school and other caregivers and extended family members (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein, 2011). This wider view of relationships between families and schools supports an approach that may be adapted according to each family's structure (Ratliffe, 2010).

Barriers

Cultural perceptions. Schools and families have always had a relationship. The literature on family-school partnerships seeks to turn that relationship, whatever it may currently be, into an equitable partnership. However, perceptions of the roles of each partner may vary, especially in multicultural relationships. Many schools treat families as having little to contribute, relegating families to a bystander role rather than that of active participants (Moll et al., 1992; Housel, 2020; Sakai, 2015). Furthermore, how families perceive the relationship between families and schools will dictate the ways in which families partner with schools (Whitaker, 2013). Families from cultures who view schooling as a collaborative process are more likely to engage, whereas families from cultures who view parents as responsible for moral development but not educational progress will be less likely to engage in family-school partnerships (Housel, 2020; Whitaker, 2013; Whitaker, 2019). Similarly, families who view

teachers and school officials as the authority on education will likely leave educational support and decisions to the school (Chattergy & Ongteco, 1991).

Nevertheless, schools can have an impact on family perception of involvement. A teacher who builds a strong rapport with families and invites them to participate in a variety of ways can help families come to see themselves as partners (Sakai, 2015; Whitaker, 2013). This requires skill on the part of the educator, especially when “creating pathways” for families to become involved in culturally responsive ways (Robinson, 2017, p. 12).

Lack of engagement skills. Unfortunately, not all educators innately know how to create engaging pathways for involvement. As Yamauchi et. al (2017) detailed, educator preparation regarding family engagement is severely lacking. Additionally, a teacher’s own self-efficacy can limit the ways in which they engage with families (Sakai, 2015; Barnyak & Mcnelly, 2009). A teacher who waits for families to initiate a family-school partnership will find themselves stuck when working with families who are waiting for the school to initiate a family-school partnership. In order to have meaningful family-school partnerships, both families and educators must be prepared to do so.

Successful practices

Scholars, community organizations, and families note several important practices of meaningful family-school partnerships. Of particular note are the following three themes: viewing engagement as essential, shared power, and responding to families’ needs.

Prioritizing family engagement as essential. Outside of early childhood education, family engagement content is often left out of educator preparation programs (Yamauchi et al., 2017; Willemse et al., 2018). This means that from the time teachers start preparing for their careers, they comprehend that their jobs include teaching content, using effective pedagogy,

engaging students, and managing student behavior. A lack of preparation in family engagement strategies may contribute to teachers viewing the ability to work with families as nice but “extra.” Ratliffe and Ponte (2018) argued that mature educators recognize that developing family engagement skills are part of an educator’s professional duties. Furthermore, Epstein (2018) said that family engagement and utilizing community resources are not only essential aspects of a teacher’s professionalism, they are also imperative *measures* of teachers’ professional skills. This responsibility extends beyond the classroom teacher; Siegel et. al (2019) noted that a principal’s physical presence and availability makes an impact on how families perceive their connection with a school. School leaders, therefore, are also responsible for proactively strengthening their connections with families. When educators recognize their responsibility and role in creating meaningful family-school partnerships (Trumbull et al., 2003), and the vital role of family-school partnerships to student success, then family-school partnerships can occur.

Shared power. Another key element of family-school partnerships is shared power (NPTA, 2009). Noting the importance of family members having active roles (Marcon, 1999), educators who value true partnerships will involve families in decision making. This can happen formally, as when developing the school’s annual academic and financial plan, or informally, such as when a teacher and family collaborate to address a student’s needs. Either way, in family-school partnerships, there is respect for families, their structure, and their unique needs (Delpit, 2003; Starkey & Klein, 2000), as well as continuing communication between families and schools (Delpit, 1988). In addition to shared power for decision-making, Scribner et al. (1999), asserted that families and schools share not only decision-making but also accountability for decision outcomes.

Welcoming environment. Families will partner with the school when they feel comfortable at the school and with the individuals there. Dove et al. (2018) noted that parents need to bond together. Conversations and activities with other parents can help families feel comfortable participating and leading at the school. Siegel et. al (2019) explained that parents measure the school's overall climate based on their interactions with everyone there. This means the friendly smile of a secretary at the front desk, or the sincere, "How are you?" from a principal at pick-up can and does make a difference. Although classroom teachers may be the primary contact with the school, every school employee contributes to the overall feeling of welcome. It is up to the school to create a welcoming environment. The school is also responsible for facilitating conversations in a place comfortable to the family, which may include the family's home (Moll et al., 1992). Moll's Funds of Knowledge (1992) framework revolutionized the role of teachers learning from families: educators went into the homes of students to learn more about the types of existing knowledge, rather than only academic skills, in the home through an asset-based approach. Although the dual-capacity building framework emphasizes the roles of both families and schools, make no mistake--the school holds the responsibility to take those steps to listen to their families and create a safe space for all families to share (Moll et al., 1992; Idridge & McChesney, 2021).

Responding to family needs. A final theme is the importance of responding to family needs. The role of families in responding to school needs is long-established, but when schools demonstrate additional support and outreach to families, family engagement increases (Marcon, 1999; Trumbull et al., 2003). This happens as schools work to accommodate schedules, visit with families, arranging events at times conducive for families, welcoming family representatives other than parents when parents can't attend, and providing materials that can be

used to support children's learning at home (Starkey & Klein, 2000; Dove et al., 2018). This represents approaching family engagement through a multidimensional approach (Epstein, 2011), beyond the typical school event-based approach, recognizing that family engagement is multifaceted. This also allows families and educators to develop partnerships when they otherwise would not, due to families being unable to attend school events or meetings during their own workdays (Starkey & Klein, 2000; Dove et al., 2018).

Multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships

Understanding how to facilitate family-school partnerships with multicultural multilingual families remains an area of need for research and for educator development (Tracy, 2013; Desimone, 1999; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). Educators in multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships must approach multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships through a critical lens (Tracy, 2013), by being aware of both possible areas of inequity, as well as different cultural norms regarding family-school partnerships. Educators seeking to establish meaningful partnerships with multicultural multilingual families will utilize successful practices to overcome barriers.

Barriers

Equity gaps. When working with multicultural multilingual families, educators need to realize that U.S. schools are largely based around a White, heterosexual, American, male, middle class mindset (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Kumashiro, 2001). The practices of those who operate outside of this framework, as multicultural multilingual families may, are often considered wrong or inadequate (Delgado, 1993). Additionally, the systemic design of education may lead to equity gaps for multicultural multilingual students. Halagao (2004) described a colonial mentality that may affect Filipino students. This colonial mentality suggests that

everything positive is associated with the colonizers whereas everything negative is associated with the colonized. This may result in embarrassment or shame in being associated with one's culture. Understanding this can impact teachers' work with Filipino students and families, as well as other multicultural multilingual families who have connections to a colonized history. Educators who are sensitive to this colonial mindset will seek to affirm and support connections to heritage culture; they will also be mindful of cultural differences regarding school and family norms that may create inequity for multicultural multilingual students. Examples of different school norms might include not asking questions or for assistance when something is not understood, for fear of disrespecting the teacher, or even not asking questions as a sign of a respect of power (Chattergy & Ongteco, 1991). Understanding how differing cultural norms may influence equity gaps is key in helping students succeed.

Differing cultural norms. Although a Western-based approach to family engagement may evoke thoughts of school bake sales and PTA meetings, family involvement in education goes far beyond school events. Lopez (2001) detailed how the Padilla family supported and engaged in their children's education and development even though the parents' educational experience differed from that which their children were being offered. The parents modeled work ethic for their children. Although not "engaged" in the stereotypical view of bake sales or "classroom parent," the Padilla family's values and beliefs helped their children to succeed. This represents a recognition of valuing various funds of knowledge and approaches to family engagement (Moll et al., 1992). Ratliffe (2010) outlined the roles relationships play in Micronesian cultures, noting that family participation in school activities may be based on who in the family makes decisions, which may or may not be the parents. Additionally, what is considered appropriate in terms of a family-school relationship will vary across cultures and

circumstances. This may result in educators assuming a parent is disinterested for not attending an event, when perhaps the parent had to work during the event time (Starkey & Klein, 2000; Dove et al., 2018), or a parent who refrains from asking the teacher a question for fear of being considered disrespectful (Carlisle et al., 2005; Chattergy & Ongteco, 1991). Educators who understand differing cultural norms and family circumstances can view any misunderstandings that may occur in family-school relationships with curiosity rather than criticism.

Successful practices

Strengths-based approach. A strengths-based approach to family-school partnerships is a reversal from parents being passive participants in the school to becoming valued partners. This approach is demonstrated as educators seek out the body of knowledge and skills that families already have (Moll et. al, 1992; Sakai, 2015). Knight-McKenna and Hollingsworth (2016) utilized a list of strengths-based approaches from the literature and their own experiences to prepare early childhood educators for family-school partnerships. Teachers who operate with a strengths-based approach are able to have a solid foundation for forming relationships, beginning with the belief that every family has valuable contributions to offer. Jennerjohn (2020) created the opportunity for families, students, and teachers to bond over a shared project. Similar to the participants in Moll et. al (1992), the educator spent time with the family at a local park in the student's community. The student then wrote a narrative, using images the educator had captured of the student with their family. This demonstrates how a strengths-based approach to family-school partnerships can influence curricular decisions. Teachers who have a strengths-based approach will also avoid pathologizing the experience of minoritized students (Siegel et. al, 2019).

Cultural presence. When families do not see themselves represented among the faculty and staff at a school, it can decrease engagement and lead to a feeling of isolation. Even if families are not a minority among the student population, it is important that schools have a diverse cultural presence in their faculty and staff (Siegel et. al, 2019). This includes providing appropriate interpreter and translation services as needed and requested by families (Siegel et. al, 2019). Families should be able to freely express themselves and read information in the language of their choice. Schools are responsible for having the resources and personnel to interpret and translate as necessary. Doing so demonstrates that the school values the family's heritage.

Transformative school leaders. Robinson (2017) asserted that educators seeking to build strong family-school partnerships need to have "transformative attributes" by understanding the educational needs of a student within the larger life context (p. 14). In this way, educators demonstrate multicultural competence by "analy[zing] educational policy and practice at an institutional level," including systemic inequity and hegemony (Gorski, 2009, p. 14). Educators who understand that developing meaningful family-school partnerships can address larger issues of oppression work diligently to understand families' previous engagement experiences and support families in constructing a vision of themselves as full partners at school (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). McDevitt (2016) further asserted that when educators view themselves as experts and families' perspectives as ignorant, the communication ends and schools fail to learn from families. Conversely, when educators view themselves as learning from a family, they can begin to form a partnership.

Family-school partnerships in Hawai‘i

Public schools in Hawai‘i certainly need such transformative leaders. There are significant achievement gaps in Hawai‘i for multicultural multilingual students. A Strive HI 2015-2016 No Child Left Behind Accountability report noted that only 46% of students learning English graduate high school. Students speaking Philippine and Micronesian languages make up the largest groups of multilingual students in the state, with Philippine languages (such as Ilokano, Tagalog, and Pampangan) making up 30% and Micronesian languages (such as Chuukese, and Marshallese) comprising 29% of multilingual learners (Halagao, 2016). These two groups also demonstrate significant academic achievement gaps compared to peers from other groups (Halagao, 2016; Ratliffe, 2010), and the timeliness of support makes a large impact for students in later years.

In 2019, 82% of Ilokano-speaking students designated as English Learners graduated high school on time, compared to the 96% of Ilokano-speaking students who had exited the English Learner program before high school. Eighty-one percent of Tagalog-speaking students designated as English Learners graduated high school on time, compared to 93% percent of Tagalog-speaking students who had exited the English Learner program before high school. Ilokano- and Tagalog-speaking students who exited the EL program before high school were almost twice as likely to enroll in college immediately after high school than their peers still designated as English learners in high school (P-20 Partnerships for Education, 2019).

The achievement gap was even greater among Chuukese-speaking students. In 2019, 29% of Chuukese-speaking students designated as English Learners in high school graduated, compared to 52% of their same-language peers who exited the EL program before high school. However, whether still considered English Learners or not, the college enrollment rates among

Chuukese-speaking students were similar: 38% of Chuukese-speaking students considered English Learners in high school will enroll in college immediately, compared to 37% of Chuukese-speaking students who exited the EL program prior to high school (P-20 Partnerships for Education, 2019).

Students speaking Philippine languages and students speaking Micronesian languages are the two largest groups of multicultural multilingual students at Aloha Elementary School and in the school's complex, with Ilokano and Chuukese being the most frequently spoken languages among English learners in the state (P-20 Partnerships for Education, 2019). Recognizing specific areas of inequity and differing cultural norms related to families and cultures in Hawai'i is vital for educators to understand how to build more meaningful family-school relationships. This includes educators recognizing their own privilege, given that nearly 50% of educators in the HDOE are White or Japanese (Hawai'i Department of Education, 2019). Halagao (2006) identifies both White and Japanese as privileged non-minority groups. Educators must be aware of their own privilege in order to better support students from other cultural backgrounds. Educators must be cautious that their own biases or prejudice do not inhibit them from partnering with families to support students. The sooner these relationships are built, the better able families and educators are able to support multilingual students for long-term success.

Framework

As discussed in the introduction, I designed this study using the Mapp and Kuttner Dual Capacity-Building Framework (2013). The framework identifies the challenges, opportunity conditions, program and policy goals, and family and staff capacity outcomes for meaningful family-school partnerships. The *challenge* in family-school partnerships is dual-fold: there are lack of opportunities for school and program staff to develop capacity for family-school

partnerships, and there are lack of opportunities for families to build their capacity for family-school partnerships. The *process conditions* necessary for family-school partnerships are that these partnerships are: (a) linked to learning, (b) relational, (c) focused on development of all involved, (d) collaborative, and (e) interactive (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The *organizational conditions* necessary for family-school partnerships are that these partnerships are systemic across the organization, integrated and embedded in all programs, and sustained with resources and infrastructure. The *policy and program goals* are to build the 4 Cs of families and staff: capabilities (skills and knowledge), connections (networks), cognition (beliefs, values), and confidence (self-efficacy). All of these lead toward the *family and staff capacity outcomes*. School and program staff capacity outcomes include being able to “honor and recognize families’ funds of knowledge, connect family engagement to student learning, and creative welcoming, inviting cultures” (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 8). Family outcomes include the ability to navigate multiple roles in family-school partnerships, such as “supporters, encouragers, monitors, advocates, decision makers, and collaborators” (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 8). All of this culminates in family school partnerships that support student and community success.

Mapp and Kuttner’s Dual Capacity-Building Framework (2013) addresses the challenges faced in multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships, identifies the desired outcomes, and provides a framework for how to reach them. Notably, this framework focuses on the partnership from the onus of both school and family. Unlike other frameworks which focus entirely on parent motivation (Whitaker, 2019) or entirely on school actions (Epstein, 2011), the Dual Capacity-Building Framework describes what families and schools each need in order to be equitable, contributing members of a family-school partnership. This framework, because of its focus on “development vs. service orientation” (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 8), is inclusive of all

families, including those who are multicultural multilingual, living in poverty, or otherwise at risk of being marginalized. The framework does not mandate that only families who are confident or experienced in family-school partnerships can be active, equitable partners. Instead, the framework focuses on areas to develop for both families *and* staff in fostering stronger partnerships. This framework exemplifies transformative attributes (Robinson, 2019), considers the larger sociopolitical context (Gorski, 2009), and rests entirely on the strengths-based, funds of knowledge framework (Moll et al., 1992). This framework allows understanding of the experiences with multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships at a Title I school in Hawai‘i.

The holes in the literature point to the need for specific research and frameworks on multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships in Hawai‘i. Although much work has been done regarding family-school partnerships, there remains a need for research regarding family-school partnerships with multicultural multilingual families, especially with Asian and Pacific Islander families. Additionally, there remains a need for educator professional development in family-school partnerships (Willemse et al., 2018; Yamauchi et al., 2017) as well as further research on family-school partnerships with multicultural multilingual students (Tracy, 2013; Desimone, 1999; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). This study provides a bridge for translating this theory and research into practice for pre-service and in-service teacher development.

Chapter 3: Methods

Research design

This research study used a case study approach in that I collected data from several individuals within a single site in order to gain insight on a particular issue (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A case study involves “developing an in-depth understanding about how different cases provide insight into an issue” (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 239). Creswell et al. (2007) further clarified that a case study is a “qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p. 245) which the investigator then analyzes for themes. In this way, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, although it is imperative that multiple pieces of evidence (in the case of this study, review of state and school demographics, interviews with families, interviews with educators, and the focus group) are used to understand the case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Case studies are bounded by time, place, or participants. Saldana (2011) noted “that a case may be chosen deliberately because of its unique character, thus presenting itself as a rich opportunity and exemplar for focused study” (p. 9). Aloha Elementary, with its high population of multicultural multilingual families, represented such a rich opportunity for focused study.

In this study, I interviewed both parents and teachers to understand the nature of multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships at a Title I elementary school in Hawai‘i, using the elements of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) as a theoretical framework.

Setting

The school site, Aloha Elementary, is located in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. Aloha Elementary is a Title I school with approximately 550 students. Aloha Elementary has a rich population of multicultural multilingual learners. Compared to nine percent of students statewide, 46% percent of all students at Aloha Elementary are multilingual learners. The larger community has a strong culture of multilingualism: out of the forty school complexes across Hawai‘i, Aloha Elementary’s complex supports nearly one-fourth of all English learners (P-20 Partnerships for Education, 2019). Additionally, the multilingual demographics at Aloha Elementary mirror the demographics across the state, with students speaking Philippine and Micronesian languages as the majority of multilingual learners. Of multilingual learners at Aloha Elementary, 46% speak Ilokano, 19% Chuukese, 19% Tagalog, 13% Cebuano and/or Visayan, 2% Mandarin, 2% Samoan, 1% Marshallese, 1% Vietnamese, <1% Cantonese, <1% Cambodian, and <1% Tamil. Sixty-two percent of all students receive free or reduced lunch (Strive HI, 2018-2019 school report). Aloha Elementary is an arts integration school and participates in The Leader in Me, a socioemotional program that seeks to help students develop leadership skills (Covey et. al, 2014).

Participants

Participants in this study included five multicultural multilingual student families at Aloha Elementary School and five educators who have worked with these families.

The families in this study were multicultural multilingual families whose children have attended or currently attend Aloha Elementary. I asked families who I knew from my time in the classroom as well as in other school roles if they would be willing to participate in this project focusing on family engagement. I explained to families that participation in this project would

have no relevance or effect on student grades, and that all participation was completely voluntary. Participants were gifted a nominal amount in the form of a gift card after the interviews were completed.

Recognizing that students come from diverse family situations, I aimed for a variety of family respondents in this study reflective of the school population. Of the families interviewed, one was represented by a father, one by a grandmother, and three by mothers. In total, the families interviewed represent ten students--two boys and eight girls. Two students whose families participated in this study are receiving Special Education services. Two students have reached English language proficiency as determined by the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), the program used by the school's English Learner program to determine multilingual support services. Six students are currently receiving English Learner services. One student's first language is English and as such was not identified as an English Learner under the school's criteria; however, her family's heritage language is prevalent in her home and upbringing. Please see Table 1 for more demographic information on families.

Table 1. Family participant demographics

Family	Children currently in elementary or secondary school	Number of children who have attended or currently Aloha Elementary	Number of years experience with Aloha Elementary	Cultural/linguistic background
Family A	1 (grade 2, girl)	1	3	Micronesian, Chuukese-speaking
Family B	3 (grades 1, 2, and 3; 2 girls, 1 boy)	3	4	Filipino, Ilocano-speaking
Family C	3 (grades 1, 2, and 4;)	3	5	Filipino, Ilocano-

	2 girls, 1 boy)			speaking
Family D	2 (grades 1 and 6; 2 girls)	2	7	Filipino, Visayan-speaking
Family E	1 (grade 2, girl)	1	3	Filipino, Ilocano-speaking

The teachers in this study have taught at Aloha Elementary School between seven and twenty-one years. Teachers were selected based on the families who elected to participate in this study. I reached out to past and present teachers of these families, letting them know that one of their current or former student families was participating in a research study with me. I did so without identifying the student family. This allowed the teachers to speak about their experiences with multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships broadly, rather than only in the case of that one family. Doing so allowed for a more holistic view of that teacher’s work with multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships, just as not identifying the teachers involved in the study allowed families to speak about their experiences broadly. All educator participants in this study were volunteers who did not receive any professional advancement for their participation. Participants were gifted a nominal amount in the form of a gift card after the interviews were completed. The teachers in this study work with multicultural multilingual students and families. Specifically, these teachers work with or have worked with Ilocano, Tagalog, Chuukese, Marshallese, Vietnamese, Samoan, Mandarin, and Pakistani students and families at Aloha Elementary. Three of the five teachers interviewed (Teacher A, Teacher C, and Teacher D) have met HIDOE’s Sheltered Instruction Qualification requirement, which is generally 6 university or professional development credits in English as a Second Language or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Table 2 provides more information on the

teachers who participated in this study. Please note that the grades taught refers to every grade taught during the teachers' career, and the student cultural/linguistic backgrounds refers to those of all students the teacher has ever taught.

Table 2. Teacher Participant Demographics

Teacher	Grade(s) Taught	Years Taught	Years Taught at Aloha Elementary	Student cultural/linguistic backgrounds
Teacher A	K, 1, 2, 5	19	13	Ilocano, Tagalog, Visayan, Chuukese, Marshallese, Mandarin, Samoan, Vietnamese, Latino
Teacher B	K, 1, 2, 3, 5 (General and Special Education)	9 years	9 years	Ilocano, Tagalog, Chuukese, Mandarin, Hawaiian, Samoan
Teacher C	5 (General and Special Education), curriculum coach	21 years	21 years	Ilocano, Tagalog, Chuukese, Marshallese, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Samoan, Pakistani
Teacher D	1, 2	17	17	Ilocano, Chuukese, Mandarin, Samoan
Teacher E	K, 1, 2, 3, 4 (General and Special Education)	9	7	Ilocano, Tagalog, Chuukese, Samoan, Vietnamese

Data collection

I collected data via interviews with five educators and five family members of students. I chose to interview both educators and family members in order to gain a fuller picture of family-school partnerships from both perspectives (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Although parents have

been the focus of family engagement in the past, Henderson and Mapp (2002) have called for a change from *parent involvement* to *family engagement*. Thus I welcomed participation from primary caregivers, not only parents, in order to represent the ways that the extended family members other than parents have a relationship with the school.

Interviews were conducted virtually in agreement with COVID-19 safety and research protocols of the Hawai‘i Department of Education and the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. I interviewed 5 participants via a videoconferencing platform and 5 participants via phone. Participants decided whether videoconferencing or phone was used.

I used semi-structured interviews to discuss topics such as how families feel at the school, ways they participate in their children’s learning, and things they would like to see differently at the school. Interview questions were largely modeled after Snell’s (2017) work with immigrant and refugee parents in Arizona. Because of the significant population of immigrant and migrant families at Aloha Elementary School and the multicultural focus of Snell’s work, these questions were also appropriate for families at Aloha Elementary School. Snell designed the interviews utilizing a funds of knowledge approach, seeking to utilize questions that allowed parents to feel comfortable sharing and that did not make them feel like they needed to supply a correct answer. I modified Snell’s interview questions to more closely align with the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, specifically the 4Cs (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). For my own data analysis purposes, I organized the questions based on which of the 4Cs they addressed. For clarity of intention, which of the 4Cs each question seeks to address is noted in parentheses and italics after each question. I asked follow-up questions as appropriate. See Appendix A for family interview questions.

The educator interview questions similarly aimed to allow participants to feel comfortable sharing their experiences with family-school partnerships. In order to collect data around similar themes, the questions for families were adapted to fit an educator context. I did so in order to allow families and educators to be addressing the same topics but from their own perspectives. Questions were worded in a way to allow educators to reflect on their strengths and areas of need, as well as how they might develop their skills in those areas of need. Again, for clarity of intention, I noted which of the 4Cs each question seeks to address in parentheses and italics after each question. I asked follow-up questions as appropriate, often asking for clarification of a particular event or program that educators were referring to. Although this was explained during the recruitment process and in the consent form, during the interview I also reminded educators that these interviews would in no way be used for professional evaluation or advancement. I did so with the intention of hoping to encourage educators to share strengths and weaknesses freely. See Appendix B for educator interview questions.

Data analysis

After collecting the data, I coded the data according to the four capacities Mapp and Kuttner (2013) identified: capabilities, connections, cognition, and confidence. In analyzing the data for each of those categories, I used a structural coding approach (Saldana, 2016). I also made note of any other themes that emerged, using an *in vivo* coding approach in order to capture the experiences of participants as lived (Saldana, 2016). In doing so, some themes were verbatim quotes from the participants, in situations where one phrase or expression captured a sentiment that several participants shared.

After I coded and analyzed the data, I met with a focus group with three educators at the school site. These included our English learner program coordinator, a Filipina mother fluent in

Ilocano and Tagalog; a male, Filipino parent community networking coordinator; and a reading interventionist specialist, a Japanese mother. Two of the educators are also parents of school-age children. The purpose of this focus group was to establish consensual validation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008) in order to review my findings and my analysis of the data. The length of time these focus group members have been at the school site enabled them to provide context and background for certain events or practices that families or educators mentioned.

Most importantly, the focus group members' experiences as multicultural multilingual educators and persons of color allowed me critical reflection on what I, due to my own positionality, may have overlooked or misinterpreted. Conscious of my own status as a White, native-English speaking female educator, I was eager for a more diverse set of eyes to review how I had interpreted the data. It was especially important to me to have individuals in the focus group who identified with the cultural and/or linguistic background of families who participated in the study, or who could identify with experiencing diverse cultural norms regarding education.

During the focus group, I presented findings from each of the four components Mapp and Kuttner (2013) identified: connection, capabilities, cognition, and confidence. I presented one component at a time, with a list of key findings from family interviews and key findings from educator interviews. I asked a series of questions after each component. For example, I asked the extent to which their own experiences corroborated these findings. I also asked whether there was anything that surprised them about the findings.

I sought clarification on some terms, events, or practices that participants had identified. For example, I had asked families to share a word in their native language that explained how they felt about the school. For clarification, I asked the focus group, particularly the Filipino educators, for additional meaning or significance for the Ilokano words two mothers chose. I

also asked the focus group for more details on programs that educators referred to in their interviews. The professional roles of these focus group members allowed them to share insight regarding the decision-making processes regarding multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships at the school site. See Appendix C for questions for the focus group.

Positionality

I am a White, cisgender woman who was raised in Hawai‘i. I was raised in an upper middle class family and attended public primary and secondary schools before studying at private, religious universities to obtain my teaching license. My teaching career has primarily been spent at a school composed entirely of students of color. This has not escaped my notice, nor has it escaped the notice of my students and families. As one of my kindergarteners once noted, “All of us have dark skin, but you have light skin.” I recognize that I experience a significant amount of socioeconomic and educational privilege. I also recognize that my own background may represent difficult and oppressive aspects of my students’ own history, including US colonization and oppression (which effects are still felt today, including through the continued military presence on indigenous lands). As in my career, in this study I have attempted to grapple with that privilege, questioning when my own life has rendered me oblivious to the lived experiences of another and how I might grow more cognizant. I have attempted to mediate my own bias through my methods, by directly interviewing multicultural multilingual parents and their teachers, rather than only the teachers. As mentioned above, I also selected a focus group to help me understand teacher and family responses in greater depth. My hope is not to speak for individuals from marginalized groups, but rather to use my own opportunities, including this thesis, to further include those voices into academic and educational discourse.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter I will detail the findings from interviews with families and educators regarding multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships. The intent of these interviews was to answer my research question: *What are the experiences of multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships at a Title I elementary school in Hawai'i?* Findings are organized according to the perspective of the families first and then the educators on each of the components outlined in Mapp and Kuttner's (2013) Dual Capacity-Building Framework

Connection

Both families and educators reported positive feelings about their connection with each other.. Educators also provided feedback on ways they wanted to strengthen their connection with families.

Families

Families noted a positive connection with the school. Families noted that the staff at the school were friendly: "Everyone--the principal, the cafeteria workers, the teachers." They also shared that they knew people at the school who spoke the same language and that teachers were very informative. A key finding was that their own child's comfort and happiness at school played a large role in the family's comfort on campus. When asked how they felt about the school and how they felt when they went to the school, families shared things like, "My child is excited to go to school," and "My child is happy when she goes to school." One family noted that they moved out of the school boundary but applied for a geographic exception, in part due to the comfort of the entire family. This family shared that they liked that the school was in the same community as her workplace and their grandmother's home. A grandmother shared that

she liked that the school was near her house, and that her granddaughter was very comfortable at the school.

Families also noted that the school's helpfulness played a positive role in their relationships with the school. Several families noted that teachers were very informative, with one parent saying, "They tell me everything, anything that happens with my children at the school." Another parent shared that members of the school community were very helpful if she does not understand a form or flyer. This mother shared: "They are good at helping me. If I do not understand [a form or flyer], they will just tell me. If I want to know and I'm still not understanding, I can just ask somebody to explain it to me."

One mother, who emigrated from the Philippines when her oldest daughter was in kindergarten, said that the physical conditions and enrollment of the school help her feel that her daughters are safe and comfortable there. This mother shared, "In the Philippines, the school is so crowded. There is free preschool but it is so crowded. We are grateful here because they can go to the public school and if we compare it, it's like a private school in the Philippines."

Educators

Teachers expressed a desire for a deeper relationship with families. Many teachers said that they wanted a better understanding of the cultural and social values that influence a family's interaction with the school. Although teachers said they had some background knowledge about the cultures their students identify with, there was still a need for a more specific understanding of how history, culture, and current issues informed a family's engagement with the school. Other teachers noted that understanding the home environment and what type of academic support is available at home could help them better support the student in school. They noted that this is especially difficult when there is a language barrier between teacher and family. Although

the educators interviewed were not fluent in the languages of the families interviewed, these educators did state the school's English Learner department was very helpful in communicating with families. The focus group shared that hearing families and educators talk about the role of the English Learner department was exciting; it demonstrated that the school administration's effort to hire members of the community that represent students' cultures was indeed impactful.

One educator shared that communication was especially important with higher-order thinking skills. For example,

“If I talk about OK, your child needs help with comprehension, right? Maybe some families might not know what comprehension is. You have to go into detail about it and then they wouldn't know how to help their child understand because they themselves may not understand.”

This educator shared that trying to build a relationship with the family could be difficult if it was hard to explain what type of support the child needs.

A Back And Forth Relationship

Not all of the educators' comments about relationships noted difficulties. One teacher summed up her ideal connection as “a back and forth relationship.” She explained that this back and forth relationship would involve parents and teachers both sharing and receiving help and feedback from the other. Another teacher demonstrated how such a relationship benefited one of her students. Because the student often became emotionally distressed with new tasks, the teacher developed a discrete signal to remind the student to use her agreed-upon coping mechanism. This coping mechanism was something the teacher learned about because she had gained a greater understanding of the student's home environment and what comforted her there. By understanding what worked at home, this teacher was able to help the student in a similar

way in school. That same teacher hoped that relationships with families are built as her students carry home the skills they developed in the classroom, whether academic or not. She shared,

“I think the thing for them to bring home is the attitude from school that is carrying over. It’s not necessarily, ‘Hey, I learned how to do partial products today,’ but they are bringing home their work ethics. They are becoming more responsible. I’ve noticed that the kids have been stepping it up because they don’t want to be in study and stay on[line] the entire day. They’re getting things done with quality.”

Capabilities

Families and educators demonstrated a range of capabilities in their individual roles.

Educators also shared areas in which they wish to strengthen their capabilities.

Families

Families often spoke of their responsibilities to teach skills and values. Several families shared their efforts to teach their children things like cleaning up after themselves and cooking food. One mother said, “I teach them, after they mess something up, they need to clean their mess, or put away their stuff. They clean their own bed and the girls wash the dishes.” Another mother shared, “I’m teaching her how to clean, how to cook. Sometimes, if she’s not lazy, she can clean the room and eat. But sometimes she is too lazy to clean but she still likes to cook. If I wake up after her, she tells me, ‘I finished eating already! I cooked my food already.’” This mother noted, humorously, that her daughter’s motivation to complete household chores is often related to perceived benefit from them, i.e. she will cook if she is hungry, but if the room is messy, she may not want to clean. A father shared the household responsibilities of his three children and said, “They are pretty independent, all of them.”

Families shared how they instilled values such as respect, resilience, and gratitude in their children. A father shared that he and his wife reinforced that their children need to respect their elders, whether family members or teachers. A mother shared that her daughter may resist doing her math homework, which is a subject the mother shared she herself struggled with. This mother said, “When the math gets a little bit hard, my daughter says, ‘I don’t like math!’ But I tell her, ‘No, you need to learn it. You can do it.’” Another mother shared that she taught her daughters to respect one another,

“and how to say thanks. I tell them, ‘You are so lucky because some of the kids don’t have food, so don’t waste food.’ Like that. And I tell them your dad is working and working hard. This is not free money. Your dad is working so hard for it.”

Educators

When asked about capabilities in multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships, teachers primarily expressed instructional and behavioral strategies they use to support their multicultural multilingual students. The majority of the responses about family engagement focused on how educators communicate with families.

Teachers also mentioned using a variety of communication methods with the families. When interviewed, family preferences for communication varied. Some families preferred letters, others emails, others face-to-face interactions, and others phone calls. Teachers seemed to recognize this. They spoke of efforts to find out which type of communication families preferred and noted that more and more families are preferring texting as the primary means of communication. Teachers observed that this is a more recent trend in communicating with families. One teacher shared how texting had opened new doors during the initial school closures in spring 2020.

“When the school closures happened, I called all my families to tell them what was going on. No responses, none. Then I used Google Voice [to text] and I got so many responses like boom, boom, boom! So I feel like I have to shift as a teacher how I’m going to communicate based on population and based on the times. Even for my own children, shooting out a text is way easier to get in touch with their teachers than email.”

Although texting is becoming more popular, teachers are aware that this is not accessible for all families. One teacher shared, “I asked at the beginning of the year and everyone was okay with text messaging except for two families, so I just called those two families anytime I sent out reminders to everyone else.” The teacher added that she incorporates extended family members present at school in the communication as well: “Most of my kids get picked up at the door each day, so even if it is not mom or dad picking them up, I’ll remind auntie or brother of important things coming up too.”

An Extended Family

Both families and educators emphasized the importance of family. Families spoke of their responsibilities to teach their children to work together, get along, and listen to their elders. One father said his goal for his children was that they “treat everyone [at school] like an extended family.” Educators reciprocated this by demonstrating how families can be a source of knowledge, or in other words how to treat every extended family like a school. One teacher described an interview she has students conduct with their families. Because many of her student families have emigrated to Hawai‘i, she connected that with their unit on immigration in United States history. She asked students to interview family members and ask why they chose to come to Hawai‘i, how it felt when they first came, how it was different from where they were before. This helped students to learn more about the reasons behind migration. This also built a

connection between the content learned in school and the lived experience of the family.

Another teacher shared that in previous years she had invited parents in to share their expertise on a particular topic that the children were learning about, but that fewer and fewer families seemed to feel comfortable with this over the years. The teacher shared that she wanted to present families as a source of knowledge about the curriculum, but that it can be difficult if parents “feel too humble to share.”

Honoring Heritage Language

Honoring heritage language was critical for both families and educators. The use of heritage language at home varied among families. For some families, the heritage language was spoken only among the adults; in other families, the heritage language was spoken to children (but children may not speak it themselves, although they did understand it); and in other families, both adults and children in the home conversed in heritage language. One mother shared that she and her husband agreed it was very important for their children to learn their heritage language. She said, “My husband wants them to know Visayan so that when we go to the Philippines, they can speak and understand. Otherwise they won’t be able to understand when we are there.” She shared that she rarely speaks English to her children. Notably, both of her children “graduated” from the school’s English Learner program--one in third grade, and the other at the end of kindergarten. This same parent shared, “Me and all my friends, we are all Visayan, but my friends’ kids don’t speak Visayan. So when my friends hear my kids speak Visayan, they are like, ‘Whoa!’”

Another Filipino parent expressed the role the family’s heritage language played in communicating with grandparents.

“I usually talk to them in Ilokano at the house, so they can understand. They know how to speak sometimes because my mom talks to them in Ilokano as well. If my mom talks to them, they are going to answer in Ilokano because she does not understand [English]. So they try their best to answer my mom.”

Teachers demonstrated the ability to honor heritage language in the classroom as. Many teachers noted that students spontaneously shared, “We say it like this in our language!” when learning a new vocabulary term. Another teacher shared that she had a student who had newly arrived in Hawai‘i and had difficulty communicating with his classmates. This teacher asked the student and a peer who spoke the same language to share one vocabulary word in their native language a day. The whole class used the vocabulary word throughout the day, and slowly that student began to open up and appeared to feel more comfortable. This teacher demonstrated an asset-based approach by honoring the student’s abilities in his heritage language, rather than viewing his developing English as a deficit.

Teachers also shared that collaborating with the school’s English Learner department has assisted them in instructing and assessing students to understand their true academic abilities, rather than only being able to understand what the student is able to express in English. When discussing this during the focus group, one member shared that this demonstrated that the school leadership’s efforts to hire paraprofessionals who speak students’ heritage languages have been beneficial.

Cognition

Cognition examines both how families and educators view their responsibilities in family-school partnerships, as well as how families perceive the school’s feelings towards them.

Parents talked about how they as families support their children's education and overall development.

Families

One father described his role as “supporting [his children] and helping them learn how to overcome obstacles.” A grandmother shared how she read to her granddaughter and reviewed her homework. This grandmother also shared that she taught her granddaughter concepts before she would learn them in school, such as teaching multiplication in first grade even though her granddaughter would not learn that until later.

“You provide us everything.” Things that helped families feel valued and supported were things like the school providing necessary supplies, teachers communicating frequently, and support with specific needs. One parent shared that she appreciated how the school's English Learner program supported her daughter with before school tutoring. She noted that one of her daughters received tutoring and “exited” the school's English Learner program in third grade; her younger daughter exited at the end of kindergarten. Other families mentioned that the teachers always communicated what students needed, and if families didn't have those supplies, the school provided them. When sharing how she knows the school values her family, one mother shared, “They tell us everything. The teachers, the principal--they always are going to tell us what is happening with our children at the school.”

Educators

Educators expressed that they viewed their role primarily as informing the parents of what was happening and how to support their child. Although at other times educators expressed notions of partnership, by describing the ideal family-school relationship “a back and forth relationship” or saying “I want the student to know we are all on the same team,” when explicitly

asked about what their responsibilities were with family engagement, teachers primarily spoke of their responsibilities to let parents know what is happening at school, providing information about available resources, and informing them of any specific needs their child may have.

Some teachers spoke about initiatives and programs that the school currently has or had in the past. One teacher mentioned that there was a family involvement team at the school, but she was not sure whether it had been dissolved due to circumstances of the COVID-19 school year, or how frequently it met prior to the pandemic. In the focus group, the parent community networking coordinator shared that the team did meet monthly, but that it had paused since the pandemic.) Another teacher spoke about the school's socioemotional leadership program, *The Leader in Me*, and how the school had hosted book studies with families to discuss Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*. That teacher noted that turnout had been low at the book studies. Teachers also mentioned that the school used to hold grade level parent nights at least twice a year. Teachers would host an evening event where parents would see what their children were learning and how to support them at home. The focus group clarified that these semiannual grade level events were phased out to allow families to plan to attend the annual Leadership Day. This allowed families to request that day off from work and plan to attend, rather than having to plan for several grade level nights, which could be especially difficult for families with multiple children at the school.

“I’m a teacher. My job is to teach.” Running themes throughout the discussion of an educator's role in family-school partnerships were lack of planning time and individual insecurities regarding family partnership skills. Regarding lack of planning time, one teacher shared, “I wish I could do more, but it's hard when it is just you. Like, if we as a grade level were trying to plan things for families, maybe it would be easier. But it still would take a lot of

planning time.” The overall feeling that family engagement was yet another thing on busy, overworked teachers’ plates was represented in the following comment:

“I feel like we're so stuck to this pacing guide. We gotta do language arts and math and then it's like every day we cover 6.1, then 6.2, then 6.3. There is no time. There is no time where we can slow down like, “Okay, let’s do an extended lesson or extended activity for this one thing that we learned. I mean you probably could, but I think everyone is so just OK, We gotta teach this, this, this, this. Time with families can kind of fall down further on the list 'cause it's like I'm a teacher. My job is to teach. It’s hard to find time to work with families.”

Teachers also expressed lack of confidence about working with families. A teacher expressed hesitancy after she shared her numerous attempts to engage families. “What else should I be doing?” she asked, sounding nervous that perhaps she was not doing enough. Another teacher shared, “Working with families is probably the weakest area for me with *all* of my students, not just my multilingual families.”

Just as communication methods had changed throughout the years, engagement trends seemed to as well. A teacher who had taught for more than twenty years shared the following with some discouragement evident in her voice:

“I’ve seen a decline in interaction with the parents. My first few years teaching--I still know those parents and they remember me. Maybe it’s because [I teach] fifth grade, maybe it’s because the parents work multiple jobs...I don’t have a lot of interaction because of their work schedule, too. Phone calls, emails, a lot of it goes unanswered.”

Interestingly, the focus group shared that “younger” parents, such as those in their twenties, seem to prefer more of the engagement/partnership style over simple involvement. This was a

significant and singular difference in perception between the classroom teacher and the focus group, who are in non-classroom teacher roles.

Confidence

Families and teachers varied in their responses to their confidence in working with each other. Families shared that they found teachers easy to talk with, ask questions to, and communicate with. Teachers expressed a greater deal of insecurity regarding working with parents.

Families

Families shared that teachers are “easy to communicate with” and “easy to ask questions to.” When asked whether she felt comfortable discussing issues or problems with a teacher, one mother laughed and said, “Of course! I don’t have any problems with the teachers at this school.” That same mother shared that when she sends her children to school, “I feel secure, like I don’t have to wonder. I know what they are doing.”

Educators

Educators shared specific topics that caused them to feel ease or discomfort when talking to parents--and there was a great deal of variation among the teachers themselves. Some teachers shared that explaining policies and procedures was easy, “because you are just telling them what they need to know to be successful.” Other teachers shared that talking about policies and procedures is difficult, because the factual nature of the subject may come across as condescending. “I don’t want them to feel like I am talking down to them,” she said.

Items that were unanimously viewed as “uncomfortable” to discuss with families included the grading system, academic performance below grade level, and how to support higher-level academic skills.

“The grading system is hard for anyone to understand! Like, if it’s standards-based, it may look like they got a 90% on this test but really the problems they missed were all in different standards so it’s not as simple as that.”

“It’s heartbreaking when you have to say that like, something isn’t working here. No parent wants to hear that their child isn’t doing well.”

“If it’s just something like sight words or addition facts, I mean sure, I can give them flashcards. But when I am trying to explain that their child needs help with something like comprehension, how do I help them ask questions about a story she reads, especially when I don’t even know the parent’s reading level or how comfortable they are with that book?”

Hygiene was similarly uncomfortable to discuss because of fear of embarrassing the parents. A teacher explained that she did not want to sound like she was accusing the parents. She noted that when she has observed situations with lice, toothaches and oral pain, or bodily hygiene, she has approached parents by saying, “I noticed that…” or “Your child mentioned to me…” Nevertheless, she said it is hard to share because she doesn’t want to sound like she is blaming the parents. Her feeling was encapsulated by another teacher, who explained her anxiety discussing school policies: “I don’t want them to feel like I am talking down to them.”

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, I sought to understand the experiences of multicultural multilingual families with family-school partnerships at a Title I school in Hawai‘i. I used the Mapp-Kuttner Dual-Capacity Building Framework (2013) to examine the cognition, confidence, connection, and capacities of both educators and families in family-school partnerships. I interviewed five family representatives from the cultural groups that (a) comprise the largest population of multilingual students at Aloha Elementary School and (b) experience significant achievement gaps in statewide academic data. I also interviewed five educators who taught at least one child from each family. Both the educators and the families interviewed remained anonymous, both within my research and to one another.

I chose ‘A Back and Forth Relationship’ to describe multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships in Hawai‘i because that phrase represents what family-school partnerships should be. These partnerships should be reciprocal, in which families and educators learn from one another and work together in the interest of the student. As I reflected on the findings from this study, I realize that at the same time, “a back and forth relationship” also illustrates the areas in which these partnerships need to improve. “Back and forth” suggests a discrepancy, which was found in this study as families described partnerships as ongoing relationships while educators often spoke of their engagement methods as frequent one-way communication. This led to an inconsistent institutional approach to family-school partnerships.

Major takeaways from this study include: (a) the importance of family-school partnerships, (b) progressing beyond partnerships to relationships, and (c) moving away from quantitative-based to quality-based value and measures of family engagement.

Importance of Family-School Partnerships

Family-school partnerships are fundamental for student success. Effective family-school partnerships also support other means that lead to academic achievement, including school-home communication and familial comfort with involvement at school. Partnerships should not be confused with parent involvement. Parent involvement suggests that the parent is passive, only acting upon direction or invitation from the school (Marcon, 1999). One may even argue that family-school partnerships are a higher form than family engagement, though I have used the term interchangeably in this study and contend that family engagement is the end goal and family-school partnerships are the method. Family-school partnerships involve parity, respect, and adaptability (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein, 2011). The role of the entire family is taken into consideration with family-school partnerships, noting that more than just parents are involved in a child's education (NPTA 2009; Scribner et al., 1999; Ratliffe, 2010). Family-school partnerships should be approached from a dual perspective (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013), using the strengths of both families and educators to support the student.

These partnerships are of particular importance for families from minoritized backgrounds and the teachers who work with them. School, as a system, can be overwhelming to navigate for parents who are unfamiliar. Families from minoritized backgrounds may experience difficulties such as language barriers with teachers and differing cultural norms (Chattergy & Ongteco, 1991; Housel, 2020; Whitaker, 2013; Whitaker, 2019). It can be confusing to know what is appropriate and what is not, what is expected and what is not. Because educators and families may be participating in school based on different expectations or perceptions of roles, family-school partnerships allow for open communication, consistent and concerted efforts to understand one another, and continual support for the student. Having a

partner at the school can help the family feel secure and supported. Having a partner in the home can help educators feel secure and supported. Educators who operate from a family-school partnership will not blame, even subconsciously, a parent for a child's behavioral or academic difficulties. Instead, they will look to the family as a resource of knowledge to help the teacher better support the student. Conversely, families who operate from this framework will trust teachers, seek their expertise, and know that feedback will be received gratefully and graciously. When families are able to trust an educator, their children will feel safe and comfortable with that educator. With partnership as a foundation, miscommunication or misunderstandings can be addressed and resolved quickly. Partnership enables families and educators to better support students for success.

Progressing to Relationships

However, partnerships are not the end goal. When asked about how the school demonstrated that it values families, families shared a wide range of responses, from providing supplies, assisting with filling out documents, to being friendly on campus. In contrast, when asked about their responsibilities toward families, educators primarily shared that they communicated frequently with families and shared information about policies, programs, and events. This is significant because families seemed to view their interaction with the school more as relationships, whereas educators, whether consciously or unconsciously, viewed themselves primarily as messengers.

Even so, educators noted discomfort in explaining "how things work" to parents, often saying that they did not want to sound demanding or condescending. On the contrary, the literature suggests that parents from minoritized cultures benefit from clear, specific guidance on how they can help their children's schooling (Delpit, 1988). Because social norms for family

and educator roles can differ across cultures, Housel (2020) advised educators to explain that family engagement in schools is a social norm and expectation in the US, and then provide clear ways for families to be engaged in their learning by creating a welcoming environment for culturally diverse families. Although educators may feel discomfort at the thought of stating expectations so clearly, they can view it through the lens of helping families know how to operate within the school schema. Most parents want to be engaged and help their children but may shy away from “typical” forms of engagement if they aren’t aware that those opportunities are encouraged and expected.

Viewing family-school partnerships as relationships, rather than one-way communication venues, may dispel educator discomfort. One Nā Hopena A‘o aim is “A Strengthened Sense of Belonging” to family, school, community, and place (Hawai‘i Department of Education, 2015). The accompanying ‘ōlelo noeau (proverb or wise saying) is *He pili wehena ‘ole*, meaning “a relationship that cannot be undone” (Hawai‘i Department of Education, 2015). If educators view themselves as having long-term, lasting relationships with their students and families, then students and their caregivers become less like “partners” for a temporary project, and rather like family. Just as one would want to share helpful tips with any loved one, educators who view their students and their parents this way can communicate suggestions and strategies to navigate the school system in a loving way. Sharing school policies will likely not be interpreted as condescending or demanding if the teacher and family have a strong relationship. When the relationship is strong, all aspects of the partnership can thrive.

Relationships among families also contribute to the overall family-school partnership culture at the school. One educator mentioned that of the events the school does hold, they are primarily to build a teacher-parent connection rather than a parent-parent connection. This

teacher posited that parents who have friends at school are more likely to be engaged at school, which is supported in the literature (Dove et al., 2018; Stefanski, 2016; Ratliffe and Ponte, 2018). Although the formal networks of principal-family and teacher-family relationships are often well-known, social connection among families can increase social capital, confidence, and engagement (Dove et al., 2018). Stefanski et al. (2016) also noted that “parent leaders” can often act as liaison for other parents who may have less confidence or comfort sharing their concerns with the school. Relationships that form between parents at these school events can become an important part of social capital. If a family is uncomfortable bringing something up to a teacher or administrator, the “parent leader” can provide support or guidance. Future research is needed in the role of these “parent leaders,” particularly in multicultural multilingual settings.

Quality-based Measures of Family Engagement

In this study, it is significant to note what families did not say. Families did not talk about field trips, or classroom events, or schoolwide bingo night. They did not discuss the school musical. When asked what they appreciated about teachers at Aloha Elementary, families talked about consistent communication, thorough explanations, and assistance when needed. Those things are what mattered to families most. That begs the question: are those daily relational areas being given enough time and attention, in addition to the large structural events?

Both the literature and the data from this study support the notion that many parents from minoritized communities support their children through at-home support. This can be hard to measure, especially when schools are used to calculating percentages of how many families attended Open House. This support, though not visible to school leaders, is nevertheless vital. This includes the support parents provide with homework, teaching their children basic life skills and responsibilities, exposing their children to a variety of experiences, and even teaching their

children academic skills before they learn them in school. Research that measures at-home engagement could provide a fuller picture of how families are indeed partnering with the school, even when not at the school. There is no participation log to submit as documentation for use of Title I funds, unlike with formal events, but this less visible support is no less vital.

Protacio et al. (2020) reminded that the goal of family-school partnerships is to move from families being involved at school to families being involved in learning. As such, a key element of the less visible but no less vital ways families can be engaged in learning is through curriculum. Teachers who are familiar with students' homes and families' cultures and languages are able to select materials and design instruction in a way that will connect with families. Anytime a teacher makes an activity, lesson, or unit more relatable to families, the partnership increases. The teacher who shared about her immigration unit and interview *is* engaging families. Families may not be attending an event at the school, but they are speaking to their children about their experiences and therefore connecting with what their children are learning in the classroom. Family-school partnerships must be evident not only in the 5 p.m. events but also the 9 a.m. lessons.

Recommendations

Based on these three major themes, I propose the following recommendations for improving multicultural multilingual family-school partnerships: multilingualism training, pre-service and in-service training for family-school partnerships, and institutional support for family-school partnerships.

Multilingualism Training

Families in this study identified that they appreciated that members of the school staff speak their language and represent their culture. Educators spoke of how helpful the English

Learner department, particularly the coordinator, were in communicating with and supporting families. Although educators seemed confident in their abilities to teach multicultural multilingual learners, they felt less competent engaging with multicultural multilingual families, often citing a language barrier.

Efforts to develop multilingualism among in-service teachers are underway. Beginning in the school year 2020-2021, every classroom teacher in HIDOE must earn six credits in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) within three years. This allows teachers to be “Sheltered Instruction Qualified” (HIDOE, 2019). The requirement to earn this qualification has long been in place, but the three-year time limit demonstrates the Department’s commitment to ensuring this happens. Three of the teachers interviewed in this study have obtained that qualification. Further research is needed in the effectiveness of this HIDOE TESOL requirement. HIDOE should also consider whether six credits of professional development in TESOL for all educators is sufficient, given that multilingual education needs are greater in some complexes than others (recall that Aloha Elementary’s complex, one of 41 in the state, educates more than 25% of all multilingual learners). It may be beneficial for HIDOE to offer PD classes introducing teachers to the languages their students and families speak, especially for schools like Aloha Elementary and its complex, which services nearly a quarter of the multilingual students in the state. Further training in Filipino and Micronesian languages is especially needed, given the significant achievement gaps students from these backgrounds experience across the state. Pay differentials currently exist in the Department of Education for “hard to staff” positions, such as Special Education and Hawaiian language immersion. It may be worthwhile to offer stipends or pay incentives for educators with high English learner

populations who demonstrate multilingual proficiency in the languages of their students (for example, educators in Aloha Elementary's complex that speak Ilocano, Tagalog, or Chuukese).

Regardless of this multilingual instructional training, educators still need more support in multilingual training for working with families. This training should be grounded in funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and the Dual-Capacity Building Framework (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The Dual-Capacity Building Framework (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) seeks to improve the skills of both families and educators in working together to support student success. A funds of knowledge approach to building relationships with students and their families provides for richer, deeper understanding and enhanced educator capacity to connect school learning to the child's life (Moll et al., 1992).

One approach schools may consider is intergenerational or family literacy programs. These events can affirm the heritage language while also supporting families who wish to enhance their English. Family literacy programs also allow children to demonstrate or "show off" their English to their parents, while promoting the use of heritage language and helping parents understand the vital role that L1 proficiency plays in L2 acquisition (Housel, 2020). Multilingual families may feel pressure to demonstrate their child's proficiency in English, and as such, may feel shame or embarrassment about how school officials will feel if their child learns the heritage language. Educators participating in these family literacy programs can demonstrate their support of the heritage language and learn more of the heritage language, thus building relationships with families. Culturally conscious educators have a responsibility to share the overwhelming cognitive, affective, and social benefits of multilingualism, but also to model their efforts to develop their own multilingualism.

Pre-service and In-service Training

Although educator preparation programs have increased their content in family-school partnerships, much work needs to be done to augment the perception of an educator from the person teaching multiplication to the academic professional partnering with a family for the child's overall success. Preservice educators in family engagement courses reflected on their growth and improved in practice, but few, if any, mentioned a deeper understanding of the global significance of working with families (Sutton et al., 2020). Research that examines pre-service and in-service perception of family engagement can inform how to help educators adjust to this age-old but seemingly new dimension of their profession.

Preservice and in-service professional development for family engagement should seek not only to teach systemic or instructional skills, but also interpersonal skills. A huge component of family-school partnerships is the educator's ability to communicate warmth and care for the student. Educators do when they are honest and vulnerable with families. This doesn't mean sharing inappropriately personal stories. It means conveying that you love their children. It means demonstrating your own humanity. It can also mean sharing personal stories. In my work with parents, I have found that sharing what we have in common has allowed us to build stronger relationships. The mother of one of my kindergarten students was attending the community college nearby. I shared with her how my mother also restarted her bachelor's degree when I went to kindergarten, and what a blessing it was for me to grow up seeing my mother sacrifice and prioritize education. In the years since working with that family, I still ask after the mother and her schooling, mindful of the difficulties of work, classes, and raising her family. The warmth established between teacher and parent leads to comfort. When a parent is comfortable with the teacher, the student will feel secure in school.

One area in desperate need of attention is preparing teachers to work with families while in their educator preparation programs. When educator preparation programs address the vital role of family-school partnerships, they influence the cognition and the capabilities of pre-service teachers. Mancenido and Pello (2020) detailed several approaches universities have taken: family engagement courses, extended practicum experiences with families, preparation for or participation in a school-based parent night, in-class activities and course assignments, and even e-learning and role-plays. Professors and evaluators must assess pre-service teachers' performance based on skills, not merely self-assessment. Mancenido and Pello (2020) noted that when pre-service teachers self-reflect, they describe ways in which their opinions have changed, particularly about working with low-income and culturally diverse families. However, only assessments based on skill truly measures pre-service educators' capacity to work with families.

Sutton et al. (2020) explained a more phased and longitudinal approach of an educator preparation program. Students enroll in a family engagement course in their sophomore year and a content specific course their senior year. During the sophomore year course, students partner with a family receiving services through a community-based organization. Students attend events with their families, engage them in conversation, and learn how to understand their needs. Students also provide the families with a one-page list of tips and ways to engage their children at home based on the family's circumstances. As seniors, the pre-service teachers are responsible for presenting and leading student activities in their content areas at these events, again with the understanding of tailoring instruction to meet family needs. Meanwhile, professors from the educator preparation program observe and prompt pre-service teachers as needed. Sutton, Lewis, and Beauchat (2020) explained that this approach helps pre-service educators reflect on their initial experiences in family engagement as sophomores as they develop into more mature pre-

service educators as seniors. The opportunity for faculty to observe pre-service educators in these settings can also provide valuable insight and feedback.

Every new HIDEOE teacher is assigned a district mentor. These mentors often come to collaborate, observe, and provide feedback to teachers. Although the majority of these efforts are focused on instructional duties, it may be beneficial for these mentors to make a concerted effort to help new teachers develop their family-partnership skills, as well as how to create more family-centered learning. For example, a teacher who is self-reflecting on a lesson may consider the following ideas: How can you invite families to be part of the curriculum? For example, when you are doing a lesson on community helpers, perhaps invite a parent to talk about their job and how they contribute to the larger community. When your students learn about habitats, have them ask a family member about a significant place in their lives and how a relationship to that place has affected them. Educators should frequently ask themselves, How am I engaging families in the curriculum? Socioemotional development? Behavior? Goal-setting? School and community opportunities? If teachers find that they are only addressing one or two of these topics with families, they should find ways to develop a connection with families in other areas. District mentors often support in improving pedagogy. Integrating engagement with pedagogy can create opportunities for deeper family-school partnerships.

Institutional Support

Finally, a major recommendation is for administrators to provide educators with planning time and resources to engage families. School leaders need to recognize that engagement does not only mean parents attend events, although events may be a way to form relationships. But educators need institutional support to plan how to increase family discussion about curriculum, how to better share what is happening in the classroom on a regular basis, and how to help

parents assist their children in areas of need. Although most schools, including Aloha Elementary, have a parent community networking center (PCNC), families primarily interact with the classroom teacher daily. Bilingual School-Home Assistants (BSHAs) can be a vital support for families and teachers in developing partnerships. The BSHAs can provide not only language support but also cultural context as families and educators work together.

There also appeared to be some confusion among classroom teachers as to the role of the schoolwide family involvement committee, which includes the PCNC. HDOE (2015) defined the role of the PCNC as “support[ing] the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of family and community engagement/partnerships based upon national evidence-based best practices.” Although PCNC is a parent community networking *center*, many teachers appeared to believe it was a parent community networking *coordinator*. This led to some confusion regarding who was responsible for each area of family engagement. Clarity in these areas will help develop family-school partnership skills among educators. Idrige and McChesney (2021) noted that the most effective strategies focus on student learning outcomes, “rather than, say, focusing on providing teachers with practical support” (p. 25). This suggests that any training or planning time for teachers must be clearly linked to student learning goals. Rather than feeling like another thing to do, family engagement should become a better way to support what educators are already doing. Additionally, administrators should provide justification for this institutional support by sharing the literature that demonstrates the importance of family-school partnerships.

Administrators who recognize that teachers need collaborative planning time will find that their teachers are prepared to engage students in higher-order thinking. Teachers interviewed expressed that they feel so rushed to cover everything that they don’t know when they would stop to plan more family partnership activities. Part of this may be due to the lack of pre-service

training; educators recognize that teaching curriculum is part of their job, but perhaps view family engagement as a “may do” rather than a “must do.” As educator preparation programs increase their family-school partnership training, administrators may need to provide additional support to teachers until family engagement is embedded in educator culture. Administrators can also recognize the importance of depth over breadth. Administrators can support educators by providing compensated, designated planning time for grade levels and professional learning communities to work together on family-school partnership.

Assumptions and Limitations

The following assumption provides the basis for this study: the increased mandates for family-school partnerships suggest there is a dearth of family engagement currently occurring in the United States and within Hawai‘i specifically. The Hawai‘i Department of Education’s 2030 Promise Plan demonstrates the need for deeper family engagement here locally. Specifically, the Nā Hopena A‘o statements focus on Hā suggests that there remains a need for strengthened senses of belonging, responsibility, excellence, aloha, and total well-being (HĀ or BREATH).

There are some limitations with this study. Participants volunteered to participate, which may lend itself to those families who naturally feel more comfortable dialoguing in a school setting or about school-related topics. Furthermore, I chose my own school site to conduct this study. Thus, educator participants may or may not have experienced either a greater degree of comfort or unease in sharing their experiences. Familiarity with participants can also lead to assumptions on the part of the investigator (Saldana, 2011); however, I have taken steps to mitigate any unintentional bias, including the focus group detailed in the data analysis section (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008).

Additionally, the sample size is limited. This study is not meant to be representative of all family-school partnerships here in Hawai'i, but rather a case study of how educators might use one framework to critically evaluate strengths and weaknesses in family engagement.

Although the overwhelming majority of family responses were positive, the lack of critical feedback was noticeable. I was curious why families shared only their successful experiences with teachers and school members. This could be because that has truly encapsulated their entire experience at Aloha Elementary; it could also be because the interviewer was a member of the school community herself. I wondered whether cultural differences created discomfort in sharing true feelings regarding the school; however, two Filipino members of the focus group shared families have not provided critical feedback to them, even when asked in native language or by a school representative of their own culture. One of those focus group members added that several years ago parents were interviewed by a facilitator outside of the school community as part of a state-wide evaluation process. The focus group member shared that during that interview, parents provided substantial positive and critical feedback regarding the school. This seems to suggest that an interviewer who is a member of the school community may create a barrier. Families may feel more comfortable sharing with someone who they feel has no direct bias toward the school.

The phrasing of the questions may elicit more openness regarding family concerns. Years ago, a Filipina colleague shared an insight with me about working with Filipino parents:

“They will never want to hurt your feelings as the teacher. So when you need feedback, you phrase it as, ‘Can you please help me with this? You are the expert with your child, and you would be helping me if you shared how you handle this circumstance at home.’”

This colleague explained that helping the teacher is viewed as honorable, whereas providing

unsolicited feedback would be viewed as rude and disrespectful. Although I used this phrasing during parent interviews, there may have been more hesitancy because I was not always asking about their child directly, but rather about the school.

Concerns over disparaging a teacher may have also impacted responses to other questions. When a family member is asked what topics are difficult to discuss with the teacher, they may fear sharing these examples for fear it will reflect badly on the teacher. Families could also fear that by sharing difficult topics or experiences, they could appear to be criticizing the teacher or the school, which the members of the focus group asserted would be culturally inappropriate for many parents. It may be helpful to understand family concerns by asking about a time they felt worried about their child at school, and how they handled it. Worry is often viewed as a natural and almost inevitable aspect of parenthood, so phrasing a question in this way may help a family to feel more comfortable sharing. How the family handled that worry can indicate the extent to which they utilized support from the school to help, which can in turn illustrate a representation of the family-school partnership.

Future Research

Future research is needed to further examine family-school partnerships with multicultural multilingual families. Possible areas of future research include (a) further using a Funds of Knowledge approach (Moll et al., 1992) to extend interview questions inspired by the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013), (b) studying best practices for family-school partnerships with single-parent and/or divorced families, (c) examining resources spent on relational activities vs. structural activities, (d) creating an instrument or survey to indicate quality of relational aspects of family-school partnerships, (e) the role of families as experts in educator preparation courses and professional development courses, (f) the role of

administrators in creating a culture for family-school partnerships, and (g) the role of technology in family-school partnerships.

Funds of Knowledge, Dual Capacity-Building, and Family-School Partnerships

Further research is needed in how the work of Moll et al. (1992) and Mapp and Kuttner (2013) intersect. It would be useful to expand the family interview protocol by including questions based on Moll et al. (1992). The Funds of Knowledge framework is especially helpful for follow up questions. For example, when I asked about what things parents teach their children, I could have asked follow up questions using specific examples, such as, “What do you teach your children about household knowledge? Health and medicine? Work and repair? Economics and finance? The arts? Religion?” This may prompt families to think of additional ways families display their funds of knowledge and what they are teaching their children.

It would also be useful to ask about specific strategies that teachers have done that parents liked. The term *strategies* may be confusing, so a question may be, “What is the most helpful thing a teacher has done for your family? What is your favorite memory of a teacher? When is a time a teacher has helped you?” In light of the increase of technology use in education post-COVID-19, it would also be interesting to learn how teachers support families with technology. What do teachers do if a family is having technical difficulties? How do teachers use technology? How do families wish teachers used technology? Questions such as these can be indicative of family preferences or even needs for support.

Similar questions can be asked of teachers. Regarding what knowledge students come to school with, utilizing a funds of knowledge framework can help teachers think more deeply about family contributions to education. This will help teachers move beyond generic statements such as “the language” or “they’re very well-behaved” to recognize the specific areas their

families and students have expertise in. For example, many students at Aloha Elementary School travel to the Philippines often to see family. What may these children know about travel? Airplanes? Passports and tickets and currency changes?

When interviewing educators about family-school partnerships, there may be a tendency for teachers to revert back to experiences with their students. Although family-school partnerships are centered on working together for the good of the student, teachers must think critically about their interactions with families. This may require additional prompting, including on the part of the interviewer, a statement such as, “That is a wonderful instructional practice for students. What might be some of your best practices in working with families?”

Single, Divorced, or Geographically-separated Parents and Family-School Partnerships

Further research is needed in family-school partnerships outside of two-parent settings. In this setting, every set of parents was married, except for Family E. Family E was unique in that a grandmother was the primary caregiver, in addition to the child’s single father. The grandmother was interviewed for this study. Research into the experiences of single and divorced parents can help educators strengthen family-school partnerships by being sensitive to the different circumstances of each family. Single and divorced parents may have different time, financial, and childcare demands, which can impact family-school partnerships. Educators may also have to navigate the relationships between divorced parents when attempting to establish family-school partnerships.

More research is needed in this area, as well as family-school partnerships when parents are geographically separated. The family I discussed at the beginning of this study is one such example. How could I have better supported this mother, mindful of her circumstances due to her husband being in the Philippines? Educators working with immigrant families need to be

especially aware of the home circumstances, recognizing that one parent may have “gone ahead” to the new country or “stayed behind” in the home country. This can play into the family-school partnership dynamic. Research in this area can help educators understand and effectively partner with families in this situation.

Resources for Relational Aspects of Family-School Partnerships

Another area of research is the difference between relational aspects of family-school partnership and the structural aspects of family-school partnerships, and whether educators are aware of the distinction. Family engagement often calls to mind images of Open House, PTA Night, or other school events. These are examples of structural aspects of family-school partnerships. However, families can be disengaged structurally but engaged relationally. Relational aspects of family-school partnerships include communication, connection, and the feeling of warmth and trust between families, students, and educators. In other words, whether or not a family is attending an event, do they feel positively about the school? And what are those day-to-day practices that help families feel that way? In this study, parents only referred to the relational aspects of family-school partnerships. They rarely talked about structural aspects, aside from one parent mentioning EL tutoring. It is clear that these relational aspects matter.

Research is needed into whether resources are appropriately allocated for relational aspects of family engagement. It may feel easier to set aside planning time for Open House than to set aside planning time to send home a positive note to each parent once every two weeks. Schools often spend significant money and time preparing for large events, but research into how schools fund and support relational, daily aspects of family-school partnerships is needed. For example, are schools paying for app subscriptions for things like ClassDojo or SeeSaw? Are schools allocating paid planning time for educators to deliberately and consciously plan their

approach to partnering with families? How are relational family-school partnership aspects modeled and taught to teachers? Are schools and districts investing in multicultural and multilingual communication? All of these provide areas of future research that can examine the approach to family-school partnerships.

Measurement of Relational Aspects of Family-School Partnerships

The extension of studying resource allocation for relational family engagement is understanding how relational aspects are measured, especially in populations for whom a survey based on a Likert scale wouldn't be accessible. Because relational aspects are such a vital part of family-school partnerships, instruments or surveys that measure the relationship are needed. This is difficult because the intangible is much more complex to measure; it is far easier to "measure" engagement through a headcount or a sign-in at an event.

I experienced this dilemma myself as a classroom teacher. I had a sign-in sheet for parent-teacher conferences, and the turnout was fantastic, but the quality of each conference varied. In some conferences I found myself doing the majority of the talking, even though I asked for input or whether the parent had any concerns. In other conferences, the parent and I collaborated together on how to support the child.

A possibility may be a mixed methods approach to measuring relational family engagement. This could include ratings from both educators and families, conducted in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way. Because a Google form or paper survey sent home may not be accessible for all families, it is vital that researchers examine the multidimensional aspects of the relationship between family and school.

Families as Experts in Pre-service and In-service Courses

Research should also be conducted into the role of families in pre-service and in-service educator development. For example, are classes on how to work with families taught by other educators, or are they taught by families? Is the work grounded solely in academic research, or is it grounded in the lived experience of families as the embodiment of theory? When possible, especially when learning about working with multicultural multilingual families, the families themselves should be the primary instructors. This doesn't need to mean that families from the community design a course for teachers, although that can happen, but rather that the individuals in charge of the course facilitate the opportunity for educators to hear from families directly. This can be from families coming to the course, videos or recordings of interviews done previously and then shared, or even from seminal articles. However, it is vital that educators are taught to engage with families from a wide background and that individuals from those communities are featured speaking for themselves, not by having a professional educator describe the family's circumstances for them.

Administrators and Family-School Partnerships

The role of administrators in family-school partnerships is also in need of further research. Administrators, particularly principals, have influence over the school culture regarding family-school partnerships, including how the administrators themselves interact with families and how administrators allocate resources to support developing family-school partnerships. Research regarding administrators and family-school partnerships could consider how administrators ensure they interact with families daily, how administrators address discipline and attendance issues with families, and how administrators coach classroom teachers in developing partnerships with families. Research regarding the preparation pre-service

administrators receive in family-school partnerships, as well as the support in-service administrators receive, could be indicative of another way to improve the climate for family-school partnerships.

Technology and Family-School Partnerships

Given the events of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures, technology has taken center stage in education. This extends to family-school partnerships. Research on how technology supports or hinders family-school partnerships is needed. This includes increasing accessibility to technology in traditionally marginalized communities. Educators can use technology to share student work, exchange messages with families, and even provide instructions regarding forms or assignments via video recordings. Research into family preference regarding technology, as well as families' self-efficacy with technology, can be helpful in informing educator practice.

Epilogue

When I began designing this study in 2019, I already felt the urgency for bringing marginalized voices to the forefront of conversations in academic decision-making. The events of the following year, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter, and growing Anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S., made this need even clearer.

During COVID-19 school closures, teachers grappled with online learning themselves, let alone how to instruct students how to navigate these platforms. Language barriers and other access discrepancies made trouble-shooting technology problems very difficult for families at home. Now, children were cared for by older siblings while parents worked during the school day. This created difficulty with providing timely tech support for families, as older children supervising younger children also had their own online school simultaneously. Many families

came to the school directly for help, often relying on the English Learner coordinator and her team to help them navigate how to sign on to platforms, check email, and submit assignments virtually. As schools have reopened, differing views of the role of school have highlighted the need for communication, compassion, and understanding between family and school. That linguistic and cultural support, based on the strong relationships the EL coordinator and her staff have with the community, has been vital to our school.

In many ways, the increase of technology has aided in family-school partnerships. The walls of classrooms have been lowered. Aloha Elementary was already attempting this prior to the pandemic, through the use of apps like ClassDojo and SeeSaw. These apps allowed parents to see the work students did in the classroom in real time. The messaging feature also allowed for frequent communication between families and educators. These apps were helpful for me as an educator. Recognizing that many forms or letters may not be accessible in the written medium, I would often record videos on ClassDojo explaining them orally. I also used videos to record homework help tips for parents, reminders about school events, and positive things their children had done. Just as educators use multiple means of representation in the classroom, the combination of audio, video, and oral explanation allows for multiple means of representation in family-school partnerships as well.

Black Lives Matter, though sometimes labeled as a response to a “continent problem,” has affected education in Hawai‘i. During an interview, one educator shared that she grew up as a “mixed” (her term) girl in Southern California. She said she knows what it feels like to be too shy or insecure to speak, so that is why she has high expectations for her students. “I try to tell them,” she said, “that Black Lives Matter isn’t only about those who are Black. It is us, too, as people of color.” Helping her students understand their relationship to Black Lives Matter was

essential for this teacher because she knew that the movement seeks to liberate all people, including her Filipino and Micronesian students, from White supremacy.

Although Hawai‘i is a “minority-majority” state, White supremacy still determines which cultural groups receive privilege. Additionally, “living among diversity in Hawai‘i ma[kes] recognizing racism and social inequity difficult,” especially for privileged “non-minority” groups such as Japanese, Chinese, and Whites (Halagao, 2006, p. 37). Given that 25% of HODOE teachers are White and 24.9% are Japanese (Hawai‘i State Data Handbook, 2019), educators must be cognizant of their own privilege. Haunani-Kay Trask (2000) has challenged the notion that Hawai‘i is a land of multicultural immigrants. Fujikane and Okamura (2009), building upon Trask’s work, outline the specific ways in which Asian settlers and their descendants experience privilege in Hawai‘i, including economically and politically.

Although both Trask (2000) and Fujikane and Okamura (2009) describe the roles of settlers in displacing and oppressing Indigenous peoples, their work also illuminates the ways in which privileged cultural groups subjugate others, even when both are people of color. Recognizing hegemony in our local context is vital to improving education for multicultural multilingual learners. Ijeoma Oluo, during an episode of NPR’s *Morning Edition*, clarified that racism includes systemic privilege:

“The framing around racism has always been there is a white person who doesn't like people of color or a Klan member or someone, you know, who's making their hatred and ignorance very obvious. But what's actually been impacting our lives are systems that rely on subtle and not so subtle biases against people of color to disempower us and put us at risk.” (King, 2020)

I once overheard a community donor vocalize microaggressions against Micronesian members of the school community. I wondered what made this donor feel comfortable saying such things, aside from the fact that she genuinely believed them. Was it that she herself was from a privileged “non-minority” group (Halagao, 2006), and so were the educators she was addressing? Did she assume these individuals also have a deficit-based view of Micronesians? Why did she persist with these disparaging stereotypes, even when an educator countered her by sharing their respect for our Micronesian student families? How would this play out when this donor held workshops for our students and their families? How was she, as an education partner, reinforcing biases that put these families at risk?

After the donor left, one person said to another, “I was so uncomfortable.” This reminded me that culturally conscious educators still need support in actively identifying and challenging racism. It also reminded me that this may be even harder to do in Hawai‘i, where the majority of individuals are people of color. After all, the donor was “local.” She was a person of color. But she and the educators present experienced a different social privilege than the Micronesian families discussed. The social capital and socioeconomic privilege the donor experiences as one with a *colonizer* ethnic and cultural background, as opposed to Filipino and Micronesian families, who are from a *colonized* background, is very different. Teachers who recognize this do what the teacher earlier did. They teach about movements such as Black Lives Matter in a way that helps their students understand the importance to their own lives.

My job as a scholar and as an educator is to make sure all voices are in the room. My job is not to hog the microphone; it is only to recognize that I’ve been given one, whether because of White, socioeconomic, or academic privilege, and then to pass it on. I hoped to hand the microphone to families in this study, because they are often minoritized in school decision-

making processes. Aside from requisite family focus groups for accreditation, or written surveys that may or may not be accessible, school decisions are often made by “the experts”--the educators. But educators are not the only experts. Educators may be experts in curriculum, but each family are the experts in their children and can help contribute to the curriculum. The proverbial microphone sharing must truly be ‘a back and forth relationship,’ with each partner listening to, empathizing with, and advocating for one another. Educators and families alike love the children they have responsibility for; may we also grow in love toward one another.

I am always learning, which often involves unlearning that which I have accepted as “the way things are.” The way family-partnerships are currently is not the way they need to continue. Research shows us there is a better way, and I hope to spend my life being a part of that. I am beginning my graduate work in Education Administration in order to become an administrator in Hawai‘i public schools. My professional experience has taught me that administrators can make all the difference in making what feels impossible become a reality. From loaning the Keurig for Family Fri-Yay, to setting aside school funds so teachers aren’t buying all the refreshments out of their own pockets, to conducting home visits with teachers trying to reach families, administrators can do a great deal to provide institutional support for family-school partnerships. Administrators also set the tone for interacting with families. Administrators who greet families by name and make the time to stop and “talk story” communicate that families are valued. I have had administrators like that. My goal now is to become one.

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Appendix A: Questions for Family Interviews

(Modified from Snell, 2017)

1. When do you go to the school? How do you feel when you are there? Follow up: Who do you know who works at the school? Do you feel comfortable and welcome at this school? Why or why not? What would help you feel more welcome? (*connection*)
2. What kind of connection would you ideally want with the teachers and schools your children attend? Do you feel you want more connection? If so, what kind of connection do you want from the schools? Follow up: Under what conditions do you expect to be contacted? What are the best ways to contact you? Are some forms of contact better than others? Why? (*connection*)
3. What word in your heritage language might you use to describe the relationship you have with the school? (*connection*)
4. What do you teach your children at home that they do not learn at school? (This can be language, culture, skills, or anything else.) Follow up: Do you think that your kids use these skills and knowledge at school? Are their teachers aware that they have these skills? (*capabilities*)
5. What is one strength your child has? (This can be academic or related to character.) Can you list some responsibilities that they have at home? (*capabilities*)
6. What are things you do to support your children's schooling? (*capabilities*)
7. What is one of the favorite things you do with your children or as a family? Follow up: Share one positive memory you have with your child. (*capabilities*)
8. How would you describe your responsibilities in your child's growth and development? How would you describe your responsibilities in your child's schooling? (*Cognition*)

9. Do you feel the school values you as a family? How do you think the school shows that it values you? What are some topics you are comfortable discussing with them? What might be some topics less comfortable to discuss with teachers and staff? What might help you feel more comfortable to address those? (*Cognition*)
10. Is it easy to discuss issues with teachers and staff at the school? Why or why not? (*Confidence*)
11. Can you suggest any changes that the school could make in order to improve your experience with the school? Have you ever shared these with the school? Why or why not? Do you feel you have opportunities to share these suggestions? Follow up: What would make it easier to address these suggestions? (*Confidence, cognition*)

Appendix B: Questions for Educator Interviews

1. When do you work with multicultural multilingual families? How do you feel when you are working with them? Follow up: Who of your multicultural multilingual student families do you know well? Do you feel comfortable working with your multicultural multilingual student families? Why or why not? What would help you feel more comfortable? What types of professional development might you want to receive about family engagement? (*connection, capabilities*)
2. What kind of connection would you ideally want with your multicultural multilingual student families? Do you feel you want more connection? If so, what kind of connection do you want? Follow up: Under what conditions do you expect to be contacted? What are the best ways to contact you? Are some forms of contact better than others? Why? (*connection*)
3. What do your multicultural multilingual students learn at school that connects with what they learn at home? (This can be language, culture, skills, or anything else.) Follow up: Do you think that your kids use these skills and knowledge in both places? How have you become aware that they have these skills? (*capabilities*)
4. What are some strengths your multicultural multilingual students have? (This can be academic or related to character.) Can you list some opportunities that they have at school? (*capabilities*)
5. What are your strengths in working with multicultural multilingual students and their families? What are some of your areas of need? (*capabilities*)

6. What is one of the favorite things you do with your multicultural multilingual students and/or their families? Follow up: Share one positive memory you have with your multicultural multilingual students and/or their families(*capabilities*)
7. How do you support your multicultural multilingual student families? (*capabilities*)
8. How would you describe your responsibilities in family engagement with multicultural multilingual families? (*Cognition*)
9. How do you show you value your multicultural multilingual families? feel about your connection with multicultural multilingual student families? (*Cognition*)
10. Is it easy to discuss issues with multicultural multilingual student families at the school? Why or why not? What are some topics you are comfortable discussing with them? What might be some topics less comfortable to discuss? What might help you feel more comfortable to address those? (*Confidence, cognition*)
11. Can you suggest any changes that the school could make in order to improve multicultural multilingual family engagement for the school? Have you ever shared these with the school? Why or why not? Do you feel you have opportunities to share these suggestions? Follow up: What would make it easier to address these suggestions? (*Confidence, cognition*)

Appendix C: Questions for Focus Group

Connection

1. What resonates with you about findings in this area?
2. How might these findings align with your own professional and/or personal experiences?
3. How else might we establish a strong connection between families and educators?

Capabilities

1. What resonates with you about findings in this area?
2. How do these findings align with your own professional and/or personal experiences?
3. How else do families share their or their children's strengths? How do educators learn about families' or children's strengths?

Cognition

1. What resonates with you about findings in this area?
2. How might these findings align with your own professional and/or personal experiences?
3. How might families develop their understanding of their role in their child's education?
How might cultural norms influence how a family views their role?
4. How might educators develop their understanding of their role in working with families?
What might influence how an educator views their family engagement responsibilities?

Confidence

1. What resonates with you about findings in this area?
2. How might these findings align with your own professional and/or personal experiences?
3. What might help families and teachers develop their confidence in family-school partnerships?

General

1. As you look at the data, sorted by capacities of family-school partnerships, what stands out to you?
2. Are there any pieces of information that you think belong in another category, or perhaps multiple categories?