Teacher and School Variables that Impact Special Education Preschool Teacher-Family Involvement Behaviors

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Educational Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City of New York

2011

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Educational Psychology in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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The present study examined teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and school support and their relationship to reported family involvement behaviors, using the Epstein framework as a six part definition for family involvement. Participants included 283 teachers in 20 different special education preschool programs within the New York City area. Four measures were used, the FITS-P that measures reported teacher attitudes, the FITPQ that measures reported teacher family involvement behaviors, a questionnaire that measures reported teacher experience and teacher preparation/training, and the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide (Section 3) that measures reported school support for family involvement. A multilevel survey data set was collected from multiple teachers within multiple schools. Correlational analyses were conducted to assess the direction and strength of variable relationships among three predictors: years of teaching experience, teacher preparation/training, and teacher attitudes. The data were also analyzed using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). This was conducted in order to determine if teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, years of teaching experience impact teacher family involvement behavior differently across schools. Further, it was investigated whether degree of school support contributes to this difference across schools.

In general, the hypotheses in this study were supported by the results and provide preschool educators with valuable information to help develop strategies, identify facilitators and obstacles, and improve the working partnership between schools and families, with a goal of increasing family involvement. One of the clearest findings was that teacher attitude was predictive of reported teacher family involvement behaviors. Teachers who exhibited more positive family involvement attitudes actually reported using more family involvement practices in their classrooms. A second finding was that only one of the three types of teacher preparation/training, in-service training, was predictive of reported teacher family involvement behaviors. Also, teachers who had taken a course primarily focused on family involvement in their pre-service training had more positive reported attitudes towards family involvement. Teachers who reported not attending a course dedicated to family involvement but rather had family involvement integrated or embedded throughout a number of courses reported fewer or less frequent family involvement behaviors. Teacher experience was negatively related to teacher attitude towards family involvement; however, it was not deemed a predictor of teacher family involvement behaviors. In this study, the degree of school support as measured by the SED/VESID was positively correlated and significantly predictive of reported teacher family involvement behaviors. In this study, principals who reported to offer more administrative support for family involvement in their schools did have teachers who reportedly offered more positive attitudes and applied more family involvement practices in their classrooms. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Acknowledgements

It would be impossible for me to thank all of the people who contributed to the completion of this doctorate. First and foremost, I cannot find words to express my thanks to my Committee Chair, Dr. Marian Fish. Her encouragement and faith in me was what kept me working hard until completion of this dissertation. I am forever indebted for her understanding and patience.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the individuals who served on my dissertation committee. I thank Dr. Georgiana Tryon for her support and mentoring me early on with my research project. I would also like to thank Dr. Jay Verkuilen, who willingly became my committee member, always showed kindness and introduced me to Nancy Andiloro, my HLM specialist. Also, thanks to Dr. Joseph LiPuma who honored me as one of my outside readers.

Special thanks goes to Teresa DelPriore, the New York City NAEYC Co-President and Principal of an AHRC Preschool, who worked late nights providing me with a quiet but supportive environment to work on my literature review. I would also like to thank Christina Muccioli and Madelin Rivera, the Director and Associate Director of the AHRC Education Department. They believed in my work and in me.

This dissertation would never have been complete without the support of my family; my grandmother, mother, father and brother. My parents Flora and Remo always encouraged me to continue my education and were proud of any even minor accomplishment. Thanks to my grandmother for her continuous prayers, enabling me to continue my study and work. My family always believed that I was capable of anything and were unwavering in confidence, which carried me through those moments of doubt and uncertainty.

Finally, I am also very thankful for my friends and fellow work colleagues, especially Chapman Wong who was always there to lend a hand when I had formatting issues and Dr. Mary Donahue who always lent a sympathetic ear and honored me by accepting to be an outside reader. As well as, fellow school psychologists from AHRC and St. John's University, namely Susan Kondoff, Dr. Andrew Livanis for all his advice and help, and Irene Cyprus-Dimitratos for her spirit which still lives on.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

This chapter explains the importance of family involvement with schools and its effectiveness in improving student learning. This is followed by discussion of the operational definitions of family involvement that have been used in the literature and the variables that impact involvement. A description of the study examining the relationships among teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and school support on teacher family involvement behaviors using the Epstein typology as a definition for family involvement is presented.

In recent years much attention has been centered on family involvement in education, primarily because of its links to improvement in student learning. There is extensive evidence that family involvement in the education of children is critical to effective schooling. Research reviews show that family involvement improves student achievement, attitudes toward learning, and self-esteem (Fan & Chen, 2001; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Henderson 1987; Henderson & Berla 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Soucy & Larose, 2000; Swap 1993). Schools that work well with families have shown better teacher morale, higher ratings of teachers by parents, and better reputations and linkages to resources in the community (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Swap, 1993).

The importance of involvement applies to all parents including those with low incomes, less formal education, and those who do not speak English or read it well (Adger, 2001; Collignon, Men, & Tan, 2001; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, & Bates 2004). This research on involvement reports benefits that include higher grades and test scores, better school attendance, higher graduation rates, greater

enrollment in post-secondary education, and more positive attitudes about school (Epstein, 1992; Henderson & Berla, 1994). All of these variables can be positively influenced by parents, teachers, and others in the community (Epstein, 2001).

The preschool years provide a critical foundation for later learning and development (Guralnick, 1998; Ramey & Ramey, 1998). The importance of families in their children's schooling has been acknowledged by early intervention professionals for many years. Preschool children are especially vulnerable due to their dependence on the adults around them, and families have the opportunity to provide the greatest influence on a child's developing competence. Given the greater educational risks that face young children, family involvement in preschool is especially important (National Research Council, 2001). Although the importance of family involvement is widely accepted and acknowledged by early educators, there is substantially less research, involving preschool populations than school-age populations (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008).

There are many operational definitions of family involvement used in the literature (Baker & Soden, 1998; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein & Dauber 1991; Epstein 1992; Jeynes, 2005) with little consistency. There are also a number of terms used to describe the relationship between the home and school, including; family involvement, parent involvement, home-school collaboration, family-school involvement, home-school relationship, family-school relation, and home-school partnerships (Baker & Soden 1998; Brantlinger 1991; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein & Dauber 1991; Epstein 1992; Hansen 1986; Jeynes, 2005; Stevenson & Baker 1987). Fan and Chen (2001) noted that family involvement is thought of simplistically, perceived in one dimension, when in reality it is multi-faceted in nature. Therefore, different dimensions of family involvement should be measured separately as well as summed up into a

general composite. Epstein (1995) presented a well-founded typology naming six independent types of parent involvement that ideally would occur in a school setting: a) parenting, b) communication, c) volunteering, d) learning at home, e) decision-making, and f) collaborating with the community.

While the importance of family involvement is clear, there are a number of variables that may affect the development of family involvement and collaboration between home and school that can be organized in three domains: teacher, school, and parent. Variables that may affect a teachers' ability to facilitate family involvement include teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, and teacher experience. School variables that may impact facilitation of family involvement include school support and school logistical variables. This is especially true in early childhood when family involvement is often highest (Epstein, 1992) as well as in special education where family involvement is essential. Parent variables might include parent efficacy, parent cultural differences, and parent logistical issues.

When comparing early childhood programs, preschool special education programs are the most family-allied in their orientation (Dunst, 2002). The earlier parents get involved in their children's educational process, the better students tend to do in their overall performance (Shepard & Rose, 1995). This suggests the importance of a research focus on the preschool population when family involvement is most critical.

In order to improve our understanding of teachers' involvement with parents, this study used data from preschool special education teachers and administrators to examine the relationships among teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and school support on teacher family involvement behaviors using the Epstein typology as a definition for family involvement. Three measures were used. The first, the Family Involvement

Teacher Survey –Preschool (FITS-P, Marchini & Fish, 2005), is based on the Epstein typology and developed and pilot-tested for identifying preschool teachers' attitudes and perceptions of their knowledge and competency in family involvement and measured teacher attitudes and perceptions. Using the FITS-P captures the multidimensional nature of family involvement by measuring the six areas of the Epstein framework. Second, the Family Involvement Teacher Practice Questionnaire (FITPQ) measuring reported teacher family involvement behaviors, was used as an outcome measure. Third, the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide (Section 3) by The University of the State of New York (SED) and The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) measuring the reported preschool administrator's level of support towards family involvement to assess school support.

Based on the above discussion, this study proposed to answer the following research questions.

1. Do teachers who report more positive family involvement attitudes report more family involvement practices in their classrooms?
2. Do teachers with less teaching experience report more positive attitudes and report more family involvement practices in their classrooms?
3. Do teachers who receive more prior preparation/training report more positive attitudes and report more family involvement practices in their classrooms?
4. Do teachers with more administrative support for family involvement report more positive attitudes and report more family involvement practices in their classrooms?

Data were collected from 283 teachers from 20 different special education preschool programs in the New York City area. Consent and ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Graduate Center of the City of New York. Consents and written approval were obtained from all 20 school administrators and from 283 teachers.

This study used data from preschool teachers and administrators to examine the relationships among teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and school support on teacher-family involvement behaviors across the Epstein typology. The three measures described above were used.

Data Analysis

A multilevel survey data set was collected from multiple teachers within multiple schools. First, using SPSS/PASW 18.0 program, data were double-entered to establish reliability of the data entry. The investigator used several procedures to analyze the data in order to answer this study's research questions. In the first stages of analysis, all survey subscales, as well as teacher and school demographics were analyzed via descriptive statistics. In addition, correlational analyses were conducted to assess the direction and strength of variable relationships among three predictors: years of teaching experience, teacher preparation/training, and teacher attitudes. In the second stage of analysis, the data were also analyzed using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). This was conducted in order to determine if teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, and years of teaching experience impact teacher family involvement behavior differently across schools. Further, it was investigated whether degree of school support contributes to this difference across schools.

Results

Using SPSS/PASW 18.0, Pearson *r* correlations were calculated to analyze the direction and degree of relations identified in H01. As expected, in line with the study's (H01) hypothesis, the total FITS-P scores for attitude toward family involvement and all subscales were significantly positively related to teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ.

As expected with the H02, teacher experience was significantly negatively correlated with total teacher attitude toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P. Regarding H03, the correlation between the level of teacher experience and the FITPQ Total score was not statistically significant, which does not support the hypothesis. As expected from H04 and H05, prior preparation/training in family involvement was positively correlated with teacher attitude and teacher family involvement behavior toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P and FITPQ. There was a significant positive relationship (H04) between the Teacher Preparation/Training question 1 scores, indicating that as the Teacher Preparation/training (one or more prior courses in family involvement) increases the FITS-P Total scores also increases. There was a significant positive relationship H05 between the Teacher Preparation/Training scores on the Teacher Information Sheet Question 3 (regarding in-service training and the Total FITPQ, indicating that as the Teacher Preparation/training in-service training increases, reported practice behavior also increases.

The final hypotheses addressed the relationship between school variables. In line with H06, the level of school support measured by the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide was significantly positively correlated with teacher attitude toward family involvement measured by the FITS-P, indicating that as the level of school support increases, the

FITS-P Total scores also increase. In support of H07, the level of school support was significantly positively correlated with teacher family involvement behavior, indicating that as the level of school support increases, the FITPQ Total scores also increases.

In order to assess how teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, years of experience, and level of school support impact family involvement behaviors and how they differ across school environments, multiple analyses were conducted to predict the dependent variable (e.g., FITPQ). Due to the nested structure of the data (teachers within schools), the analyses used hierarchical linear regression (HLM). In support of H08, higher scores on the SED/VESID which measures degree of school support, significantly predicts reported higher teacher family involvement behavior (FITPQ). In support of H09, higher scores on the FITS-P (attitude) predicted higher scores on the FITPQ (teacher practice). All other teacher demographics (including number of months teachers have taught preschool) H010 were not found to significantly predict the outcome. In partial support of H011, prior teacher in-service training was found to be a significant positive predictor of teacher practice.

This study focused on the special education preschool population where teachers can work with families in a positive way to create a foundation that may carry over this positive perception throughout the family/student's school career. Using the Epstein framework as a six part definition for family involvement, this study examined teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and school support and their relationship to reported family involvement behaviors. In general, the hypotheses in this study were supported by the results and provide preschool educators with valuable information to help develop strategies, identify facilitators and obstacles, and improve the working partnership between schools and families, with a goal of increasing family involvement. Knowledge of specific variables

associated with teacher attitudes and family involvement practice behaviors can be beneficial to universities training teachers and also to the agencies employing them.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter consists of eight sections. The first section examines the importance of family involvement and its indirect effects across a student's lifespan from preschool through high school. In this section, the preschool period as well as preschool special education is reviewed and prior research conducted with this population is described. The second section involves legislation, policy, and trends in family involvement since the 1970's until the present day. Section three describes the theoretical perspectives of family involvement including transactional theory of development, family systems theory, and ecological theory of human development. The fourth section describes the operational definitions of family involvement. Two major frameworks based on the work of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) are presented.

The fifth section consists of three subsections that explore teacher, school, and parent variables that affect family involvement. The first subsection explores prior research that focuses on teacher variables namely: teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, and teacher experience. The second subsection explores prior research that focuses on school variables namely: school support and school logistical variables. Although not included as a variable in this study, the third subsection involves parent variables that can affect family involvement. Examples of these variables are; parent efficacy, cultural differences, and parent logistical issues. Sections six through eight present the summary, rationale, and the hypotheses of the study.

Family Involvement in Education

In recent years much attention has been centered on family involvement in education primarily because of its links to improvement in student learning. As the National Education

Goals panel states, “research on the impact of parental involvement on a child’s academic well-being is conclusive: Students whose parents are involved in school have higher achievement, better behavior, and more motivation than other students” (National Education Goals Panel, 1998, p. 1). There is extensive evidence that family involvement in the education of children is critical to effective schooling. Research reviews show that family involvement improves student achievement, attitudes toward learning, and self-esteem (Fan & Chen, 2001; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Henderson, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Soucy & Larose, 2000; Swap, 1993). This evidence of the positive impact of family involvement persists in longitudinal studies as well (Epstein, 1991; Epstein, Simon, & Salinas; Simon, 2001; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1991; Van Voorhis, 2001). Schools that work well with families report better teacher morale, higher ratings of teachers by parents, and better reputations and linkages to resources in the community (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Swap, 1993).

Family involvement is central to most public efforts aimed at the reduction of the achievement gap between children living in low-income families and higher income families (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). The importance of involvement applies to all parents including those with low incomes, less formal education, and those who do not speak English or read it well (Adger, 2001; Collignon, Men, & Tan, 2001; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, & Bates 2004). Catsambis (1998), using the Epstein family involvement typology, found that family involvement seemed to benefit the achievement levels of both high and low-achieving twelfth grade students.

In a study by Hill, Baker, and Marjoribanks (2004), they reported that parental involvement in seventh grade was positively associated with students’ educational and

occupational goals in eleventh grade across socio-economic status (SES) levels. For lower SES families, there was a strong, direct relation between family involvement and educational and occupational goals. Family involvement, however, was not associated with academic behavior or achievement. Findings suggest that while parents from all backgrounds may understand the importance of involvement, and may be involved, the effectiveness of the involvement may vary across SES. Bemak and Cornely (2002) also noted that behaviors of children at risk may be exacerbated by the lack of family involvement in the educational process. Also, research indicates that parent participation leads to a host of positive outcomes for children with special needs, including greater generalization and maintenance of treatment gains (Koegel, Koegel, & Schreibman, 1991).

Henderson and Berla (1994) identify three key predictors of student success: a) students' families create an environment that encourages student learning, b) students' families express high expectations for children's achievement and future careers, and c) students' families become involved in their children's education in school and in their lives in the community.

Adger (2001) reports that student attendance, homework completion, report card grades, leadership skills, course credits, and post-secondary educational plans are all indicators of student success. All of these variables can be positively influenced by parents, teachers, and others in the community (Epstein 2001).

Family members are the most constant, influential, and valuable people in a child's environment (Dunlap, 1999). Epstein and Sheldon (2002) have reported that family involvement behaviors are associated with improvements in school attendance. In this longitudinal study, data were collected on daily student school attendance, chronic absenteeism, and on specific family-school-community partnership practices that were implemented to help increase or

sustain student attendance. Results indicated that several partnership practices predicted an increase in daily attendance, a decrease in chronic absenteeism, or both. The data suggest that schools may be able to increase student attendance in elementary school by implementing specific family and community involvement activities such as conducting workshops for parents, making home visits, and calling parents when students are absent.

Fehrman, Keith, and Reimers (1987) investigated the direct effects of family involvement on grades and the indirect effects of family involvement on grades through homework and TV time. Results suggest a direct effect on grades but an indirect effect on grades through homework and TV was negligible. They report that parents may help their high school students achieve higher grades through monitoring daily activities, keeping track of how they are doing in school, and working closely with students concerning post high school pursuits and planning.

Using longitudinal data from elementary and secondary schools, Sheldon and Epstein (2005) examined family and community involvement and connections with student achievement in mathematics. Findings suggest that subject-specific practices of school, family, and community partnerships may help educators improve students' mathematics skills and achievement. Griffith (2001) presents data on parent perception and structural characteristics of 42 elementary schools. The author examined the relationship of parental involvement and empowerment to student academic performance. Positive relationships between parental involvement and student test performance were unaffected by school characteristics, SES, race and ethnic composition of students. Secondary analyses of this relationship were observed even when school-level resources and the composition of the school's student population were controlled. In a meta-analysis by Jeynes (2005), parent involvement was found to transcend SES, race, and other factors with urban elementary school students. Feldman (2003) found that

high school students are three times more likely to complete a bachelor's degree when their parents talk with teachers, monitor homework, and help with post-high school planning. Barnard (2004) found that parental involvement in elementary school years is associated with decreased probability of high school drop out rates and an increased probability of on time high school completion.

It is important to recognize that family involvement in school often decreases across the middle and high school years for middle-income families (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Simon, 2004). Hansen (1986) concluded that the number and strength of school-family partnerships actually declines with each grade level, beginning with kindergarten and shows the most dramatic decrease at the point of transition into the middle grades and in high school. Serpell, Baker, and Sonnenschein (2005) also indicate that family involvement begins to decrease across the early school years for many low-income families. Nearly half of the families in the Dearing et al. (2006) study displayed declines over time in their school involvement between kindergarten and fifth grade. In a longitudinal study by Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, and Fendrich (1999), researchers studied over 1200 urban kindergarten through third grade students for three years. Researchers found that the frequency of parent-teacher contacts, quality of parent-teacher interactions, and parent participation at school declined from years 1 to 3 of the study. Thus, the child's transition from elementary to middle and middle to high school consistently decreases parent involvement over time. This decline may be associated with the greater opportunities for involvement during the earlier years (Epstein & Dauber, 1991), as well as parents feeling less competent to help their children with more advanced instruction during the later years (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Another point may also be made in that teachers' efforts to work with parents also tends to decline as children get older (Becker & Epstein, 1982).

The Preschool Years

The importance of family involvement during the preschool period has been acknowledged by early childhood educators for many years since those years provide a critical foundation for later learning and development (Guralnick, 1998; Ramey & Ramey, 1998). The earlier parents get involved in their children's educational process, the better students tend to do in their overall academic performance (Shepard & Rose, 1995). For example, two-way communication between home and school is encouraged by professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), as well as pre service and in service teaching programs (Brededkamp & Copple, 1997). The National Research Council (2001) recommends that early childhood programs develop quality relationships with parents in their programs. When this partnership is formed, continual communication is established, an understanding of role expectations and preferences is achieved, and parental involvement is maintained (Gettinger & Guetschow, 1998).

In 1985, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), one of the largest nationwide organizations for early childhood practitioners and researchers, established a voluntary, evidence-based national early childhood accreditation system. Family involvement is listed as one of the five key factors that determine the quality of an early care and education program. The importance of high-quality early childhood education is clear; research links it to better cognitive function, language development, higher rates of attendance at four year colleges and rates of employment (NICHD, 2006; Ramey et al., 1999). The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Childhood Research network (NICHD, 2006) found that the majority of the programs in their study were only of fair quality and only nine percent of the programs were rated as excellent quality. In another study by Vandell and

Pierre (2003), the majority of care for older preschoolers was only of medium quality. Family involvement is one of five factors that may possibly improve this quality. The other four are child to staff ratio, caregiver education, learning experiences and activities of the care environment.

Preschool children are especially vulnerable due to their age and dependence on the adults around them. Parents of preschoolers, therefore, are naturally going to be more involved due to this dependency at this early developmental level. Families have the opportunity to provide the greatest influence on a child's developing competence via opportunities of modeling, guiding, and nurturance. Given the greater educational risks that face young children, family involvement in preschool is especially important (NRC, 2001). In recent years, there has been an increasing demand for preschool opportunities for children; many caregivers return to work and they want their children to gain from positive educational and social experiences (Kutnick, 1988). In 2004, 62% of married mothers with children under age six were in the labor force, and 53% of married mothers with infants under age one were in the labor force. In the same report, the workforce participation rate for single mothers with children under six is even higher; 77% of these mothers work outside the home (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005).

Although the importance of family involvement is widely accepted and acknowledged by early educators, there is substantially less research involving preschool populations than school age populations (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008). Developing a better foundation for parent-family involvement, may provide a more positive outcome in the long term. While Rimm-Kaufmann and Pianta (1999) report a decrease in teacher-family contact as children make the transition from preschool to kindergarten, parents who stayed involved beyond the early years helped students make better transitions and stay in school. Rimm-Kaufman and Zhang

(2005) found that two-thirds of fathers had contact with their child's preschool teacher, however, less than half of fathers had contact with kindergarten teachers. Marcon (1999) examined the parents of 708 low-income preschoolers. Involvement levels were found to be related to teacher ratings of language development and emergent academic skills. Specifically, he found increased parent-school involvement and more active types of parent involvement were both associated with more positive development in adaptive behavior and greater mastery of early basic school skills in all subject areas. Although girls outperformed boys, increased parent-school involvement was associated with especially positive development and academic performance in preschool boys. Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff and Ortiz (2008) studied the parents of 163 low-income preschoolers. Results of this study also indicate that parent-preschool involvement is related to children's preliteracy development.

Additional studies support the benefit of parent involvement in early childhood programs. Senachal and LeFevre (2002) asserted that family involvement behaviors are associated with improvements in language and early literacy skills. The findings of this five year longitudinal study suggest links from home experiences, through early literacy skills, to fluent reading. In this study, early home experiences were indirectly related to later reading performance. The pattern of results suggested that children's exposure to books at home played an important indirect role in the development of reading skills. Parent involvement in teaching children about reading and writing words was related to the development of early literacy skills. Miedel and Reynolds (1999) posited that increased family involvement was related to reductions in grade retention and special education referrals. This study investigated the longitudinal association between parent involvement in early intervention and children's later school competence. Results indicated that even after controlling for family background, the number of activities in

which parents participated in preschool and kindergarten was significantly associated with higher reading achievement, lower rates of grade retention at age 14 (eighth grade), and fewer years in special education.

Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, and Childs (2004), using a sample of Head Start preschool children, report that home-based involvement (e.g., parents reading to their children, providing a place for educational activities, asking a child about school) showed a stronger correlation with children's classroom competence than school-based involvement (e.g., going on class trips, volunteering in the classroom) or home-school conferencing (e.g., talking with the teacher about children's competencies or problems). They also found a strong correlation between home-based involvement strategies and children's receptive vocabulary skills, as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test –Third Edition. Taylor and Machida (1994) also examined teacher ratings of Head Start children. They found a moderate relationship between developmental indicators and teacher ratings of parental participation. Mantzicopoulos (1997) also assessed Head Start children with the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC). She found, however, that scores were not related to teacher ratings of parental involvement.

Simpkins, Weiss, McCartney, Kreider, and Dearing (2006) suggested that associations between family involvement in children's education and children's achievement vary based on the mother-child relationship of kindergarteners. These findings suggest that efforts to increase parental involvement in schools are most likely to improve child achievement if the overall quality of the parent-child interactions are also addressed. Kreider (2002) found that parents who were involved in early education programs read to their children more, were more likely to visit their children's kindergarten classrooms, and were more likely to network with other parents than those not involved in early childhood programs. In an early intervention long-term

7 year study by Kagitcibasi, Sunar, and Bekman (2001), children of "trained mothers" had longer-lasting and greater effects on achievement 7 years later. Both educational preschool and the mother trained programs had a positive effect on cognitive outcomes on 280 children.

Early childhood special education has long recognized the importance of the role of families. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, parents were seen as potential change agents for their young children in the first early intervention programs (Tharp & Wetzel, 1969). These early intervention programs had a parent training component to teach parents how to carry out the interventions with the child. According to McLean and Odom (1993), the 1980's led the way to family-focused intervention. Family-focused services incorporated aspects of family systems theory, focusing concern from the child to the mother-child dyad of the family unit. Later, the 1990's led to family-centered intervention in early childhood special education (Campbell, Strickland, & LaForme, 1992). This placed the family in the center of the assessment and intervention process. Over the years, perception of a parent's role has moved from a passive to active trainer to parents becoming their own directors of the intervention process.

When comparing early childhood programs, preschool special education programs are the most family-allied in their orientation (Dunst, 2002). McWilliam et al. (1995) surveyed over 500 parents of children receiving early intervention and preschool services. They found 70% of parents of children ages birth to 3 years indicated that practitioners tried to help them with what the family considered its needs, which is one characteristic of the family centered approach. However, 45% of parents of children ages 3 to 5 reported this as the case. Earnest, Sexton, Stricklin, Thompson, and Jardine (1997) also found that families of children in preschool special education programs rated practices they had encountered as less family-centered when compared with families of children in early intervention programs. Burton (1992) also reported that Head

Start programs were more family-centered than typical public school prekindergarten and kindergarten programs. Early intervention and to a lesser degree preschool special education programs have been shaped and influenced longer by the family-centered approach than have school age programs. Surprisingly, little is known about the characteristics and consequences of family-centeredness in early childhood compared with the school years (Dunst, 2002).

Thus, the research indicates the importance of family involvement and its many possible positive academic outcomes at the preschool level as well as in K-12. These outcomes may include: student achievement, attitudes toward learning, self-esteem, higher grades, test scores, better school attendance, higher graduation rates, greater enrollment in post-secondary education, higher student educational and occupational goals, positive attitudes about school and greater generalization and maintenance of treatment gains in special education (Adger, 2001; Barnard, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Feldman, 2003; Griffith, 2001; Henderson, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Koegel, Koegel, & Schreibman, 1991; Soucy & Larose, 2000; Swap, 1993). Although the importance of family involvement is widely accepted and acknowledged by early educators, there is substantially less research on this topic involving preschool populations than school age populations (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008). Also, the earlier families can get involved and collaborate with the school, the better the results (Shepard & Rose, 1995). This suggests the importance of a research focus on the preschool population when family involvement is at its highest point (Dearing et al., 2006; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Guralnick, 1998; Hansen, 1986; Ramey & Ramey, 1998; Rimm-Kaufmann and Pianta, 1999). Schools can impact families in a positive way to create a foundation that may carry over throughout the family/student's school career (Gettinger & Guetschow, 1998). Indirectly, this positive

relationship could influence that student into adulthood, facilitating a positive relationship in future generations. Surprisingly, little is known about the factors that influence these early stages of family involvement (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff & Ortiz, 2008), and even less for the preschool special education population.

Legislation, Policy, and Trends in Family Involvement

Federal and State legislation and policy initiatives all include specific information encouraging teachers to participate in parent involvement programs and to enhance their relationships with students, families, and the community. In the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) parental participation is one of eight goals. The United States Congress responded by formalizing parent and family involvement and by recognizing this goal as a vital part of national education reform. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards also includes standards for family involvement as does the national PTA (Shartrand et al., 1997). The National PTA (1997) developed the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs to help schools, communities, and parenting groups implement parent involvement programs with the aim of improving students' academic performance. The standards delineate certain practices that were shown to lead to success and high quality parent involvement programs.

Prior to the 1980's, many parents were reliant on professionals for training and emotional support (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). The impetus for parent participation in the schools began with political advocacy of parents with exceptional children (Fish, 2002). Historically, parents were often blamed for their children's educational problems and isolated from the decision making process (Pugach & Johnson, 1995). IDEA (Public Law 94-142, 1975) guarantees the right to a free and appropriate education for all learners with disabilities. It also ensures continuous involvement of parents in educational planning, decision making, and

implementation as one of its six principles. Prior to its passage, Congress found that up to one million of the estimated eight million children with disabilities in the United States were excluded from public school services. Another three million children were being served improperly (Smith, 2005). In the last three decades, special education legislation has included the family's perspective and input as critical legal components of instructional planning. IDEA was further strengthened in P.L. 101-476 (1990) and in the reauthorization of P.L. 105-17 (1997) and lastly P.L. 108-446 (2004). Current policies and practices encourage parents in educational matters.

Since 1975, Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) had been a mandated program only for 6 to 18 year old students with disabilities. In 1986, the United States Congress passed "The Preschool Law" Public Law 99-457 (Education of Handicapped Children Act) Part B that provided incentives for states to extend the law for 3 to 5 year old children with disabilities. Preschoolers were now also provided with rights to access a free and appropriate public education. In P.L 99-457 section 619 Part H also established a program for infants and toddlers from birth through 3 years of age and their families. This law contained provisions for significant involvement of families.

Thus partnerships at the early childhood level received attention. An example of this specific attention is the implementation of the IFSP, Individualized Family Service Plan, created for children under 3 years of age, qualifying for developmentally delayed Early Intervention programs. P.L. 99-457 stipulates that a multidisciplinary team that includes the parent or guardian develop an IFSP that has a statement of the family's strengths and needs in enhancing the development of the disabled infant or toddler. Thus, the family is the focus of service delivery. This legislation strengthens the commitment to family involvement set forth in P.L 94-

142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This law mandates parents to participate with professionals when creating an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), for their special education children, ages three and up to address their strengths and deficits (Cronin, Slade, Bechtel & Anderson, 1992). The law also enables parents to initiate a hearing if they do not agree with the diagnosis of the child, the placement, and/or the IEP. Because of changing federal legislation, parents are now equal partners with school personnel, entitling them to access children's school records and participate in the design and evaluation of special education services.

In 2002 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law as The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). It was created with the goal of improving education through a system of accountability plans for schools and school districts (Spitser, 2007). Although NCLB has brought public attention to annual achievement tests and high-quality teachers, it also includes important requirements for family involvement. School reform includes requirements for schools, districts, and states to promote school, family, and community partnerships and to communicate with families and the public about student achievement and the quality of each school (Epstein, 2005). Federal funding for Comprehensive School Reform (CSR), Title I Part F specifies that all programs provide for the meaningful involvement of parents. Title I was reauthorized in 1994, which placed a greater emphasis on parent involvement, than its predecessor Chapter 1. Title I provisions emphasize policy involvement by parents at the school and district level; shared school-family responsibility for high academic performance expressed as school-parent compacts; and parent capacity for productive mutual collaboration. Title I also requires schools to develop a written parent involvement policy as well as the school-parent compacts that describe the responsibilities of both the school and

parents to achieve high standards. Federal policies such as these recognize the importance of family involvement as an effort to improve the quality of schools and the education children receive (Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004).

Parents are not always invited to participate as partners with school personnel. Spann, Kohler, and Soenksen (2003) surveyed 45 families of 6 counties in a mid-eastern state, about their knowledge and involvement in their child's IEP process. Fifty-six percent of the participants reported moderate involvement, whereas 33% and 11% indicated high and low involvement, respectively. Interestingly, 44% of parents also indicated that they believed that schools were doing little or nothing to address their child's most pressing needs, whereas 29% and 27% believed that schools were expending moderate and high degrees of effort. Similarly, Able-Boone, Goodwin, Sandall, Gordon, and Martin (1992) surveyed 290 parents about their involvement in early intervention services. They concluded that many parents reported that IFSP plans were not developed jointly or failed to reflect families' existing views and priorities.

Through Federal and State legislation and policy initiatives, it is evident that parent involvement is strongly supported in our nation's judicial and educational reform. Families are indispensable partners in education planning and delivery of supports and services. Education practices and strategies have an improved chance of effectiveness if they are implemented and generalized across all settings, (i.e., home and community) (Koegel, Koegel, & Schreibman, 1991; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Simpson, de Boer-Ott, Smith-Myles, 2003; Spitser, 2007). The consideration of family participation should include determining the best possible level of participation based on family characteristics, stressors affecting the family, and the individual needs of the child (Iovannone, Dunlap, Huber, & Kincaid, 2003). Although there are laws, policies, and initiatives put in place to include families in their child's education, schools and

families still struggle to maintain collaborative relationships (Sheldon, 2002). Most schools leave parent involvement in the schools up to the individual families themselves (Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004). Some schools, however, are working to develop comprehensive plans for partnerships to turns their goals of family involvement into positive results (Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004).

Theoretical Perspectives of Family Involvement

Schools, families, and children are interconnected in many ways. Knight and Wadsworth (1999) identified three theoretical bases for promoting active family involvement: transactional theory of development, family systems theory, and ecological theory of human development. In transactional theory of development, there are changes in an individual that occur as a result of the interactions between genetics and environment, (Sameroff & Fiese, 1990); these can include the child and his or her family. In family systems theory, there is importance in understanding the various aspects of the family and how the members interact in order to effectively meet the needs of both the child and the other family members (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Ecological theory places the family within its own microsystem, interacting continuously with many other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Therefore, it is important to understand the influences of other systems on the child and family (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The ecological model will be best used in this study as the family and school systems are continuously influencing the student and the student continuously influencing with the school and family.

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1999) ecological model, human development is shaped by various interacting systems. These systems include the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. The core theoretical premise is that human development is a function of the forces from all the various systems. The microsystem is characterized by direct,

intimate and interactional processes such as familial relationships or close friendships. As it is the layer closest to the child, it encompasses the relationship and interactions a child has on his/her immediate surroundings. These structures include family, school, or childcare environments (Berk, 2000). Bronfenbrenner hypothesized that significant others continually influence individual development. At this level, relationships have impact in two directions, away and towards the child. An example would include sibling relationships that can impact on the child's behavior; however, the child also affects the behavior of his/her siblings. The mesosystem is characterized by the processes that occur between two or more settings. This is the layer that provides the connections between the structures of the child's microsystem (Berk, 2000). Children are impacted in various ways by the functioning of the mesosystem. An example is the connection between the child's teacher and his/her parent, such as the family involvement partnership, which is the focus of this study. The exosystem is characterized by the processes that occur between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the individual. For example, a parent works for a company without a flexible time schedule and the child becomes ill. Unfortunately, this parent cannot come home and care for the child.

Children's development can be influenced by policies made by school boards and employment policies set by parents' employers. The macrosystem consists of patterns that can be found in a given culture. These patterns can be ideologies, activities, world views, and belief systems. For example, our economic system and the values and customs of the society are ideologies or values that are shared in a society. Bronfenbrenner (1989) has postulated that these four systems are bi-directional and are continuously influencing the individual, as the individual is continuously influencing the systems. It is the ecological system that both explicitly and implicitly endows meaning to social networks, institutions, roles, activities, and their

interrelations. An alteration within one system also has the potential to affect every level of systemic functioning. Each level is interrelated and children's opportunities and risks depend on how these systems work together for the education of children. This ecological model attempts to incorporate characteristics of the family, school, and the community in its scope of study, thus promoting interaction between home and school to affect child development.

Definitions of Family Involvement

Crozier (1999) shows that family involvement is beset with problems of definition. He is critical and believes that family involvement initiatives presume that schools, parents, and pupils are relatively homogeneous, equally willing and capable of developing parental involvement schemes, and all agree on what constitutes and what should be the aims of family involvement. There are many operational definitions of family involvement used in the literature (Baker & Soden, 1998; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1992; Jeynes, 2005) with little consistency. The definitions range from parental aspirations, expectations, interests, and attitudes and beliefs regarding education to more active parental participation in specific activities in the home or at school (Hong & Ho, 2005). There are also several terms used to describe the relationship between the home and school, namely; family involvement, parent involvement, home-school collaboration, family-school involvement, home-school relationship, family-school relation and home-school partnerships (Baker & Soden 1998; Brantlinger 1991; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein & Dauber 1991; Epstein 1992; Hansen 1986; Jeynes, 2005; Stevenson & Baker 1987).

Brain and Reid (2003) reported that some of the school administrators surveyed in their study believed that family involvement included parents ensuring that their children attended school, behaved properly, and supported the aims and goals of the school. Other school officials

in their survey regarded family involvement as anything that involved contacting parents. In a study by Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) teachers defined parent involvement differently than parents. Teachers viewed a parent's primary role as one of support for academic achievement, while parents viewed it as supporting a child's well-being. Fine (1993) stated that a parent's role in the eyes of school personnel must go beyond signing permission slips, volunteering for bake sales, and crisis intervention for behavior issues. However, Reglin (1993) broadly defined school involvement as positive actions by family members to support the efforts of the school by performing these positive acts in the school, in the home, or in the community. Ratelle, Larose, Guay, and Senecal (2005) defined parental involvement as "providing resources to their child and being interested and attentive to the child, as well as providing emotional resources" (p. 286). All parents cannot be involved to the same degree, but they should all be invited to participate in a range of different school activities.

Baker and Soden (1998) reviewed the challenges of parent involvement research by critically evaluating over 200 parent involvement research studies. They found that while most practitioners and researchers supported the policy direction of increased parent involvement, few agreed about what is effective involvement or what defines involvement. They also found flaws in existing research regarding inconsistent definitions of parent involvement as well as flaws in use of non-experimental designs, lack of isolation of parent involvement effects, and non-objective measures of parent involvement. They found that few studies operationalized the definition of family involvement in the same way. Some researchers focus on attitudinal components, or behavioral aspects, or conceptualize it as parenting style /interaction patterns. These differences therefore, make it difficult to assess cumulative knowledge across the different studies.

DesJardin (2003) determined that there were no studies that have defined parental involvement in terms of following through with prescribed interventions at home with their child. Baker and Soden (1998) also posited that in studies thus far, definitions of parental involvement varied widely, included parental aspirations and expectations of their child's educational success, and included behavioral aspects and parenting styles. Bruder (2000) and Fan and Chen (2001) noted that differences in definitions and measurements of parental involvement make it difficult to assess cumulative knowledge across different studies, may inhibit any replication efforts, and could create a research-to-practice gap.

Fan and Chen (2001) reviewed the voluminous body of literature of family involvement in their meta-analysis and discuss some promising frameworks that explain/define involvement. In one framework Epstein (1987) identified four types of parental involvement in schools: a) basic obligations, b) school to home communications, c) parent involvement at school, and d) parent involvement in learning activities at home. After further study, Epstein (1992, 1994) expanded the typology to six types of parent involvement. She views this issue mainly from the perspective of schools, and her research is usually concerned with what schools can do to stimulate more active parental involvement. Epstein (1995) presented a well-founded typology naming six independent types of parent involvement, which ideally occur in a school setting: a) parenting, b) communication, c) volunteering, d) learning at home, e) decision-making, and f) collaborating with the community. In 2002, Epstein clearly defined each of these types that can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

The Epstein Typology

Section	Type	Description
A	Parenting	Assist families with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children.
B	Communicating	Communicate with families about school programs and student progress. Create two-way communication channels between school and home.
C	Volunteering	Improve recruitment, training, activities, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and as audiences at the school or in other locations. Enable educators to work with volunteers who support students and the school.
D	Learning at Home	Involve families with their children in academic learning at home, including homework, goal setting, and other curriculum-related activities. Encourage teachers to design homework that enables students to share and discuss interesting tasks.
E	Decision Making	Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations.
F	Collaborating with the Community	Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with community groups, including businesses, agencies, cultural, and civic organizations, and colleges or universities. Enable all to contribute service to the community.

Note. From Epstein, J.L., Sanders, M.G., Simon, B.S., Salinas, K.C., Jansorn, N.R., & VanVoorhis, F.L. (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:Corwin.

Epstein directs the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) that was established in the mid-1990's. It is based on research conducted in collaboration with the city of Baltimore, other cities across the United States as well as Canada, England, Hong Kong, Poland, and Australia to implement family involvement programs. The guidance for family involvement for all the NNPS programs is based on Epstein's theory and framework for involvement (Epstein, 2001). The National Parent Teacher Association (1997) has also developed the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement programs that are based on the Epstein typology.

Another framework is based on the work of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995). Their work focuses on three main issues: a) why parents become involved in their children's education, b) how parents choose specific types of involvement, and c) why parental involvement has positive influence on students' education outcomes. According to Fan and Chen (2001), this promises to be more than a typology for parent involvement because it deals with specific types of involvement, and it attempts to explain why parents choose to be involved, as well as what mechanisms occur through which parental involvement exerts positive influences on students' educational outcomes. It is still unclear, however, how the major elements in this model: a) parents' role construction, b) parents' sense of self-efficacy and c) general invitations, demands, and opportunities for involvement, can be operationally defined and measured empirically (Fan & Chen 2001). They noted that family involvement is thought of simplistically, perceived in one dimension, when in fact in reality it is multi-faceted in nature. Therefore, different dimensions of family involvement should be measured separately as well as summed up into a general composite.

For example, Jeynes (2005) defined parental involvement as parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children. He further added more specific variables

of general, specific, communication, homework, expectations, reading, attendance and participation, and parenting style supporting the multi-dimensionality of family involvement. Baker and Soden (1998) discussed using the Epstein typology to aid in clarification of the definition. According to Hong and Ho (2005), there is a need to consider the multidimensionality of the construct and specify the components of family involvement, and their study supported this aspect as well. The Epstein typology attempts to clarify the complexity of the multi-faceted aspects of involvement. Baker and Soden also suggested that this might prove useful in developing a measurement, as it provides a widely accepted typology of parent involvement. The NCLB Act now includes this definition of parental involvement; therefore, this study used the current Epstein framework as a definition for family involvement. This typology of involvement provides a structure around which a school can organize and evaluate its efforts to involve parents in their children's education, thus reducing the discord between the home, school, and community (Epstein et al., 2002). A questionnaire, Family Involvement Teacher Survey –Preschool, (FITS-P), based on the Epstein typology and developed and pilot-tested for identifying preschool teachers' attitudes and perceptions of their knowledge and competency in family involvement (Marchini & Fish, 2005) was used. Using the FITS-P in this study captured the multidimensional nature of family involvement by using the Epstein framework. In this study, I used the Epstein typology to clearly define family involvement and used the term family involvement.

Teacher, School, and Parent Variables that Affect Family Involvement

In reviewing the literature, variables that affect the development of family involvement and collaboration between home and school can be organized in three domains: teacher, school, and parent (Fan & Chen. 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995;

Jeynes, 2005; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Swap, 1990). Several variables that may affect a teachers' ability to facilitate family involvement are: teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, and teacher experience (Shartrand, Kreider, & Erickson-Warfield, 1994). School variables that may impact facilitation of family involvement are school support and school logistical variables. There are other parent variables that may affect facilitation of family-school involvement such as parent efficacy variables, parents' cultural differences and logistical variables (Fan & Chen. 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jeynes, 2005; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Soodak & Erwin, 2000). This review will focus on teacher and school variables which will be used in the study.

Teacher attitudes. The attitudes of a child's teacher toward family involvement can be a facilitator or barrier to family involvement. Attitudes can influence a parent's wish to participate in the school or classroom. A teacher's attitude can be defined as a "teacher's emotional response in support of or against family involvement practices" or "one's perception and ideas about the effectiveness of parents' instructional support of their children at home." (Jones, White, Aeby, & Benson, 1997, pp. 154). Jones et al. (1997) conducted a study that focused on student and teacher characteristics affecting teacher attitudes toward parental involvement in elementary and middle school. Results of this study that used a parent and teacher interview questionnaire indicated that teacher attitudes are affected by ability level of the students and by teacher race. Teachers who taught large proportions of higher ability students had a more positive view of a family's strengths than those who taught lower ability students. Furthermore, African American teachers had a more positive attitude towards parental involvement than European American teachers.

In other research an unspoken negative bias toward family involvement is commonly held by teachers. Epstein (1991) found that even though teachers thought that family involvement would improve student achievement, they still had reservations about whether they could motivate the parents to become more involved. At times, teachers may often believe that parents are neither interested in participating in their children's education nor are they trained to teach (Soodak & Erwin, 2000). Attitudes are difficult to teach and change (Harris, 1980). It is true that teachers have knowledge and expertise about effective teaching; it is also true that families have information to offer about their unique situation, their child's competencies, and the activities they participate in and learn through (Bruder,2000; Soodak & Erwin, 2000). In the Shartrand et al. (1997) study, respondents reported that schools had blaming-type attitudes toward families or we-are-the-experts approach. Comparably, parents sometimes feel intimidated by school administrators, staff, and teachers, and feel that they lack the knowledge and skills to help educate their children (Fish 1990; Riley 1994). This myth of parental indifference, however, has been deflated in study after study (Chavkin, 1993; Epstein & Sanders 1998). Positive attitudes, however, are embraced and reflected by agencies, organizations, communities, and those conducting research, training, and service delivery (Bruder, 2000).

According to Hilliard and Pelo (2001), some teachers are fearful of parents judging their teaching style or methods and may construct boundaries to protect their classroom climate, while other teachers may regard themselves as the experts and do not respect the importance of the family. One preschool teacher in this study explained that she formerly expected the families to "check themselves at the door," but has since changed her philosophy to work with families to fully know a child (Hilliard & Pelo, 2001, p. 49.). The Pena (2000) study explored parents' views in one urban elementary school in Texas. Her study found that parent involvement was

influenced by attitudes of school staff. Parents emphasized that school staff must take the time to gain the trust of parents and inform them of how they can be involved. In her study, parents indicated that they would like the attitudes of school staff to change, suggesting that they recognized the advantages of teachers and parents working together.

In order for family involvement practices to improve, teachers will need to reject the family deficit model and embrace a view that includes parent participation and collaboration. Mapp (2002) professed that when school staff engage in caring and trusting relationships with parents, these relationships enhance family involvement. Parents can not be limited to volunteering and sponsoring events but must be an integral part of the curriculum (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006). For example, Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2006) suggested that primary teachers can initiate a number of strategies to bridge the home-school gap. These can include but are not limited to home visits, school-based meetings, and parent newsletters. It is important to examine how teacher attitudes impact their family involvement behaviors.

Teacher preparation/training. Another teacher variable impacting effective family involvement, is teacher pre-service and in-service training and preparation involving family members in schools. According to Chavkin (1991), teacher education in family involvement is one of the most potentially effective methods of reducing almost all barriers to strong home-school partnerships. Approved teacher education programs, therefore, hold the potential for providing student teachers with the strategies, general knowledge, and attitudes needed to achieve increased family involvement. The Specialty Area Studies Board of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) endorsed the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) guidelines for pre-service training of special educators. Within these

guidelines are principles advocating the development of skills to collaborate with families and emphasizing the benefits of positive relationships with them (Swan & Sirvis, 1992).

Teachers need concrete strategies, general knowledge, and positive attitudes about family involvement in order to collaborate effectively with families (Burton 1992; Fish 1990). DeAcosta (1996) studied teacher preparation programs, and she suggested that teachers will need both theoretical and experiential knowledge of families, homes, and communities to meet this objective. In a study by Houston and Williamson (1990), elementary teachers conveyed that during their education, they had received little or no training in conducting parent conferences, communicating with, or building a positive relationship with parents of their students. Among the teacher education programs surveyed in Shartrand et al. (1997), more family involvement training exists at the early childhood level than at any of the other levels. They concluded that early childhood programs had more fully required courses addressing family involvement, offered more hours of family involvement training, used guest speakers for teaching family involvement more frequently, and had more courses addressing an understanding of parents than did K-12 programs. They also found that the quality of family involvement in education appeared to be higher at the early childhood level than at the K-12 levels.

In a study by Knight and Wadsworth (1999), the authors sent questionnaires to chairpersons of special education departments of 146 university/colleges, and found that 83% addressed family issues. However, for undergraduates, it was only 1 to 2 hours per semester. A separate family issues course is only required and is typically placed at a graduate level of study. This is a disservice for undergraduate teachers who are teaching and pursuing master degrees in their first classrooms, who start with a lack of knowledge about family-school partnerships. This knowledge needs to be a required component for those already in field in-services between

school districts and their local teacher training institutions (Knight & Wadsworth, 1999; Shartrand et al., 1997).

Evidence suggests that parent-teacher contact tends to be a function of academic or behavioral problems rather than used to provide helpful hints or invitations to become involved in the educational process (Dornbusch & Glasgow, 1996). According to the recommendations made by Swan and Sirvis (1992), this type of interaction would not typically facilitate positive parent- teacher relationships. Based on their research evidence, teachers need to be educated to promote better family involvement prior to problem situations. Teaching and learning should move toward experiential methods that are more likely to equip teachers with the problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills needed to create meaningful relationships with students and families (Swan & Sirvis, 1992).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (1997), 48 % of principals in Title I schools believe that lack of staff training in how to work with families poses a barrier. Teachers must also learn new ways to involve parents in the learning process. After 30 years, research tells us that the starting point of putting children on the road to excellence is parental involvement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Despite this, research has also shown that pre-service teacher education programs often do not adequately prepare teachers to involve parents (Chavkin, 1991). Surveys of teacher educators, teachers, and administrators by Shartrand, Kreider, and Erickson-Warfield (1994) support the conclusion that programs for teacher education neither provide student teachers with information about and supervised experiences in working with families, nor expect them to demonstrate relevant competencies and skills for certification.

There is also a minimal amount of training provided in pre-service teacher training programs regarding communication and collaboration skills with families (Bailey, Simeonsson, Yoder, & Huntington, 1990). Brantlinger (1991) found an absence of pre-service training and course work in family-related topics within teacher preparation programs that has possibly contributed to the reticence of special educators to embrace family/professional collaboration. Unfortunately, as important as family involvement is, it is rarely addressed in teacher training or professional development.

Thus, a serious discrepancy exists between pre-service preparation and the types of family involvement activities that teachers are increasingly being expected to perform in schools. Therefore, changes made at the pre-service level, quite possibly would reach the greatest number of future teachers. This could raise the quality of home-school partnerships. Several findings listed in the International Reading Association (2002) statement also corroborate this information.

Mohlman, Kierstead, and Gundlach (1982) identified three common barriers to teacher implementation of training techniques: a) not believing in the program's philosophy, b) thinking change will cost too much or require too much effort, and c) inability to apply theory to practical situations. According to Swan and Sirvis (1992), all three of these barriers are more likely to be overcome, if programs incorporate a practicum component. Trainees can test out new techniques for themselves, getting direct proof of the program's efficacy, determining how costly and difficult implementation would be, and generating their own practical applications under a trainer's supervision (Burton, 1992).

Researchers are beginning to insist that practicum components are essential to teacher training programs (Mesibov, Shea, & Schopler, 2004). Lectures, manuals, and demonstrations

require only passive receipt of training. Allowing trainees to practice what they have learned from other methods makes them more active learners. Showers (1990) asserted that those researchers who make the effort to investigate often find that skill-based training programs result in absolutely no implementation once teachers return to their classrooms. She has noticed that even if teachers enthusiastically practice the skills during training, transfer of training to the classroom is not automatic. Because of this phenomenon, it is clear that the overarching goals of training programs should be implementation and maintenance. Unless these goals are met, the impact of any training program on students in classrooms or with their families will be limited. It is important to examine how teacher preparation and training impact their family involvement behaviors.

Teacher experience. Research has shown some critical distinctions between novice and more experienced teachers with regard to content and pedagogical knowledge, classroom management skills, problem solving skills, and decision making (Berliner, 1994; Palmer, Stough Burdenski, & Gonzales, 2005). Teachers with more experience are likely to have different attitudes about their students and think and behave differently as compared to novice teachers (Palmer et al., 2005). Although teacher experience is not often listed as a variable in relation to family involvement, teachers can quite possibly become complacent as their teaching careers progress. Ramirez (2001) interviewed many teachers, but several with over 8 years of experience indicated a loss of enthusiasm with regard to involving the families of their students as they continued in their teaching careers. Teachers focused instead on teaching their students alone. This under-researched variable, therefore, needs to be further explored.

Research evaluating the relations between teaching experience and teachers' sense of self efficacy has produced mixed results. Some studies (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993, Ross, Cousins, &

Gadalla, 1996), have associated increased teacher experience with higher levels of teacher self-efficacy. Ross et al. (1996) found evidence in their study with 92 high school teachers that greater years of teaching experience was associated with higher levels of teachers' sense of efficacy. In contrast, however, this positive association was not found in other studies (Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988; Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Greenwood, Olejnik, & Parkay, 1990; Guskey, 1987). According to Wolters and Daugherty (2007), however, many of these studies had small sample sizes and a restricted range of teaching experience.

School support. Despite some promising models and growing evidence of the benefits of connections, policymakers, funding agencies, school systems, and state education agencies are still not demonstrating maximum support for connection-building practice (Jordan, Orozco & Averett 2001). According to Shartrand et al. (1997), there are a number of variables that affect family involvement that seem to exist in schools. The first, the school itself may discourage family involvement. According to the National Task Force on School Readiness (1991), there is a lack of adequate time and training of teachers and administrators. Therefore, the school culture places little value on the views and participation of parents, particularly because there are pressing demands on teachers' time and energy. There may be a lack of support from the administration that inhibits family involvement. Teachers often need incentives such as recognition or encouragement in order to extend themselves to the families of their students (Swick & McKnight, 1989). In recent years, legislators are attempting to make policy changes to increase teacher accountability (Juhasz, 2004). Forcing teachers to teach to measurable standards reduces valuable instructional and interactive time with students and their families (Juhasz, 2004) thereby possibly discouraging the development of family involvement.

In a study by Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000), the authors surveyed 200 superintendents in 15 American states concerning their districts' parent involvement policies and programs. More than 90% of the school districts responding to the survey indicated having at least one policy in place that addresses parent involvement. These same districts, however, were least likely to indicate that they had policies to train teachers to work with families.

School logistical variables. Two variables specific to the special education preschool population are a) limited face-to-face contact between teachers and parents, and b) extensive paperwork (Smith, 2005; Walton, 1999). In typical preschools, communication is school-based and/or casual. For example, parents converse freely with preschool teachers at drop-off and dismissal times. Also, phone calls and notes are exchanged more in preschool than in kindergarten (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2005). Services to preschool students with disabilities are generally provided for in center-based programs (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004). The passage of the Federal Handicapped Act, Public Law 94-142, and Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act changed the ways schools provide education-related transportation for children with disabilities. Transportation via bus is provided through a financial collaboration with the local school district and the department of transportation. Therefore, preschoolers with disabilities family members will have less face to face contact with the school and more telephone and written communication, since they do not physically drop off and pick up their child from the local school. Conversely, parents of preschool children with disabilities require regular contact with their children's teachers and other therapy providers in order to monitor their progress, discuss on-going problems, or simply inform each other of issues or advice relating to the children (Soodak & Erwin, 2000).

Secondly, Smith (2005) reported that special education teachers must spend extensive time on paperwork as well as lesson plans such as, updating progress reports, annual reports, and renewing IEP goals. Excessive paperwork has been cited by some teachers as their primary reason for leaving the teaching profession (Smith, 2005). The reauthorization of IDEA 2004 has made some changes in the reduction of paperwork, but this reduction did not occur at the preschool level. Thus, the use of time for administrative duties and activities such as paperwork and the lack of regular family contact may impact family-school involvement specifically for families of children with disabilities. Measures of school support are incorporated in this study with the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide (2003) that is a measure indicating administrative school support.

Parent efficacy. While this study focused on teacher and school variables, parent variables have also been found to impact family involvement (Fan & Chen. 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jeynes, 2005; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Soodak & Erwin, 2000). Examples of these variables include parent efficacy, cultural differences, and parent logistical issues.

Regardless of the evidence of the positive effects of family involvement, its potential is still largely ignored in schools. Teachers do not regularly develop family involvement in their classrooms, and parents do not always involve themselves even when they are encouraged to be involved (Shartrand et al., 1997). According to Hoover Dempsey and Sandler (1995), parents' decisions to become involved are based on three factors: the belief that they should be involved, the belief that their involvement will make a difference in their children's education, and the existence of opportunities for involvement. They suggest that schools and communities can better engage families by working actively to invite and welcome parent involvement by

developing programs that support and enhance parents' efficacy for involvement in their children's schooling.

Research has shown that parent efficacy about school achievement can be another variable affecting parents' views of their ability to be involved with their child's education. Some parents may feel a sense of omission, hopelessness, or even low self-esteem in relation to involvement in the school and as a result, are less likely to involve themselves in their children's education (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Parents who possess higher degrees of education have been found to be more involved in their child's education (Coleman & Churchill, 1997; Sheldon, 2002). The parental efficacy, or their belief about whether or not they possess the ability to make an impact on their child's education, may be related to their previous level of education and previous educational experiences (Sheldon, 2002).

Fine (1993) identified several obstacles that stand in the way of parents helping their children and participating in the schools. In her work with three urban school districts, she found that parents feel they do not know enough to be helpful, cannot ask the "right" questions, are blamed for their children's problems at school, and/or their collaboration is not appreciated. Parents can possibly fear retaliation from teachers against their children if they are too vocal, express criticism, or make suggestions (Levine & Trickett, 2000). In this same study Levine and Trickett (2000) found that parents who perceived discrimination from school personnel, indicated that they felt resentfulness and distrust, however, also felt helpless to complain. Bemak and Cornely (2002) worked with school counselors and coined the term *marginalized families* for those families who are difficult for schools to reach and who are not participating in their children's psychological and academic development. They also coined the term *integrated families* for those who feel comfortable in schools and regularly participate in PTA and Booster

club type activities. Many marginalized families have had negative experiences with schools and are reluctant to reenter these settings (Eccles & Harold, 1996), often lacking certain interpersonal skills to effectively advocate for their children or themselves in a school setting and frequently misunderstood by school staff who do not appreciate or even understand their life struggles (Bemak & Cornely, 2002).

Shumow and Lomax (2001) used a national sample of 900 families with children aged 10-17 to examine parents' feelings of success in guiding their children. It was found that parents who had a high sense of efficacy believed that they could help their children do well in school, be happy and be safe. They also believed they could overcome negative influences and keep their children away from trouble makers, illegal drugs, or alcohol. Lastly, they believed they could have a positive impact such as improving quality of the school and making the neighborhood a better place.

As technology progresses, schools progress and are able to reach parents and vice versa via e-mail services. Lower SES families may not have the availability of internet access, making families acutely aware of limitations for communication. The changes in methods of communication may add to the difficulty of parent efficacy, leaving technologically deprived populations behind (Walton, 1999).

Not all types of family involvement are equally acceptable to both parents and teachers. Parents may be more interested in advocacy and decision making, whereas teachers and administrators seem to be more comfortable with traditional family involvement activities, such as parents' supporting school programs and attending school meetings. (National PTA, 1997). These different expectations, therefore, can inhibit home-school partnerships (Shartrand et al., 1997). Soodak and Erwin (2000) suggest that mere participation in their young children's

education does not ensure parents' membership in the school. Rather, when parents perceive that schools fully support the inclusion of their children and their participation in their child's special education, they feel like valued and respected members of the school community. Most importantly, when parents believed that they and their children were welcome and accepted members of the school and classroom community, effective parent-professional partnerships were possible.

Parent cultural differences. As the population becomes more ethnically diverse, teachers and parents will likely come from different cultural, racial, and economic backgrounds, leading at times to contrasting values and beliefs (Murphy, 1991). In a study by Al-Hassan and Gardner (2002), however, they found that minority cultures represented among students are typically not reflected in teachers, who most often come from the majority culture. There are certain cultures which believe it to be disrespectful to communicate with teachers, fearing that communication sends a message of second guessing a teacher. The expectations, customs, experiences, and values of the schools are very different from the children's homes and parents may be unwilling or unaware of how to integrate these two environments (Coleman & Churchill, 1997). This is expressed in many studies that suggest that family involvement varies by parents' cultural background (Sheldon, 2002). Parents who are immigrants with a limited proficiency in English may also have an added obstacle such as a fear of discovery of undocumented status (Levine & Trickett, 2000). Parents who speak minimal to no English may not be able to understand information sent home and may not be able to respond to requests, information or suggestions for involvement at home (Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002). As discussed in Keyser (2001), these types of parents may refrain from involving themselves because they feel inferior to teachers and intimidated by teachers' expertise.

Families of all backgrounds are active in their children's education, but research demonstrates that they are active in slightly different ways. Ho Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) found some variation by ethnicity in that African American parents reported higher involvement than whites reported in all types of involvement at home. Asian and Hispanic parents reported slightly higher levels of home supervision than whites did. Asian parents also reported spending less time discussing school, communicating with school staff, volunteering, and attending PTO meetings than white families.

Parents from diverse cultures and backgrounds can make better choices for what to do to help children learn if they have an understanding of home factors that contribute to learning. Programs designed to assist parents to support and encourage their children have proved beneficial in promoting children's learning at school (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993).

Parent logistical issues. Changing employment patterns and demographics may make it more difficult to develop family involvement. The nuclear families of the 1950's are no longer the norm in the United States. The rise in the number of dual-worker families can affect the overall family involvement in a child's education because dual-worker families have less time to spend on family involvement (Swap, 1990). Research by Sheldon (2002) found that mothers who work full-time tend to be less involved in schools than other mothers. In another study by Turbiville, Umbarger, and Guthrie (2000), fathers expressed frustration at not being able to participate in weekday activities at their children's schools due to conflicting work schedules. When combined with teachers' time-consuming responsibilities that often limit their availability to meet with family members outside of the school day, this becomes another barrier in the development of increased family involvement (Swap, 1990). These changing demographics

have created a situation in which fostering that involvement requires an increasing effort on the part of schools. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005), more children come from families where two parents work, more come from single-parent families, and more come from a wider variety of cultural and economic backgrounds than ever before. Research has shown that traditional families in which both parents are present in the home are more involved in their children's education than non-traditional families (Sheldon, 2002).

In a study by Nord and West (2001), biological two-parent families were found to be the most likely to be highly involved in their children's education. This was followed by biological single-parent mothers, and biological mothers with step-fathers. For fathers, the highest level of involvement was found to be biological single-parent fathers, followed by biological fathers with step-mothers, biological fathers in two-parent biological families, and lastly stepfathers.

Summary

While the importance of family involvement is clear and the literature provides numerous studies identifying variables that impact this family-school relationship (Fan & Chen. 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hill, Baker, & Marjoribanks, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jeynes, 2005; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Swap, 1990), there are no empirical studies that examine the relationship among variables such as teacher attitudes, experience, training and school support on actual teacher behaviors used in schools. This is especially true in early childhood when family involvement is often highest (Epstein, 1992) as well as in special education where family involvement is essential. In order to improve our understanding of teachers' involvement with parents, this study looked at variables that impact preschool special education teacher behaviors. It is important for future interventions to include family involvement outreach, a successful approach that will implement changes in the way teachers

perceive and enact strategies to involve parents. This study would enable preschool administrators to focus on facilitators and obstacles, increase strategies and improve the working partnership between schools and families, thereby increasing family involvement.

Rationale

An ecological model attempts to incorporate characteristics of the family, school, and the community in its scope of study, thus promoting interaction between microsystems of home and school to affect child development in this mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). There is clear evidence that family involvement with schools impacts children on all levels (Epstein, 1991; Epstein, Simon, & Salinas; Fan & Chen, 2001; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Henderson, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Simon, 2001; Soucy & Larose, 2000; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1991; Swap, 1993; Van Voorhis, 2001). Specifically, involvement of families of preschool children is especially critical due to their dependency at this developmental level. Developing an early foundation for family involvement may provide a more positive outcome in the long term (Guralnick, 1998; Ramey & Ramey, 1998). Undoubtedly, the sooner families get involved and collaborate with the school, the better the results in their overall academic performance (Shepard & Rose, 1995). Of particular importance is family-school collaboration when children have disabilities (Soodak & Erwin, 2000; Simpson, de Boer-Ott, & Smith-Myles 2003). This study focused on the special education preschool population where teachers can work with families in a positive way to create a foundation that may carry over this positive perception throughout the family/student's school career. Few can agree on what is effective involvement or what defines involvement (Baker & Soden, 1998; Hong & Ho, 2005), however, the Epstein typology (1995) attempts to clarify the complexity of the multi-faceted aspects of family involvement that ideally would occur in a

school setting. This study used the current Epstein framework as a six part definition for family involvement. While the importance of family involvement is clear, there are a number of school and teacher variables that may impact the development of a family-school relationship and include; teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and level of school support. This study examined teacher and school variables, specifically, teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and school support that impact actual family involvement behaviors.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses focus on how teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, years of experience, and level of school support impacted family involvement behaviors as they relate to the six-part framework outlined by Epstein (1995). Family involvement attitudes were measured using the FITS-P, an attitude scale developed based on the six part framework. Family involvement behaviors were measured using the FITPQ, a teacher practice questionnaire also developed based on the six part framework. Specifically, it was hypothesized that:

H0 1: Total FITS-P scores for reported attitude toward family involvement will be positively related to reported teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ. Further, it is expected that each of the 6 subscales would be positively related to reported teacher family involvement behavior.

H0 2: Teacher experience will be negatively related to total reported teacher attitude toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P total score.

H0 3: Teacher experience will be negatively related to total reported teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ total score.

H0 4: Prior preparation/training in family involvement will be positively related to reported teacher attitude toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P composite.

H0 5: Prior preparation/training in family involvement will be positively related to reported family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ composite.

School support was measured using the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide by VESID and SED (2003), an assessment scale that measures the preschool administrator's level of support for increasing family involvement. The final hypotheses address the relationship among school variables as well as possible predictors of teacher family involvement behavior:

H0 6: The reported level of school support, as measured by Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide, will be positively related to reported teacher attitude toward family involvement, as measured by the FITS-P.

H0 7: The reported level of school support, as measured by Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide, will be positively related to reported family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ.

H0 8: The reported level of school support as measured by the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide will be a significant positive predictor of reported family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ.

H0 9: The reported attitude toward family involvement will be a significant positive predictor of reported family involvement behavior.

H0 10: Teacher experience, as measured by total months teaching preschool, will be a significant negative predictor of reported family involvement behavior.

H0 11: Prior preparation/training will be a significant positive predictor of reported family involvement behavior.

CHAPTER III

Method

This chapter presents the methodology used to address the research questions and hypotheses. The chapter describes the study's participants, measures used and procedures. In addition, the investigator presents the study's design and methods for data analysis.

Participants

Data were collected from 283 teachers in 20 different special education preschool programs within the New York City area. Following suggestions by Cohen (1992), in order to obtain a medium effect size, a minimum of 84 teachers was needed. It included teachers who are part of agencies that serve preschool children with special needs. These agencies are contracted with the NYC Department of Education, under the auspices of education law § 4410 and serve children from three to five years of age. A listing of the borough and number of teachers in each program can be found in Table 2 below. Teachers were recruited through each New York City borough's public monthly Children's Committee meetings for all of the special education programs in the 5 boroughs. Ninety-nine percent of all the teachers recruited for the study participated. Eight programs in Brooklyn participated in the study, recruiting 45% (n = 126) of total teacher participants; 4 programs in Manhattan, recruiting 21% (n = 59) of the total sample; 4 programs in the Bronx, recruiting 20% (n = 56) of the total sample; 3 programs in Queens, with 7% (n = 21) of the total sample; and 1 program in Staten Island, resulting in 7% (n = 21) of the total teacher sample.

Table 2

Participants

School	Borough	Number of Teachers/Surveys
A	Queens	5
B	Brooklyn	6
C	Brooklyn	20
D	Brooklyn	22
E	Brooklyn	11
F	Brooklyn	20
G	Manhattan	21
H	Manhattan	17
I	Brooklyn	17
J	Bronx	15
K	Brooklyn	20
L	Queens	6
M	Queens	10
N	Bronx	19
O	Manhattan	15
P	Bronx	9
Q	Staten Island	21
S	Bronx	13
T	Brooklyn	10
U	Manhattan	6
Total	20	283

Participant demographics are presented in detail in Table 3. The sample consisted of 283 teachers from 20 different schools. Participants identified themselves as follows 57.24% White not Hispanic (*n* = 162), 20.49% Hispanic or Latino (*n* = 58), 10.25% Black or African-American (*n* = 29), 6.71% Asian or Pacific Islander (*n* = 19), 3.53% Multi-Racial not Hispanic (*n* = 10),

and 1.78% as Other (*n* = 5). In a survey study involving 2,727 early childhood teachers by the NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute and Cornell University Early Childhood Program (2007), ethnicity demographics were similar; respectively 60% White, 12% Latino, 15% Black, 8%Asian, 1% Multi-Racial, and 3% Other.

The majority of the sample, 85.16% had obtained their Master's degree (*n* = 241). A smaller percentage 10.60% were currently enrolled in a program to obtain a Master's degree (*n* = 30) and a smaller group 4.24% had only obtained their Bachelor's degree (*n* = 12).

Most teachers, 80.21% indicated that they took one or more courses with primary content on families (*n* = 227), while 19.79% (*n* = 56) did not. A majority of teachers, 95.41% indicated that they took courses which included or addressed family issues (*n* = 270), while 4.59% (*n* = 13) did not. A little over half of the teachers, 54.77% indicated that they received an in-service training regarding family involvement during their teaching career (*n* = 155), while 45.23% (*n* = 128) did not. Of the 283 teachers, teacher experience ranged from 1 month to 408 months or 34 years experience (*SD* = 69.85, *mean* = 76.56). There were 15.89% teachers with 1 year or less of experience (*n* = 45), 24.74% of the teachers had experience ranging from more than 1 year to 3 years (*n* = 70), 25.44% of the teachers had experience between 3 years and 6 years (*n* = 72), 18.37% of the teachers had 7 to 12 years teaching experience (*n* = 52) and 15.56% of the teachers had 13 to 34 years of experience (*n* = 44).

Overall types of disabilities serviced in their classrooms were 16.83% Autism/PDD, 4.98% Physically Impaired, 3.44% Emotional/Behavioral, 13.92% Cognitive Disability, 47.25% Speech/Language Impaired, 9.29% Typical Developing and 5.62% were Visually Impaired.. Percentages were requested from teachers; therefore, sample sizes were not obtained. The majority of teachers in the sample indicated that family involvement was suggested in their

program (84.81%, *n* = 240), a minority felt it was mandatory (11.31%, *n* = 32) and a small number felt it was neither suggested nor mandatory (3.88%, *n* = 11).

The school sample consisted of 20 programs and the entire sample of administrators indicated family involvement was occurring in their school (*n* = 20). School administrators indicated that the families they served were on average 41.44% Hispanic or Latino, 30.51% White not Hispanic,18.53% Black or African American, 6.15% Multi-Racial not Hispanic, and 3.52% Asian or Pacific Islander,. The sample of school administrators indicated that the 62.72% of families they served were primarily families who had completed their HS Diploma/GED, 17.10% with some college, 14.65% graduated college and 4.11% attended/completed Graduate School. School Administrators indicated that the students in their programs were primarily from families of a socio-economic status as follows 45.52% Low Income, 30.59% were Middle/Low Income, 16.08% Middle Income, 6.10% Middle/High Income and 1.75% from High Income. Overall types of disabilities serviced in their programs were 17.52% Autism/PDD, 4.08% Physically Impaired, 4.29% Emotional/Behavioral, 16.11% Cognitive Disability, 38.42% Speech/Language Impaired, 13.61% Typically Developing, and 5.97% Visually Impaired. Percentages were requested from school administrators; therefore, sample sizes were not obtained.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Total Sample	
	n	%
Teacher Ethnicity		
White not Hispanic	162	57.2
Hispanic or Latino	58	20.5
Black or African American	29	10.2
Asian or Pacific Islander	19	6.7
Multi-Racial not Hispanic	10	3.5
Other	5	1.8
Teacher Educational Level		
Master's Degree	241	85.2
Enrolled in Master's Program	30	10.6
Bachelor's Degree	12	4.2
Family Involvement Course		
Yes	227	80.2
No	56	19.8
Family Involvement Issued included in Coursework		
Yes	270	95.4
No	13	4.6
Family Involvement In-service		
Yes	155	54.8
No	128	45.2
Teacher Experience (1month – 34 years)		
1 year or less	45	15.9
> 1 year – 3 years	70	24.7
> 3 years – 6 years	72	25.5
7 – 12 years	52	18.4
13 - 34 years	44	15.5

Table 3 (continued)

Characteristic	*n*	%
Teacher indicated Family Involvement was		
Suggested	240	84.8
Mandatory	32	11.3
Neither	11	3.9
Administrator indicated Family Involvement was		
Suggested	20	100.0
Mandatory		0.0
Neither		0.0

Consent and ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Consents and written approval were obtained from all 20 school administrators and from 283 teachers.

Measures

This study used data from preschool special education teachers and administrators to examine the relationships among teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and school support on teacher-family involvement behaviors across the Epstein typology (1995). Four measures were used; the FITS-P that measures reported teacher attitudes, the FITPQ that measures reported teacher family involvement behaviors, a questionnaire that measures reported teacher experience and teacher preparation/training, and the (SED/VESID) Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide (Section 3) that measures reported school support.

Family Involvement Teacher Scale- Preschool (FITS-P) (Marchini & Fish, 2005). This multidimensional rating scale is based on the six areas of the Epstein (1995) framework that asks teachers of preschool children to indicate their perception and attitudes towards family

involvement. Item development adhered to Smith and Kendall's (1963) critical incidents analysis method for developing psychometrically sound behavior ratings. Twenty-eight items were developed by the authors that illustrate each of the six types of family involvement. Definitions for the six areas from the final instrument can be found previously in Table 1.

The FITS-P was pilot-tested with a sample of 50 preschool teachers who did not participate in the final study. Response format consists of a four point Likert scale (1 = "disagree" to 4 = "agree"). The first step in item development was the listing of behaviors that reflected each of the 6 areas described by Epstein. Thirty-five items were developed by the authors that illustrated each of the six types of family involvement. Sample items for the original FITS-P can be found in Table 4. The items were randomly listed and sent to a group of 31 experts including school psychologists, social workers, and preschool administrators. These experts were asked to review the definitions of the 6 areas and then to select the area that was illustrated by each of the 35 items. If an item illustrated more than one area, a second choice column was provided. If there was not an appropriate definition relating to an item, individuals were asked to check "none."

Table 4

Original 35 Items of the FITS-P

Item Number	Item Content
1	I feel confident in encouraging parents to seek assistance from the community.
2	I make an effort to learn about my students' families.
3	I support families in investigating services made available for them in the community.
4	I feel confident in my ability to involve my students' families in their child's education.
5	I encourage parents to be a part of the decision-making process regarding their child's learning.
6	I regularly invite parents/families to attend class events.
7	I include parents in making decisions regarding their child's learning.
8	I regularly find ways that students and their families work together with me.
9	If available, I accept parent donations of materials not supplied but needed in the classroom.
10	I provide parents with information in their preferred language.
11	I encourage parents to assist with fundraising events for the school.
12	I provide opportunities for parents to get involved.
13	I send home class assignments which involve the parents in their child's learning.
14	I feel secure in my ability to make parents feel welcome when they come to school.
15	I encourage parents to seek assistance from local parent centers or parent education programs.
16	I spotlight the accomplishments of my students to their families.
17	I refer parents for extra help and community resources.
18	I regularly communicate with my students' families.
19	I am comfortable referring parents to our school's social services.
20	I felt prepared to collaborate with parents during my first year of teaching.
21	I encourage parents to be active in the school's parent organization.

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

Item Number	Item Content
22	Though some parents are not comfortable talking with their child's teacher, I encourage them to speak with me.
23	I ask parents to participate on school trips and class activities.
24	I collect my students' outstanding class work, assignments and artwork, and send them home periodically.
25	If available, I always work with parent volunteers.
26	I use open-ended conversation and actively listen to my students' parents.
27	I use clarifying statements to clear up ambiguity when speaking to parents.
28	I currently feel prepared to work with parents.
29	I involve parents when creating IEP goals.
30	I easily establish a friendship and rapport with parents.
31	I encourage parents to advocate for their children.
32	I consider cultural differences knowing their may be a bridgeable divide between home and school rules, expectations, and styles.
33	I provide families with information regarding the benefits of family involvement.
34	I optimistically put problems in perspective.
35	I personally promote the benefits of and positive attitudes toward involving families.

Note. Marchini, L., & Fish, M. (2005, August). *Development of a scale to identify teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and competency in family involvement.* Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

When 75% of the experts agreed that an item represented only one area, that item was retained for further review. If an item represented two dimensions, then it was revised to be in line with one dimension. If an item represented more than two dimensions or none then it was eliminated. Approximately 1/4 (n = 9) of the items were eliminated, 1/2 (n = 19) revised, and ¼ (n = 7) retained, during the first round (Table 5).

Table 5

FITS-P Experts Item % Agreement on Item Category for the Pilot Study (First Round of 35 Items)

Item Number	Category Choice	# of Experts	% of Agreement
16 Retained	A	31	100%
26 Retained	F	28	90%
27 Retained	F	28	90%
20 Retained	E	25	81%
1 Retained	A	24	77%
9 Retained	B	24	77%
34 Retained	F	24	77%
18 Revised	A	23	74%
11 Revised	B	22	71%
12 Revised	B	22	71%
31 Revised	C	22	71%
28 Revised	F	22	71%
35 Revised	F	22	71%
22 Revised	B	20	65%
30 Revised	C	20	65%
29 Revised	D	19	61%
33 Revised	E	19	61%
8 Revised	B	18	58%
19 Revised	A	17	55%

Table 5 (continued)

Item Number	Category Choice	# of Experts	% of Agreement
5 Revised	A	17	55%
13 Revised	B	16	52%
21 Revised	E	16	52%
32 Revised	E	15	48%
10 Revised	A	14	45%
15 Revised	B	14	45%
24 Revised	C	14	45%
7 Eliminated	A	12	39%
4 Eliminated	B	12	39%
2 Eliminated	D	11	35%
25 Eliminated	E	11	35%
14 Eliminated	A	10	32%
3 Eliminated	C	10	32%
17 Eliminated	NONE	10	32%
6 Eliminated	D	9	29%
23 Eliminated	C	9	29%

Note. A = Parenting, B = Communicating, C = Volunteering, D = Learning at Home, E = Decision Making, F = Collaborating with the Community

Marchini, L., & Fish, M. (2005, August). *Development of a scale to identify teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and competency in family involvement.* Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Additional items were created by the authors and 38 items were randomly listed a second time, and sent to the same group of 31 experts. These are included in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Second Round 38 Items of the FITS-P

Item Number	Item Content
1	I respect family culture and its impact on children's lives.
2	I encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom or at school.
3	I feel knowledgeable about the importance of collaborating with parents.
4	I consider cultural differences knowing their may be a bridgeable divide between home and school rules, expectations, and styles.
5	I ask parents to participate on school trips and class activities.
6	I feel confident in encouraging parents to seek assistance from the community.
7	I provide parents with information in their preferred language or use a translator over the phone.
8	I support families in investigating services made available for them in the community.
9	I make an effort to learn about my students' families.
10	I accept that family lifestyles may be different from mine.
11	I encourage parents to read to their children at night.
12	I respect that there are many types of families.
13	I encourage parents to serve as models by reading while at home.
14	I believe that family involvement is essential.
15	I provide opportunities for parents to get involved in school projects at home.
16	I share the accomplishments of my students with their families.
17	I encourage parents to assist with fundraising events for the school.
18	I regularly invite parents/families to share their expertise in the classroom.
19	I provide families with information regarding the benefits of family involvement.
20	I try to create some class assignments which involve parents in their child's learning.
21	I collect my students' outstanding class work, assignments and artwork, and send them home periodically.

Table 6 (continued)

Item Number	Item Content
22	If available, I accept parent donations of materials not supplied but needed in the classroom.
23	I regularly communicate with my students' families.
24	I am comfortable referring parents to our school's social services.
25	I try to overcome barriers to family involvement.
26	I encourage parents to advocate for their children.
27	I encourage parents to participate in school programming.
28	I support parent decision-making whenever possible.
29	I encourage parents to speak to me in person, or via email, notes or telephone.
30	I encourage parents to set up a quiet space for working on school assignments at home.
31	Before a parent meeting, I think about what I want to say and how I want to say it.
32	I support and involve parents in developing IEP goals.
33	I personally promote the benefits of and positive attitudes toward involving families.
34	I refer parents for extra help and to community resources.
35	I use open-ended conversation and actively listen to my students' parents.
36	I encourage parents to seek assistance from local parent centers or parent education programs.
37	I easily establish good rapport with the parents of my students.
38	I encourage parents to participate/attend school policy/decision-making meetings.

Note. Marchini, L., & Fish, M. (2005, August). *Development of a scale to identify teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and competency in family involvement.* Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

In a second round, when a minimum of 70% of the experts agreed that an item represented only one area, it was retained (Table 7). This two-step process assured that items were accurately assigned to dimensions and were to be understandable by participants.

Table 7

FITS-P Experts Item % Agreement on Item Category for the Pilot Study (Second Round)

Item Number	Category Choice	# of Experts	% of Agreement
8 Retained	F	30	97%
34 Retained	F	30	97%
1 Retained	A	30	97%
6 Retained	F	29	94%
36 Retained	F	29	94%
30 Retained	D	29	94%
23 Retained	B	29	94%
29 Retained	B	29	94%
38 Retained	E	28	90%
5 Retained	C	28	90%
4 Retained	A	28	90%
10 Retained	A	28	90%
26 Retained	E	27	87%
24 Retained	F	27	87%
17 Retained	C	27	87%
11 Retained	D	27	87%
35 Retained	B	27	87%
12 Retained	A	27	87%
22 Retained	C	26	84%

Table 7 (continued)

Item Number	Category Choice	# of Experts	% of Agreement
13 Retained	D	26	84%
2 Retained	C	25	81%
16 Retained	B	24	77%
28 Retained	E	23	74%
18 Retained	C	23	74%
15 Retained	D	23	74%
32 Retained	E	22	71%
21 Retained	B	22	71%
27 Retained	E	22	71%
37 Eliminated	B	21	68%
33 Eliminated	E	20	65%
25 Eliminated	A	20	65%
20 Eliminated	D	19	61%
7 Eliminated	B	19	61%
9 Eliminated	A	19	61%
14 Eliminated	A	15	48%
3 Eliminated	A	12	39%
31 Eliminated	B	11	35%
19 Eliminated	A	10	32%

Note. A = Parenting, B = Communicating, C = Volunteering, D = Learning at Home, E = Decision Making, F = Collaborating with the Community

Marchini, L., & Fish, M. (2005, August). *Development of a scale to identify teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and competency in family involvement.* Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Twenty-eight items were retained for use in the final scale. Test-retest reliability is the indicator of stability of an instrument over time (Portney & Watkins, 2000). Sixty-five teachers and assistant teachers who were not solicited for the final study were recruited for test-retest reliability information in a pilot study (Marchini & Fish, 2005). The participants were asked to complete the FITS-P survey twice, two weeks apart. Sixty-four participants completed and returned the FITS-P on two occasions at approximately a two week interval. Table 8 presents mean and standard deviations for the FITS-P total and subscale scores on these two occasions. The test-retest data for the FITS-P total and subscale scores are presented in Table 9.

Table 8

FITS-P Means and Standard Deviations for Subscales and Total Score

FITS-P Scale	First Rating		Second Rating	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
FITS- P Total Score (28 items)	104.33	6.688	104.92	6.257
Parenting Subscale	15.80	.568	15.80	.647
Communicating Subscale	19.22	1.327	19.34	1.211
Learning at Home Subscale	15.06	1.511	15.13	1.579
Volunteering Subscale	17.19	2.416	17.34	2.304
Collaborating with the Community	18.36	2.111	18.59	1.841
Decision Making Subscale	18.70	1.550	18.92	1.325

Note. Marchini, L., & Fish, M. (2005, August). *Development of a scale to identify teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and competency in family involvement.* Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.
N = 65.

Table 9

FITS-P Test-Retest Stability Coefficients for Subscales and Total Score

FITS-P Scale	
FITS- P Total Score	.946 **
Parenting Subscale	.749 **
Communicating Subscale	.950 **
Learning at Home Subscale	.935 **
Volunteering Subscale	.938 **
Collaborating with the Community	.900 **
Decision Making Subscale	.800 **

Note. Significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)
Marchini, L., & Fish, M. (2005, August). *Development of a scale to identify teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and competency in family involvement.* Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

The test-retest reliabilities for the total score and 6 subscales ranges from .749 to .950 and all stability coefficients were significant at the $p < .01$ level (2-tailed). Although all test-retest correlations were significant at the $p < .01$ level, the test-retest correlation for both the Parenting subscale and Decision Making subscale produced lower correlations than the other subscales. All other test-retest stability coefficients for the subscales and the FITS-P Total were in the .90s. Four items that fall in the Parenting subscale (Item1, Item 7, Item 13, Item 19) had stability coefficients ranging from .652 to 1.00. Five items that fall in the Communicating subscale (Item 2, Item 8, Item 14, Item 20, Item 25) had stability coefficients ranging from .689 to .919. Four items that fall in the Learning at Home subscale (Item 3, Item 9, Item 15, Item 21) had stability coefficients ranging from .870 to .918. Five items that fall in the Volunteering subscale (Item 4,

Item 10, Item 16, Item 22, Item 26) had stability coefficients ranging from .656 to .918. Five items that fall in the Collaborating with the Community subscale (Item 5, Item 11, Item 17, Item 23, Item 27) had stability coefficients ranging from .640 to .933. Five items that fall in the last Decision Making subscale (Item 6, Item 12, Item 18, Item 24, Item 28) had stability coefficients ranging from .646 to .716.

Internal consistency of the instrument will indicate the extent to which all items in the scale uniformly measure the same attribute (Nunnaly & Berstein, 1994). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. The closer the coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. Using SPSS/PASW 18.0 item analysis program to determine the scale's internal consistency, it was determined that the 28-item FITS-P had a Cronbach's alpha of .851 in both test administrations. George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb ">.9 Excellent, > .8 Good, >.7 Acceptable, >.6 Questionable, >.5 Poor, and <.5 Unacceptable" (p. 231). When determining the internal consistency of each of the Subscales the results were somewhat poor. This is to be expected, as the number of items in each subscale decreases, which decrease reliability. Four items that fall in the Parenting subscale (Item1, Item 7, Item 13, and Item 19) had a Cronbach's alpha of .278 first rating and .508 second rating. Five items that fall in the Communicating subscale (Item 2, Item 8, Item 14, Item 20, Item 25) had a Cronbach's alpha of .682 first rating and .697 second rating. Four items that fall in the Learning at Home subscale (Item 3, Item 9, Item 15, Item 21) had a Cronbach's alpha of .597 first rating and .700 second rating. Five items that fall in the Volunteering subscale (Item 4, Item 10, Item 16, Item 22, Item 26) had a Cronbach's alpha of .676 first rating and .698 second rating. Five items that fall in the Collaborating with the Community subscale (Item 5, Item 11, Item 17, Item 23, Item 27) had Cronbach's alpha of .790 first rating and .733 second rating. Five

items that fall in the last Decision Making subscale (Item 6, Item 12, Item 18, Item 24, Item 28) had a Cronbach's alpha of .526 first rating and .498 second rating. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the FITS-P total and subscale scores are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

FITS-P Coefficient Alpha Reliabilities for Subscales and Total Score

FITS-P Scale	Coefficient Alpha	
	First Rating	Second Rating
FITS- P Total Score (n = 28)	.851	.851
Parenting Subscale (n = 4)	.278	.508
Communicating Subscale (n = 5)	.682	.697
Learning at Home Subscale (n = 4)	.579	.700
Volunteering Subscale (n = 5)	.676	.698
Collaborating with the Community (n = 5)	.790	.733
Decision Making Subscale (n = 5)	.526	.498

Note. Marchini, L., & Fish, M. (2005, August). *Development of a scale to identify teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and competency in family involvement.* Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Using the FITS-P captures the multidimensional nature of family involvement by continuing to encompass the Epstein framework. The final scale has 4 to 5 items on 6 dimensions, namely Parenting, Communicating, Learning At Home, Volunteering, Collaborating with the Community and Decision Making. Scores for the total scale can range from 28 to 112, with each subscale score ranging as follows; Parenting 4 to 16, Communicating 5 to 20, Learning at Home 4 to 16, Volunteering 5 to 20, Collaborating with the Community 5 to 20, and Decision

Making 5 to 20. Higher scores on the FITS-P would indicate a higher incidence of agreement (1 disagree to 4 agree) with the statements on the attitude scale and a more positive attitude towards family involvement. Item scores are added together for each of the subscales and a total score is obtained from adding the subscores together. The FITS-P can be viewed in Appendix A.

Teacher Information Sheet. There are 8 questions that request information on teacher experience as well as the types of training the teacher has received with regard to family issues or the focus on families. First, teachers provided the highest level of education attained; respectively BA/BS, MA/MS enrolled # of credits, MA/MS, and other on a continuous variable. Next, the number of years of experience were requested. Prior training or preparation in working with families used a yes/no format for 3 items. They were "While obtaining your teaching degree, did you take one or more courses with a primary content or focus on families?" "While obtaining your teaching degree, did other courses include or address family issues?" "Have you ever received an in-service training regarding family involvement during your teaching career?" Each "yes" is scored as a 1 and each "no" is scored as a 0. Finally, participants were asked ethnic/racial identification. In order to determine the level of disability each teacher had enrolled in their classroom, a percentage was requested of each of the following types of disabilities; Autism/PDD, Physically Impaired, Emotional/Behavioral, Cognitive Disability, Speech/Language Impaired and Other. Last, teachers were requested to delineate if family involvement was suggested, mandatory, or neither in their program. The Teacher Information Sheet can be viewed in Appendix B.

Family Involvement Teacher Practice Questionnaire (FITPQ). This checklist measures self-reported teacher behavior practices employed in the classroom to increase family involvement. The items of the FITS-P were used to create this questionnaire as well for my study, however, the response format consists of a four point Likert scale modified to (1 = "never" to 4 = "always") This was suggested by Dr. Joyce Epstein, an expert in the field of family involvement (J. Epstein, personal communication on 6/18/07). This teacher practice questionnaire was completed and collected from teachers to assess perceived family involvement behaviors. Using the FITPQ also captures the multidimensional nature of family involvement by continuing to encompass the Epstein framework. The final scale has 4 to 5 items on 6 dimensions, namely Parenting, Communicating, Learning At Home, Volunteering, Collaborating with the Community and Decision Making. Scores for the total scale can range from 28 to 112, with each subscale score ranging as follows; Parenting 4 to 16, Communicating 5 to 20, Learning at Home 4 to 16, Volunteering 5 to 20, Collaborating with the Community 5 to 20, and Decision Making 5 to 20. Higher scores on the FITPQ indicate a higher incidence of reported teacher practice towards family involvement behaviors (1 = "no parents yet" to 4 = "all or most parents") with the statements on the behavior scale. Item scores are added together for each of the subscales and a total score is obtained from adding the subscores together. The FITPQ can be viewed in Appendix C.

"Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide" (The University of the State of New York (SED) and The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID)). This assessment is distributed by The University of the State of New York (SED) and The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID). The measure was designed using research-based quality indicators to

provide early childhood special education agencies a better understanding of their current program functioning and to identify areas of strength, as well as areas in need of improvement related to program quality. The entire measure consists of seven areas including; Program Administration, Personnel, Family Relationships, Teaching and Learning, Program Environment, Stakeholders/Partners, and Program Evaluation. The original instrument was sent to 258 preschool special education programs, representing 70 percent of the total number of New York State funded programs at the time in 1996 (State Education Department, 2003).

In this study, school administrators completed Section Three of this assessment called "Family Relationships" that measures the preschool's level of support of family involvement. Section three, includes 28 items focusing on family involvement, family education, and diversity. Each item with a yes/no format are then scored as 1 or 0, respectively. Scores can range from 0 to 28 with higher scores indicating greater school support of family involvement. The principals also filled out a separate demographic section for the entire school. The measure as adapted and used in this study can be viewed in Appendix D or is also available on the web at www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/home.html in its entirety.

Procedure

In each borough within New York City, there are monthly public Children's Committee Meetings for all of the special education preschool programs. At each of these meetings, the principal investigator presented the study using a script that can be viewed in Appendix E. The script introduced the purpose of the study and asked for involvement of the "4410" Administrators (agencies are contracted with the NYC Department of Education, under the auspices of education law § 4410 and serve special education children from three to five years of age) who attended the meeting. The principal investigator then scheduled a meeting with each

individual principal who expressed an interest in participating. Once the appropriate consent form was signed and permission granted by the Administrator/Principal, the administrator was given the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide" The University of the State of New York (SED) and The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) measure and school demographic questions. The questionnaires took approximately 10 minutes to complete. The official, approved, and stamped Administrator Consent form by Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Graduate Center of the City of New York is located in Appendix F.

An appointment was set up with the administrator to meet with the teachers of the school. This usually was a regularly scheduled school teacher meeting or one was set for the purpose of the study. Attendance at school-wide teacher meetings, were used to recruit teachers using the same script for the study. In each school, the principal investigator served as the study coordinator and obtained all the necessary forms from all participants. After appropriate permission and consents was obtained from the teacher, the appropriate surveys were distributed at the same teachers' meeting. The official, approved, and stamped Teacher Consent form by Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Graduate Center of the City of New York is located in Appendix G. A coded Teacher Information Sheet as well as either the FITS-P or FITPQ was hand distributed to each teacher who submitted a signed consent form. Teacher from one half of the schools were administered the FITS-P first and teachers from the other half of the schools were administered the FITPQ first.

Teachers' names were coded by the principal investigator at each of the preschools when distributing the surveys so that no administrator could know any personal comments or personal responses of any of the participants. The actual FITS-P or FITPQ along with the Teacher

Information Sheet took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Due to their similar content items, in order to have sufficient time between administrations of the scales so that teachers did not recall responses from the first survey to the second, a minimum of a two week interval was established. After a two week period of time, a third measure the FITPQ or FITS-P was distributed. This was distributed in a ready to seal envelope via teacher mailboxes or in person to the same teachers using the same codes. Periodic visits were made to the school until all possible surveys were collected from an assigned mailbox or collected directly from the teachers themselves. It is important to note, all three measures were coded and no teacher names were associated with any forms.

Hypotheses

Based on the above discussion, this study proposed to answer the following research questions.

1. Do teachers who report more positive family involvement attitudes report more family involvement practices in their classrooms?
2. Do teachers with less teaching experience report more positive attitudes and report more family involvement practices in their classrooms?
3. Do teachers who receive more prior preparation/training report more positive attitudes and report more family involvement practices in their classrooms?
4. Do teachers with more administrative support for family involvement report more positive attitudes and report more family involvement practices in their classrooms?

The hypotheses looked at how teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, years of experience, and level of school support impacted family involvement behaviors as they relate to the six-part framework outlined by Epstein (1995). Family involvement attitudes were measured

using the FITS-P, an attitude scale developed based on the six part framework. Family involvement behaviors were measured using the FITPQ, a teacher practice questionnaire also developed based on the six part framework. Specifically, it was hypothesized that:

H0 1: Total FITS-P scores for reported attitude toward family involvement will be positively related to reported teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ. Further, it is expected that each of the 6 subscales would be positively related to reported teacher family involvement behavior.

H0 2: Teacher experience will be negatively related to total reported teacher attitude toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P total score.

H0 3: Teacher experience will be negatively related to total reported teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ total score.

H0 4: Prior preparation/training in family involvement will be positively related to reported teacher attitude toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P.

H0 5: Prior preparation/training in family involvement will be positively related to reported family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ.

School support was measured using the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide by VESID and SED (2003), an assessment scale that measures the preschool administrator's level of support for increasing family involvement. The final hypotheses address the relationship among school variables as well as possible predictors of family involvement behavior:

H0 6: The reported level of school support, as measured by Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide, will be positively related to reported teacher attitude toward family involvement, as measured by the FITS-P.

H0 7: The reported level of school support, as measured by Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide, will be positively related to reported family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ.

H0 8: The reported level of school support as measured by the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide will be a significant positive predictor of reported family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ.

H0 9: The reported attitude toward family involvement will be a significant positive predictor of reported family involvement behavior.

H0 10: Teacher experience, as measured by total months teaching preschool, will be a significant negative predictor of reported family involvement behavior.

H0 11: Prior preparation/training will be a significant positive predictor of reported family involvement behavior.

Data Analysis

A multilevel survey data set was collected from multiple teachers within multiple schools. First, using SPSS/PASW 18.0 program, data were double-entered to establish reliability of the data entry. The investigator used several procedures to analyze the data in order to answer this study's research questions. In the first stages of analysis, all survey subscales, as well as teacher and school demographics were analyzed via descriptive statistics. In addition, correlational analyses were conducted to assess the direction and strength of variable relationships among three predictors: years of teaching experience, teacher preparation/training,

and teacher attitudes. In the second stage of analysis, the data were also analyzed using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). This was conducted in order to determine if teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, years of teaching experience impacted teacher family involvement behavior differently across schools. Further, it was investigated whether degree of school support contributes to this difference across schools.

The basic concept of HLM is similar to regular regression. At the individual or teacher level (Level 1), an outcome variable is predicted from a set of predictors. At the school level (Level 2), Level 1 slopes and intercepts become dependent variables being predicted from Level 2 variables. Following this, one can model the effects of Level 1 variables on the outcome and the effects of Level 2 on the outcome. Table 11 presents the teacher and school variables used in the analyses in this study. Teacher level variables included teacher demographic characteristics, FITS-P scores, and training/preparation information. School level variables included school demographic information as well as the SED/VESID School Support scores.

Table 11

HLM Variables Included in the Model by Level

Teacher Level Variables	School Level Variables
Teacher Demographics	School Demographics
Highest education level achieved	Percent African-American within school
Number of months teaching preschool	Percent Autism within school
Teacher ethnicity	Borough
FITS-P (Attitude)	SED/VESID School Support
Training/Preparation (separately)	
Primary Course in Family Involvement	
Multiple Courses included	
In-service Training	

Table 12 highlights corresponding Level 1 and Level 2 equations for a two level random intercepts HLM model, employed for the current study.

Table 12

Equations for a Two-Level Random Intercepts HLM Model

Symbol	Meaning
Level 1 Equation	$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}X_{ij} + r_{ij}$ *where* $r_{ij} \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$
Y_{ij}	Value of the DV at Level 1 for teacher i in school j
X_{ij}	Level 1 predictor
β_{0j}	Intercept for DV in school j
β_{1j}	Slope for the relationship in school j between the DV and Level 1 predictor; change in DV with 1 unit increase in Level 1 predictor in school j
r_{ij}	Random error of prediction for teacher i in school j
σ^2	Variance of Level 1 random errors
Level 2 Equations	$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}W_j + \mu_{0j}$ $\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$
W_j	Level 2 predictor
γ_{00}	Overall intercept; grand mean of the DV scores across all schools when all predictors are equal to zero
γ_{01}	Overall regression coefficient for the relationship between a Level 2 predictor and the DV
μ_{0j}	Random error for the deviation of the intercept of a school from the overall intercept; the unique effect of school j on the intercept
γ_{10}	Overall regression coefficient for the relationship between a Level 1 predictor and the DV when the Level 2 predictor is equal to zero
τ_{00}	Variance of μ_{0j}
Combined Equation	

Raudenbush and Byrk (2002) suggest a build-up strategy for HLM analyses, whereby the first model run is the unconditional model, equivalent to a one-way ANOVA model with random coefficients added for each teacher. The unconditional model provides information regarding variation of family involvement behavior within and between schools, not conditional on any

predictors. This also provides evidence of the reliability of each school's sample mean, as an estimate of the population mean. The second series of analyses include models of the outcome conditional on certain predictors, and thereby gives one an indication of how much of the variation within and across can be accounted for by these predictors. Predictors of interest added in the more complex models include FITS-P scores, months teaching preschool, and teacher preparation/training at Level 1 as teacher covariates, and degree of school support (SED/VESID) as Level 2 school covariates.

An intraclass correlation was calculated to assess the amount of variation in teacher outcome that is attributed to school-level characteristics in the unconditional/baseline model. The intraclass correlation was calculated using the equation below:

$$\rho = \frac{\hat{\tau}_{00}}{\hat{\tau}_{00} + \hat{\sigma}^2} \quad (1)$$

Where $\hat{\tau}_{00}$ is the total variation at Level 2 (school level), and $\hat{\sigma}^2$ is the total variance in outcomes at Level 1 within schools (teacher level). The percent variance accounted for at Level 1 can be calculated using 1 - ρ. It is common practice, and considered appropriate to use HLM, when the amount of variance accounted for at Level 2 exceeds 10%.

Snijders and Bosker (1994) suggest evaluating pseudo-R^2 values at both Level 1 and Level 2 in order to fully assess the variance attributed by the two-level models. The process evaluating the psuedo-R^2 begins with the unconditional model and compared with the final model to determine the percent reduction in variation at both levels. This determines the percent of variance explained by the predictors included in the final model. The percent reduction in variation at Level 2 is calculated using the following equation (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2001, p.74):

$$R_2^2 = \frac{\hat{\tau}_{00}(null) - \hat{\tau}_{00}(final)}{\hat{\tau}_{00}(null)} \quad (2)$$

The percent reduction in variation at Level 1 is calculated using the following:

$$R_2^2 = \frac{\hat{\sigma}^2(null) - \hat{\sigma}^2(final)}{\hat{\sigma}^2(null)} \quad (3)$$

where $\hat{\tau}_{00}$ and $\hat{\sigma}^2$ are noted above. The pseudo- R^2 is not identical to the interpretation that can be made with the R^2 statistic used in OLS multiple linear regression analyses, which directly represents the percent variance accounted for by the model, but it does provide an acceptable alternative in determining the proportion reduction in mean squared error at both levels of the analysis.

When centering predictor variables in HLM analyses, model intercepts take on a more meaningful interpretation. Centering variables involves calculating deviation scores from a mean instead of using raw scores. Scores can either be group mean centered, or grand mean centered. The decision about which centering method should be used depends on the research questions and past theories (Kreft, Leeuw, & Aiken, 1995). For purposes of this study, the total scores from the FITS-P in Level 1 (teachers) and SED/VESID (schools) in Level 2 were grand mean centered.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter presents the descriptive statistics and the results of the statistical tests performed to test the current study's hypotheses.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 13 presents descriptive statistic for teacher and school variables.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics for Teacher and School Variables

Variable	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Teacher Level Variables					
FITS-P Total Score (Attitude)	283	105.94	6.033	77	112
Parenting Subscale	283	15.80	.586	12	16
Communicating Subscale	283	19.72	.746	14	20
Learning at Home Subscale	283	15.35	1.146	8	16
Volunteering Subscale	283	17.52	2.139	9	20
Collaborating with the Community Subscale	283	18.78	1.980	6	20
Decision Making Subscale	283	18.75	1.651	11	20
FITPQ Total Score (Practice)	283	89.84	13.363	54	112
Parenting Subscale	283	15.47	.997	10	16
Communicating Subscale	283	19.41	1.018	14	20
Learning at Home Subscale	283	12.45	2.879	4	16
Volunteering Subscale	283	13.16	4.418	5	20
Collaborating with the Community Subscale	283	12.89	4.481	5	20
Decision-Making Subscale	283	16.43	3.579	5	20
Preparation/Training	283	2.30	.673	0	3
Number of Months Teaching	283	76.56	69.849	1	408

Table 13 (continued)	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
School Variables					
VESID/SED (School Support)	20	23.39	2.982	17	28

The FITS-P Total score measuring reported teacher attitudes toward family involvement averaged 16.1 points higher than the FITPQ Total score measuring reported teacher family involvement practice behaviors. For the majority of the responses to the FITS-P or the FITPQ, participants varied across items scoring from 1 to 4. Of the 283 teachers taking the FITS-P, 16 of the 28 questions (57.14%) varied in response from 1 = “no parents yet” to 4 = “all or most parents”, 6 of the 28 questions (21.43%) varied in response from 2 = “few parents” to 4 = “all or most parents”, 6 of the 28 questions (21.43%) varied in response from 3 = “Some parents” to 4 = “all or most parents”. Of the 283 teachers taking the FITPQ 24 of the 28 questions (85.71%) varied in response from 1 = “no parents yet” to 4 = “all or most parents”, 3 of the 28 questions (10.71%) varied in response from 2 = “few parents” to 4 = “all or most parents”, 1 of the 28 questions (3.57%) varied in response from 3 = “Some parents” to 4 = “all or most parents”. Of the 20 administrators who took the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide” The University of the State of New York (SED) and The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) measure, 17 of the 28 questions (60.71%) varied in response from 0 = “no” to 1 = “yes” and 11 of the 28 questions (39.29%) did not vary and responded 1 = “yes”.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

Using SPSS/PASW 18.0, Pearson *r* correlations were calculated to analyze the direction and degree of relations identified in H01. Table 14 shows correlations among the FITS-P and FITPQ. As expected, in line with the study’s (H01) hypothesis, the total FITS-P scores for

attitude toward family involvement was significantly positively related to teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ, r (281) = .433, $p < .01$. As the FITS-P total score increases, the total score of the FITPQ also increases. The Parenting subscale scores on the FITS-P were significantly positively related to teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ, r (281) = .328, $p < .01$. As the FITS-P Parenting subscale increases, the FITPQ Parenting subscale also increases. The Communication subscale scores on the FITS-P were significantly positively related to teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ, r (281) = .495, $p < .01$. As the FITS-P Communication subscale increases, the FITPQ Communication subscale also increases. The Volunteering subscale scores on the FITS-P were significantly positively related to teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ, r (281) = .324, $p < .01$. As the FITS-P Volunteering subscale increases, the FITPQ Volunteering subscale also increases. The Learning at Home subscale scores on the FITS-P were significantly positively related to teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ, r (281) = .284, $p < .01$. As the FITS-P Learning at Home subscale increases, the FITPQ Learning at Home subscale also increases or vice versa. The Decision-making subscale scores on the FITS-P were significantly positively related to teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ, r (281) = .413, $p < .01$. As the FITS-P Decision-making subscale increases, the FITPQ Decision-making subscale also increases. There was a significant positive relationship between the Community subscale scores on the FITS-P and the FITPQ r (281) = .272, $p < .01$, indicating that as the FITS-P Community subscale increases the FITPQ Community subscale also increases. Thus, H01 was supported.

Table 14

Correlations between FITS-P and FITPQ (*N*=283)

	FITSP Total	Parenting	Communicating	Learning at Home	Volunteering	Collaborating	Decision Making	FITPQ Total	Parenting	Communicating	Learning at Home	Volunteering	Collaborating	Decision Making
FITS-P Total	1													
Parenting	.525**	1												
Communicating	.394**	.198**	1											
Learning at Home	.714**	.288**	.247**	1										
Volunteering	.836**	.328**	.258**	.494**	1									
Collaborating	.766**	.333**	.127*	.507**	.536**	1								
Decision Making	.769**	.456**	.265**	.427**	.530**	.462**	1							
FITPQ Total	.433**	.174**	.146*	.314**	.335**	.324**	.381**	1						
Parenting	.286**	.328**	.095	.086	.250**	.209**	.245**	.391**	1					
Communicating	.182**	.046	.495**	.084	.103	.070	.130*	.447**	.284**	1				
Learning at Home	.335**	.137*	.090	.284**	.294**	.217**	.263**	.868**	.332**	.383**	1			
Volunteering	.315**	.113	.113	.228**	.324**	.238**	.183**	.809**	.303**	.252**	.749**	1		
Collaborating	.351**	.089	.076	.245**	.247**	.272*	.371**	.805**	.201**	.264**	.589**	.451**	1	
Decision Making	.388**	.179**	.065	.299**	.209**	.322**	.413**	.805**	.225**	.372**	.609**	.482**	.607**	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

As expected with the H02, teacher experience was significantly negatively correlated with total teacher attitude toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P composite, r (281) = - .307, $p < .01$. As teachers' level of experience increases, the FITS-P Total score decreases. Regarding H03, the correlation between the level of teacher experience and the FITPQ Total score was not statistically significant, r (281) = - .039, p = .51, which does not support the hypothesis.

As expected from H04 and H05, prior preparation/training in family involvement was positively correlated with teacher attitude and teacher family involvement behavior toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P and FITPQ. Prior teacher preparation/training was obtained from three questions in the Teacher Information sheet. These questions included prior training or preparation in working with families in a yes/no format. Question 1 = "While obtaining your teaching degree, did you take one or more courses with a primary content or focus on families?" question 2 = "While obtaining your teaching degree, did other courses include or address family issues?" and question 3 = "Have you ever received an in-service training regarding family involvement during your teaching career?" Each "yes" was scored as a 1 and each "no" was scored as a 0.

There was a significant positive relationship (H04) between the Teacher Preparation/Training question 1 scores on the Teacher Information Sheet and the Total FITS-P, r (281) = .220, $p < .01$, indicating that as the Teacher Preparation/training (one or more prior courses in family involvement) increases the FITS-P Total scores also increases. The correlations between prior teacher preparation/training questions 2 and 3 and FITS-P fell short of statistical significance, r (281) = .101 and -.046, p = .09 and .44.

There was a significant positive relationship (H05) between the Teacher Preparation/Training scores on the Teacher Information Sheet Question 3 (regarding in-service training and the Total FITPQ r (281) = .241, p<.01, indicating that as the Teacher Preparation/training in-service training increases the FITSPQ also increases or reported practice behavior. The correlations between prior teacher preparation/training questions 1 and 2 and the total FITPQ fell short of statistical significance, r (281) = .097 and -.039, p = .10 and .51.

School support was measured using the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide by VESID and SED (2003), an assessment scale that measures the preschool administrator's level of support for increasing family involvement. The final hypotheses address the relationship between school variables. In line with H06, the level of school support measured by the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide was significantly positively correlated with teacher attitude toward family involvement measured by the FITS-P, r (281) = .131, p < .05 . As the level of school support increases, the FITS-P Total scores also increase.

In support of H07, the level of school support was significantly positively correlated with teacher family involvement behavior, r (281) = .253, p < .01. As the level of school support increases, the FITPQ Total scores also increases.

Table 15 shows correlations among teachers' teaching experience, preparation/training, and the composite FITS-P and FITPQ scores.

Table 15

Correlations between Number of Months Teaching Preschool Experience, Preparation/Training, FITS-P and FITPQ (*N*=283)

		FITPQ Total	FITS-P Total	# of Months Experience	Preparation/Training 1	2	3
FITPQ Total		1					
FITS-P Total		.433**	1				
# of Month Experience		-.039	-.307**	1			
Preparation Training	1	.097	.220**	-.221**	1		
	2	-.039	.101	-.073	.188**	1	
	3	.241**	-.046	.366**	-.059	-.030	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$
Preparation/Training
1 = pre-service: one or more courses with a primary content/focus on families
2 = pre-service: various courses included or addressed family issues
3 = in-service training

In order to assess how teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, years of experience, and level of school support impact family involvement behaviors and how they differ across school environments, multiple analyses were conducted to predict the dependent variable (e.g., FITPQ). Due to the nested structure of the data (teachers within schools), the analyses used hierarchical linear regression (HLM).

A series of separate HLM analyses, or sequential modeling, were conducted in order to evaluate the most important predictors for the dependent variable of interest; teacher family involvement behavior (i.e., FITPQ). Table 16 depicts the structure, or sequence, of the fitted models (Model A through D).

Table 16

Structure of Fitted Models for FITPQ Practice as Outcome

Model	Covariates included in Level 1	Covariates included in Level 2
Model A	None	None
Model B	Teacher Demographics	School Demographics
	Highest Education level achieved	Percent African American
	Number of Months Experience	Percent Autism
	Teacher ethnicity	Borough
Model C	Teacher Demographics	School Demographics
	Highest Education level achieved	Percent African American
	Number of Months Experience	Percent Autism
	Teacher ethnicity	Borough
	FITS-P (Attitude)	
	Training/Preparation	
	Question 1 Primary Course(s) in Family Involvement	
	Question 2 Various courses included content in Family Involvement	
	Question 3 In-service Training	
Model D	Teacher Demographics	School Demographics
	Highest Education level achieved	Percent African American
	Number of Months Experience	Percent Autism
	Teacher ethnicity – African American	Borough
	FITS-P (Attitude)	SED/VESID School Support
	Training/Preparation (separately)	
	Primary Course in Family Involvement	
	Multiple Courses included	
	In-service Training	

HLM Fitted Models

Model A. Model A reflected an unconditional model that did not include any predictors. One can think this model to be equivalent to an ANOVA model. The unconditional model yields a decomposition of the total variance into within and between school components. This is useful in calculating the amount of variance accounted for when adding Level 1 (teacher) and Level 2 (school) variables.

Model B. Model B controlled for teacher demographics at Level 1, including highest educational level attained, number of months teaching preschool, and teacher ethnicity. Model B also controlled for school demographics at Level 2, which included the percent African-American within each school, the percent of students diagnosed with Autism within each school and the borough in which each school was located.

Model C. Model C retains both teacher and school control variables at Level 1 and 2 respectively, but the FITS-P and Teacher Preparation/training were added. There were three yes/no questions which were included separately in the analysis. The composite scores of the FITS-P were grand mean centered, or centered on the overall mean of all the teachers' FITS-P scores.

Model D. Model D included both teacher and school control variables at Levels 1 and 2, FITS-P, Teacher Preparation/training (3 questions) at Level 1, and VESID/SED school support scores at Level 2.

Final Models. For practice outcome variables, final models were chosen using model fit statistics (-2 residual log likelihood). The full maximum likelihood estimation (FML) was used in HLM to compare models that vary by both fixed and random effects. Using FML estimation provides an advantage by allowing comparison of models changing in both fixed and random

effect. Therefore, a likelihood-ratio test was used for comparing two models. The deviance statistic is equal to the -2 log likelihood for a particular model; the difference in deviance statistics of the two models corresponds to a chi-square distribution with degrees of freedom equal to the difference in the number of parameters estimated.

Models Predicting Teacher Family Involvement Behavior

HLM analyses were conducted using models A through D. As was delineated above, the unconditional model was entered as the first model to determine the proportion of within-and-between school variances when no predictors are included. The intraclass correlation was calculated using Equation 1. The results from the unconditional model (Model A) revealed a within-school variance of $\hat{\sigma}^2$ = 161.12 and a between-school variance of $\hat{\tau}_{00}$ = 20.02, and an ICC = .122. There is substantially more within-school variance than between-school. However, the amount of variance that needs to be accounted for at Level 2 is significant, $\chi^2(19) = 53.03$, $p < .001$, indicating that there are significant differences in teacher practice across schools, and supports the use of HLM.

Table 17 reports the results of Models A through D. Neither the teacher demographics included in Level 1 nor the school demographics in Level 2 have a significant impact on teacher practice behavior.

Results reveal that for both Models C and D, teacher attitudes measured by the FITS-P had a significant positive impact on teacher family involvement behavior. Further, it was found that teacher participation in an in-service training also has a significant positive effect on teacher family involvement. Teacher African American ethnicity is also revealed to be a significant predictor of teacher practice, which may have something to do with an association with another variable where, once the variable is controlled, the unique effect of ethnicity can be revealed.

Results from Model D reveal that, overall, the degree of school support measured by the SED/VESID is significantly predictive of teacher practice, t (15) = 2.27, p = .04.

Based on the likelihood ratio tests, Model D was chosen as the final model. While Model C predicts the data better than the unconditional model (Model A), χ^2 (10) = 96.20, p < .001, Model D is significantly better fit than Model C, χ^2 (1) = 4.88, p = .03. Model D included controls at the teacher and school levels, teacher FITS-P scores (Level 1), teacher preparation/training (Level 1), and school SED/VESID scores (Level 2). Higher scores on the FITS-P (attitude) predict higher scores on the FITPQ (teacher practice), t (271) = 8.48, p < .001, which supports H09. In partial support of H011, prior teacher in-service training was found to be a significant positive predictor of teacher practice. Those teachers answering yes to having taken in-service training predicted higher scores on the FITPQ, t (271) = 5.33, p < .001. Contrary to what was expected, teachers affirming that family involvement was included in other prior courses they have taken predicted lower scores on the FITPQ, t (271) = -1.97, p = .05. As for teacher demographics, teacher ethnicity of African-American was found to be a significant positive predictor of FITS-P scores, t (271) = 2.17, p = .03. All other teacher demographics (including number of months teachers have taught preschool) H010 were found to have nonsignificant effects on the outcome. All school demographic variables were found to be nonsignificant. However, as reported above, and in support of H08, higher scores on the SED/VESID, which measures degree of school support, significantly predicts higher teacher family involvement behavior.

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Table 17

HLM Estimates with Standard Errors for Practice FITPQ as Outcome

Fixed Effects		Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Intercept		89.37 ** (1.28)	87.29** (5.18)	77.12** (5.52)	75.16** (5.43)
Highest Education Level Attained			1.67 (1.67)	2.35 (1.42)	2.48 (1.41)
Number of Months Teaching Experience			-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Teacher Ethnicity			0.51 (0.72)	1.38 (0.64)	1.29* (0.64)
FITS-P				0.99** (0.12)	0.98** (0.12)
Teacher Prep/ Training	Course			1.05 (1.74)	0.71 (1.74)
	Courses			-5.94† (3.23)	-5.57* (3.22)
	In-Service			9.03** (1.69)	7.89** (1.74)
Percent African-American			-0.15 (0.11)	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.08)
Percent diagnosed with Autism			-0.02 (0.08)	0.02 (0.07)	0.01 (0.06)
Borough			0.38 (1.24)	1.86 (0.10)	2.74* (1.00)
School Support (SED/VESID)					0.85* (0.37)
Random Effects					
Intercept		20.02** (10.27)	18.72** (9.81)	9.50** (5.78)	6.46** (4.74)
Residual		161.12 (14.03)	159.48 (13.89)	116.62 (10.15)	116.08 (10.10)
Model Fit Statistics		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Deviance		2259.08	2255.51	2162.88	2158.01

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$. † Approaches Significance.

Table 18 presents this study's hypotheses and each hypothesis tested was either supported, partially supported, or not supported.

Table 18

Overview of Study Hypotheses

H0 Number	Study Hypothesis	Supported/ Not Supported
H01	Total FITS-P scores for reported attitude toward family involvement will be positively related to reported teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ. Further, it is expected that each of the 6 subscales would be positively related to reported teacher family involvement behavior.	Supported
H02	Teacher experience will be negatively related to total reported teacher attitude toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P total score.	Supported
H03	Teacher experience will be negatively related to total reported teacher family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ total score.	Not Supported
H04	Prior preparation/training in family involvement will be positively related to reported teacher attitude toward family involvement as measured by the FITS-P. Finding: Question 1 (one or more prior courses in family involvement) were related to teacher attitude.	Partially Supported
H05	Prior preparation/training in family involvement will be positively related to reported family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ. Finding: Question 3 (only in-service training was significant and positively related to family involvement behavior; Question 1 (course) and 2 (embedded in course(s)) were not.	Partially Supported
H06	The reported level of school support, as measured by Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide, will be positively related to reported teacher attitude toward family involvement, as measured by the FITS-P.	Supported
H07	The reported level of school support, as measured by Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide, will be positively related to reported family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ.	Supported

Table 18 (continued)

H0 Number	Study Hypothesis	Supported/ Not Supported
H08	The reported level of school support as measured by the Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide will be a significant positive predictor of reported family involvement behavior as measured by the FITPQ.	Supported
H09	The reported attitude toward family involvement will be a significant positive predictor of reported family involvement behavior.	Supported
H010	Teacher experience, as measured by total months teaching preschool, will be a significant negative predictor of reported family involvement behavior.	Not Supported
H011	Prior preparation/training will be a significant positive predictor of reported family involvement behavior. Finding: Question 3 (in-service training) predicted higher scores on the FITPQ; Question 1 (course) was not; and Question 2 (embedded in course(s)) predicted lower scores on the FITPQ.	Partially Supported

Additional Analyses

Internal reliability (Inter-item) refers to the extent to which a measure is consistent within itself. The inter-item reliability of the FITPQ, FITS-P and the School support measure were assessed using SPSS/PASW 18.0. It was determined that the 28 item FITPQ had a Cronbach's alpha of .901. and the 28 item FITS-P had a Cronbach's alpha of .869. The high Cronbach's alphas are a good indication that the items of each measure correlate well with one another. Item-total statistics are included in Table 19 for the FITPQ and FITS-P. Table 20 includes the item-total statistics for the SED/VESID measure. Tables 19 and 20 further indicate that all items should be included in each of the measures.

Table 19

Item-Total Statistics for the 28 Item FITPQ and FITS-P

Item	FITPQ Corrected Item-Total Correlation	FITPQ Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	FITS-P Corrected Item-Total Correlation	FITS-P Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Item 1	.144	.902	.259	.868
Item 2	.336	.900	.234	.869
Item 3	.529	.896	.348	.867
Item 4	.583	.895	.400	.865
Item 5	.640	.894	.487	.863
Item 6	.519	.897	.417	.865
Item 7	.289	.900	.417	.866
Item 8	.185	.901	.213	.869
Item 9	.608	.895	.321	.867
Item 10	.425	.899	.462	.864
Item 11	.657	.893	.547	.861
Item 12	.529	.897	.342	.867
Item 13	.177	.901	.334	.867
Item 14	.143	.902	.304	.868
Item 15	.595	.895	.475	.863
Item 16	.457	.898	.453	.865
Item 17	.661	.893	.619	.858
Item 18	.428	.898	.500	.862
Item 19	.255	.901	.167	.869
Item 20	.291	.901	.111	.870
Item 21	.608	.895	.472	.863
Item 22	.577	.895	.546	.860
Item 23	.571	.895	.611	.859
Item 24	.571	.895	.430	.864
Item 25	.279	.901	.214	.869
Item 26	.590	.895	.525	.861
Item 27	.506	.897	.534	.861
Item 28	.577	.895	.527	.861

It was determined that the 28 item SED/VESID School Support measure had a Cronbach's alpha of .758. The high Cronbach's alpha is a good indication that the items correlate well with one another. Inspection of the inter-item correlation matrix showed positive

correlations among the 28 items. Items 4, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28 had a zero variance and were removed from the analysis.

Table 20

Item-Total Statistics for the 28 Item SED/VESID School Support Measure

Item	School Support Corrected Item-Total Correlation	School Support Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Item 1	.234	.759
Item 2	.183	.759
Item 3	.776	.703
Item 5	.445	.737
Item 6	.235	.758
Item 7	.020	.763
Item 8	.020	.763
Item 9	.448	.738
Item 10	-.185	.782
Item 12	.397	.743
Item 14	.373	.745
Item 17	.453	.736
Item 19	.248	.754
Item 20	.626	.721
Item 21	.447	.737
Item 22	-.057	.773
Item 23	.778	.702

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This section summarizes and discusses the results of the study. It also presents the implications of this research for school psychologists, administrators, and educational institutions. In this section, I also discuss the limitations of the present study and make suggestions for future research.

This study focused on the special education preschool population where teachers can work with families in a positive way to create a foundation that may carry over this positive perception throughout the family/student's school career. Using the Epstein framework as a six part definition for family involvement, this study examined teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and school support and their relationship to reported family involvement behaviors. In general, the hypotheses in this study were supported by the results and provide preschool educators with valuable information to help develop strategies, identify facilitators and obstacles, and improve the working partnership between schools and families, with a goal of increasing family involvement. Knowledge of specific variables associated with teacher attitudes and family involvement practice behaviors can be beneficial to universities training teachers and agencies employing them as well.

One of the clearest findings was that teacher attitude was predictive of reported teacher family involvement behaviors. Teachers who exhibited more positive family involvement attitudes actually reported using more family involvement practices in their classrooms. Thus, attitudes of a child's teacher toward family involvement can be a facilitator or barrier to family involvement. Some studies (e.g., Shartrand et al., 1997) have shown that teachers often reported having negative blaming-type attitudes toward families or having "we-are-the-experts"

approaches. This study supports the development of positive family involvement attitudes as a desirable outcome and is consistent with other prior research showing that when positive attitudes are embraced, they are then reflected by agencies, organizations, communities, and those conducting research, training, and service delivery (Bruder, 2000).

Using parent and teacher interviews focused on student and teacher characteristics affecting teacher attitudes toward parental involvement in elementary and middle school, Jones et al. (1997) found that teacher attitudes were affected by ability level of the students and by teacher race. African American teachers had a more positive attitude towards parental involvement than European American teachers in the Jones et al. study. In this study as well teacher ethnicity (i.e., African-American teachers) was a significant positive predictor of FITS-P scores, measuring reported attitudes towards family involvement.

A second finding indicates that one of the three types of teacher preparation/training, in-service training, was predictive of reported teacher family involvement behaviors. Neither type of preservice training preparation (specific courses or integration within courses) predicted teacher family involvement. Research has shown that teacher education programs often do not adequately prepare teachers to involve parents (Chavkin, 1991). There is also a minimal amount of training provided in teacher training programs regarding communication and collaboration skills with families (Bailey, Simeonsson, Yoder, & Huntington, 1990). Despite the lack of formal pre-service training, however, the results of this study suggest that in-service training can be effective in improving reported family involvement behaviors. Additional in-service training while teachers are working in the field was a positive predictor of family involvement behaviors. Agencies employing teachers can encourage change in their employed teachers family involvement behaviors and attitudes by providing in-service training on this topic. This

contradicts Showers (1990) assertion that often skill-based training workshops in schools do not result in implementation once teachers return to their classrooms.

Study results are consistent with the National Parent Teacher Association (1997) recommendations that parents, educators and community leaders work together to implement their standards to improve family involvement. The steps that were outlined as a process for improving parent and family involvement included: a) creating an action team, b) examining current practice, c) developing a plan for improvement, d) developing a written parent/family involvement policy, e) securing support, f) providing professional development for school/staff, and g) the evaluation and revision of the plan. They, too, see the merit of school-based training to improve family involvement.

The in-service professional development could specifically include strategies in each of the 6 areas of the Epstein framework, enabling teachers to foster involvement in these areas: a) *Parenting:* helping all families establish supportive home environments for children, b) *Communicating:* establishing two-way exchanges about school programs and children's progress, c) *Volunteering:* recruiting and organizing parent help at school, home or other locations, d) *Learning at home:* providing information and ideas to families about how to help students with homework and other curriculum-related materials, e) *Decision making*: having parents from all backgrounds serve as representatives and leaders in school communities, and f) *Collaborating with the community:* collaborating, identifying and integrating resources and services from the community.

Also related to prior preparation/training were the findings that teachers who had taken a course primarily focused on family involvement in their pre-service training had more positive reported attitudes towards family involvement. Therefore, this study lends support to the

recommendations made by Swan and Sirvis (1992) that teachers need to be educated to promote better family involvement prior to entering the classroom. It also lends support to Knight and Wadsworth (1999) recommendations that all special education programs plan a separate family course, providing soon to be teachers with the knowledge of "best practices" including families in the educational process. Teachers who reported not attending a course dedicated to family involvement but rather had family involvement integrated or embedded throughout a number of courses reported fewer or less frequent family involvement behaviors. These findings support Brantlinger (1991) who reported that an absence of pre-service training and course work in family-related topics within teacher preparation programs has possibly contributed to the reticence of special educators to embrace family/professional collaboration. This study, however, suggests that rather than embedding diluted content into multiple courses, one specific family involvement focused course might be more beneficial.

The premise that teachers with less teaching experience would exhibit more family involvement practices in their classrooms was not supported. While teacher experience was negatively related to teacher attitude towards family involvement, it was not a predictor of teacher family involvement behaviors. Research has shown some critical distinctions between novice and more experienced teachers (Berliner, 1994; Palmer, et.al, 2005). Palmer et al. (2005) indicated that teachers with more experience are likely to have different attitudes about their students and think and behave differently as compared to novice teachers. Ramirez (2001) proposed that teachers can quite possibly become complacent as their teaching careers progress. He interviewed many teachers, but several with over 8 years of experience indicated a loss of enthusiasm with regard to involving the families of their students as they continued in their teaching careers. Teachers focused instead on teaching their students alone. The finding in this

study may be related to the complacency Ramirez (2001) reported as well. As teachers progress in their experience, they may lose their enthusiasm for working with families as they continue to grow in their position.

Despite some promising models and growing evidence of the benefits of connections, policymakers, funding agencies, school systems, and state education agencies are still not demonstrating maximum support for connection-building practice (Jordan, Orozco, & Averett 2001). In this study, the degree of school support as measured by the SED/VESID was positively correlated and significantly predictive of reported teacher family involvement behaviors. This supports the suggestion by Swick and McKnight (1989) that a lack of support from the administration may inhibit family involvement. They also suggested that teachers often need incentives such as recognition or encouragement in order to extend themselves to the families of their students (Swick & McKnight, 1989). In this study, principals who reported to offer more administrative support for family involvement in their schools did have teachers who reported more positive attitudes and reported more family involvement practices in their classrooms.

Schools can impact families in a positive way to create a foundation that may carry over throughout the family/student's school career (Gettinger & Guetschow, 1998). As Soodak and Erwin (2000) suggest, parents of preschool children with disabilities require regular contact with their children's teachers and other therapy providers in order to monitor their progress, discuss on-going problems, or simply inform each other of issues or advice relating to the children. The findings in this study support the importance of school agencies supporting special education preschool teachers in their family involvement quality indicators as measured by the SED/VESID. These indicators include but are not limited to; communication strategies, program

opportunities, systems, resources, informational strategies, skill development and diversity to impact family school involvement from a top down approach. This will impact family involvement from the bottom up as well. School principals and school psychologists can use a collaborative strategic planning approach to create system organizational change in their school buildings. School agencies can create a strategic planning team composed of the stakeholders (teachers and parents), identify improvement areas and goals, then develop an action plan for change and improvement according to the resources they are given (Lewis & Imier, 2010).

This study makes an additional important contribution to the family involvement literature through the development of two scales based on a well respected and researched model of family involvement. The literature on family involvement has not provided clear definitions of involvement which results in outcomes that may not be comparable. Fan and Chen (2001) noted these differences in definitions and measurements of parental involvement and purported that this resulted in leading to difficulties in assessing cumulative knowledge across different studies, inhibiting replication efforts, and creating a research-to-practice gap. These are the first scales, empirically developed, to measure these constructs. The measures, while focused on a preschool teaching population have the potential to be adapted and used with school-age populations to provide the same benefits to school psychologists and principals working with older populations as well.

Educational Implications

As mentioned above, the FITS-P and FITPQ measures can be used as pre and post measures for in-service trainings in family involvement. Either could be used to determine if the in-service trainings have made a positive impact on teacher attitude and/or practices towards family involvement. Expanding teacher knowledge in the six different areas of family

involvement as defined by Epstein (1995), suggest new ways to reach out to their student's families or re-energize their beliefs in partnering with families. In-service training workshops for teachers to develop collaborative skills and strategies can be important in recognizing that family involvement does not always occur "in the school" is critical. Possibly the FITPQ measure could assist one in studying the longitudinal effects of such in-service training. It could determine if practices towards family involvement remain at a level equal to what they were after a successful in-service. It is important for special education teachers to reach out and work with parents as learning partners. Anything we as educators can do to help train teachers to work collaboratively is essential. Further, from an ecological perspective, the importance of system-wide values and beliefs is important. Again, a collaborative strategic planning team consisting of teachers, school psychologists and parents can make systemic organizational change in this area for the better.

Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are several limitations to the current study, which attempted to determine how teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, years of experience, and level of school support impact family involvement behaviors as they relate to the six-part framework outlined by Epstein (1995). One weakness of the study was the limited geographic sampling. All participants and schools were in the New York City metro area. According to New York State Education Department, there are approximately 213 approved "4410" special education preschool programs in the 5 boroughs (retrieved from http://www.vesid.nysed.gov). This study encompassed only 20 such programs in an urban setting. The "4410" preschool community is a relatively small community. It would be important to determine if the findings of this study would generalize to suburban or rural communities. It was difficult to obtain permission from agencies and preschool administrators to even enter and recruit teachers for the study. Attendance at each of

the public Children's Committee meetings throughout the city enabled me to meet administrators and speak about my study; however, many agencies have restricted research studies from their programs.

Even though my study did not include children, only teaching and administrative staff, it was restricted nonetheless. My previous 13 years of experience in the field, working in a school in Brooklyn, enabled me to have a prior relationship with many administrators throughout the city. This allowed me the foot-in-the-door to enter many of these programs. There were 8 schools of the 20 with 45% of the teacher sample who worked in Brooklyn schools. The larger number of schools in Brooklyn can possibly be attributed to my prior working relationship and collegial support as a prior member of that community. Only one program from the borough of Staten Island participated. There was not a random selection process across schools. Because of my prior relationship with administrators throughout the city, the schools that volunteered were not random.

An additional limitation to mention regards the social desirability of the self-report measures of the FITS-P and FITPQ. There was concern that because they were self-report response measures, teachers could answer the FITS-P and FITPQ measures in such a way as to cast themselves in a favorable light. Principals/administrators of each school could also answer more favorably when responding to the level of school support for family involvement. Results indicated that of the teachers who took the FITPQ, the majority of the teachers varied their responses from favorable to unfavorable; it seems they were truthful in how they responded. Also, for teachers who took the FITS-P, a percentage of the questions had a variety of responses from favorable to unfavorable suggesting that they were not necessarily responding in a socially desirable manner.

Future studies may address the geographical limitation, sampling bias, and expand to state-wide or multiple states. It would, however, necessitate collaboration with the State Education Department or some other agency body overseeing such programs to obtain a larger sampling of schools. Social desirability and validity of the FITPQ could be further tested using observer ratings to determine if family involvement behaviors have been implemented.

Another area to study is the type, length, and quality of in-service trainings as they vary in different schools. If schools employ a practice-test approach, didactic component, and/or simple lecture, these training variables may also impact family involvement behaviors in some way.

Although this study found that neither type of pre-service training preparation (specific courses or integration within courses) predicted teacher family involvement, a factor that may have impacted this was teacher recall of what they had taken in their college coursework. Future studies may use information from actual college teaching programs to obtain a more accurate representation of this information.

There were also a number of parent variables included in the review of the literature. Although this study did not include parent information, a future study could be conducted focusing on parent variables that impact family involvement behaviors of teachers.

Conclusion

This study focused on the special education preschool population where teachers can work with families in a positive way to create a foundation that may carry over this positive perception throughout the family/student's school career. Using the Epstein framework as a six part definition for family involvement, this study examined teacher attitudes, teacher preparation/training, teacher experience, and school support and their relationship to reported

family involvement behaviors. In general, the hypotheses in this study were supported by the results and provide preschool educators with valuable information to help develop strategies, identify facilitators and obstacles, and improve the working partnership between schools and families, with a goal of increasing family involvement. Knowledge of specific variables associated with teacher attitudes and family involvement practice behaviors can be beneficial to universities training teachers and agencies employing them as well.

One of the clearest findings was that teacher attitude was predictive of reported teacher family involvement behaviors. Teachers who exhibited more positive family involvement attitudes actually reported using more family involvement practices in their classrooms. A second finding was only one of the three types of teacher preparation/training, in-service training, was predictive of reported teacher family involvement behaviors. Agencies employing teachers can encourage change in their employed teachers family involvement behaviors and attitudes by focusing in-service training on family involvement. Also related to prior preparation/training were the findings that teachers who had taken a course primarily focused on family involvement in their pre-service training had more positive reported attitudes towards family involvement. Teachers who reported not attending a course dedicated to family involvement but rather had family involvement integrated or embedded throughout a number of courses reported fewer or less frequent family involvement behaviors. This study suggests that rather than embedding diluted content into multiple courses, one specific family involvement focused course might be more beneficial. In this study, the degree of school support as measured by the SED/VESID was positively correlated and significantly predictive of reported teacher family involvement behaviors. In this study, principals who reported to offer more administrative support for family involvement in their schools did have teachers who reportedly

offered more positive attitudes and applied more family involvement practices in their classrooms.

School principals and school psychologists can use a collaborative strategic planning approach to create system organizational change in their school buildings. This study makes an additional important contribution to the family involvement literature through the development of two scales based on a well respected and researched model of family involvement. These are the first scales, empirically developed, to measure these constructs.

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS FORM

Family Involvement Teacher Survey-Preschool (FITS-P)

By L. Marchini, MS & M. Fish, Ph.D.

Code #_____ **Date**_____

Instructions: Please circle the most appropriate answer for each item.

ITEM	***RESPONSE***			
1. It is important to respect family culture and its impact on children's lives.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
2. It is important to communicate at least weekly with students' families.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
3. It is important to encourage parents to set up a quiet space for working on school assignments at home.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
4. It is important to ask parents to participate on school trips and class activities.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
5. It is important to refer parents for extra help and to community resources.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
6. It is important to encourage parents to participate/attend school policy/decision-making meetings.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
7. It is important to consider cultural differences between school and family.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
8. It is important to encourage parents to communicate in person, or via email, notes or telephone.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4

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9. It is important to encourage parents to read to their children at night.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
10. It is important to encourage parents to assist with fundraising events for the school.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
11. It is important to support families in investigating services available for them in the community.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
12. It is important to encourage parents to advocate for their children.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
13. It is important to accept that family lifestyles may be different from your own.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
14. It is important to use open-ended conversation and actively listen to students' parents.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
15. It is important to encourage parents to serve as models by reading while at home.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
16. It is important to accept parent donations of materials not supplied but needed in the classroom.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
17. It is important if needed, to encourage parents to seek assistance from local parent centers or parent education programs.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
18. It is important to support parent decision-making whenever possible.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4

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19. It is important to respect that there are many types of families. (e.g., same sex, single parent)	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
20. It is important to share the accomplishments of students with their families.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
21. It is important to provide opportunities for parents to get involved in school projects at home.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
22. It is important to encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom or at school.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
23. It is important to feel confident in encouraging parents to seek assistance from the community.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
24. It is important to support and involve parents in developing IEP goals.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
25. It is important to collect students' class work, assignments and artwork, and send them home periodically.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
26. It is important to invite parents/families to share their expertise in the classroom.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
27. It is important to be comfortable referring parents to the school's social services.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4
28. It is important to encourage parents to participate in school programming.	Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Agree 4

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS FORM

Typology based on Epstein (1995)

Epstein, J.L., Sanders, M.G., Simon, B.S., Salinas, K.C., Jansorn, N.R., & VanVoorhis, F.L. (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:Corwin.

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Parenting	*Communicating*	*Learning at Home*	*Volunteering*	*Collaborating with the Community*	*Decision Making*
1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____
7 _____	8 _____	9 _____	10 _____	11 _____	12 _____
13 _____	14 _____	15 _____	16 _____	17 _____	18 _____
19 _____	20 _____	21 _____	22 _____	23 _____	24 _____
	25 _____		26 _____	27 _____	28 _____

Total score = ____/ 112

/ 16	/ 20	/ 16	/ 20	/ 20	/ 20

Mean score =

Appendix B

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS FORM

Code #_____ **Date**_____

TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

Instructions: Please circle the most appropriate answer for each item.

A) Education Level: Highest level of education attained:
Please check off one of the following:

__ **BA/BS**

__ **MA/MS enrolled ____# of credits**

__ **MA/MS**

__ **Other_____**

B) Preschool experience: Number of years teaching _____ Year(s)

C) While obtaining your teaching degree, did you take one or more courses with a primary content or focus on families? ..... Yes No

D) While obtaining your teaching degree, did other courses include or address family issues?..... Yes No

E) Have you ever received an in-service training regarding family involvement during your teaching career?..... Yes No

F) Please check off one of the following:

__ **American Indian or Alaska Native**

__ **Black or African American**

__ **Asian or Pacific Islander**

__ **Hispanic or Latino**

__ **White (not Hispanic origin)**

__ **Multi-Racial (not Hispanic origin)**

__ **Other specify_____**

G) Although preschoolers are labeled *Preschoolers with a Disability*, to the best of your

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ability, please indicate the percentages of the types of disabilities serviced in your classroom:

___% Autism/PDD

___% Physically Impaired

___% Emotional/Behavioral

___% Cognitive Disability

___ % Speech/Language Impaired

___ % Other

H) Is Family Involvement in your program ....
(Please check one)

___ Suggested

___ Mandatory

___ Neither

Appendix C

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS FORM

Family Involvement Teacher Practice Questionnaire

Code #_____ Date_____

***Instructions:** Think about your teaching practices in the last six months, then please check one of the following categories (All or most parents, Some parents, Few parents or No parents yet) to the following teacher practices regarding Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning At Home, Decision-Making, and Collaborating with the Community.*

ITEM	RESPONSE (Check One)
1. Did you show respect to family culture and its impact on children's lives?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet
2. Did you communicate at least weekly with your students' families?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet
3. Did you encourage any parents to set up a quiet space for working on school assignments at home?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet
4. Did you ask parents to participate on school trips and class activities?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet
5. Did you refer parents for extra help or to community resources?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet
6. Did you encourage parents to participate/attend school policy/ decision-making meetings?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet
7. Did you consider cultural differences between school and family?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet
8. Did you encourage parents to speak to you either in person, via email, notes or telephone?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet
9. Did you encourage parents to read to their children at night?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet
10. Did you encourage parents to assist with fundraising events for the school?	❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS FORM

11. Did you support families by investigating services available for them in the community? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

12. Did you encourage parents to advocate for their children? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

13. Did you accept that family lifestyles may be different from your own? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

14. Did you use open-ended conversation and actively listen to students' parents? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

15. Did you encourage parents to serve as models by reading while at home? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

16. Did you accept parent donations of materials not supplied but needed in the classroom? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

17. Did you, if needed, encourage parents to seek assistance from local parent centers or parent education programs? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

18. Did you support parent decision-making whenever possible? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

19. Did you respect and work with many different types of families (e.g., same sex, single parent)? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

20. Did you share the accomplishments of students with their families? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

21. Did you provide opportunities for parents to get involved in school projects at home? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

22. Did you encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom or at school? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS FORM

23. Did you encourage parents to seek assistance from the community? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

24. Did you support and involve parents in developing IEP goals? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

25. Did you collect students' class work, assignments and artwork, and send them home periodically? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

26. Did you invite parents/families to share their expertise in the classroom? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

27. Did you refer parents to your school's social services? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

28. Did you encourage parents to participate in school programming? ❒ All or most parents ❒ Some parents ❒ Few parents ❒ No parents yet

Please give examples of other family involvement practices that you have engaged in during the last six months:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Typology based on Epstein (1995)

Epstein, J.L., Sanders, M.G., Simon, B.S., Salinas, K.C., Jansorn, N.R., & VanVoorhis, F.L. (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:Corwin.

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For Official Use Only: **SCORING**

Parenting	*Communicating*	*Learning at Home*	*Volunteering*	*Collaborating with the Community*	*Decision Making*
1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____	5 _____	6 _____
7 _____	8 _____	9 _____	10 _____	11 _____	12 _____
13 _____	14 _____	15 _____	16 _____	17 _____	18 _____
19 _____	20 _____	21 _____	22 _____	23 _____	24 _____
	25 _____		26 _____	27 _____	28 _____

Total score = _____ / 112

_____ / 16 ____ / 20 ___ / 16 ____ / 20 ___ / 20 ___ / 20

Mean score =

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ ____

Appendix D

Name: _____ Job Title: _____

Program Self Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide Questionnaire

Please indicate the demographic percentages of the students at your school:

___% American Indian or Alaska Native

___% Black or African American

___% Asian or Pacific Islander

___% Hispanic or Latino

___% White (not Hispanic origin)

___% Multi-Racial (not Hispanic origin)

Please indicate the demographic percentages of the educational level of the student's parents in your school:

___% Graduate School

___% Graduated College

___% Some College

___% HS Diploma / GED

Please indicate the demographic percentages of the Socio-Economic Status level of the parents in your school:

___% High Income

___% Middle/High Income

___% Middle Income

___% Middle/Low Income

___% Low Income

Although preschoolers are labeled *Preschoolers with a Disability*, to the best of your ability, please indicate the percentages of the types of disabilities serviced in your program:

___% Autism/PDD

___% Physically Impaired

___% Emotional/Behavioral

___% Cognitive Disability

___ % Speech/Language Impaired

___ % Other

Is Family Involvement in your program ....
(Please check one)

___ Suggested

___ Mandatory

___ Neither

Place a checkmark in the yes or no column, depending if your program has implemented the indicator.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: The program values and respects families as the primary decision-makers for their children and provides family-focused, culturally sensitive services.

Family Involvement	*The program includes families as full partners in the education of their children.*

Quality Indicators:	Check ☑ yes or no	
1. A variety of opportunities exist for families to become involved in both the program and their child's activities:	YES	NO
❖ membership on decision-making and advisory committees	❑	❑
❖ classroom observation and/or volunteer work	❑	❑
❖ information-sharing with staff	❑	❑
❖ family workshops/family group meetings	❑	❑
❖ child assessment, program planning, IEP development	❑	❑
❖ development, implementation and evaluation of program evaluation/quality improvement activities	❑	❑
2. Systems and resources are in place that support family participation in the program, such as:	YES	NO
❖ orientation programs	❑	❑
❖ written information on program philosophy, goals, policies, procedures and practices	❑	❑
❖ meals, transportation, child care	❑	❑
❖ an open-door policy that allows families to feel welcome while maintaining student safety	❑	❑
❖ materials in the preferred language of families	❑	❑
❖ flexible options for participation (e.g., flexible times and sites; opportunities for those with limited time)	❑	❑
❖ informal opportunities for sharing of family successes and concerns	❑	❑

3. Staff and families regularly exchange (jargon-free) information about the program and children's development. Communication strategies include the following:	YES	NO
❖ regular mailings or newsletters about the program	❑	❑
❖ regular progress briefs on children	❑	❑
❖ regular meetings and family conferences	❑	❑
❖ home visits to promote school-family collaboration	❑	❑
❖ informal telephone or face-to-face conversations or notes in families' preferred language	❑	❑
4. Staff and families share information about how to promote and extend child learning, social and physical development at home.	❑	❑
5. Procedures are in place to address families' concerns about the program. These procedures are available in written form and distributed to the families.	❑	❑

Family Education	*The program provides families with information to enhance their skills as their child's principal educator.*

Quality Indicators:	Check ☑ yes or no	
1. A variety of opportunities exist to promote and support family skill development including:	YES	NO
❖ special training programs for families (e.g., Parent Effectiveness Training (PET), Parent and Child Together (PACT))	❑	❑
❖ linkages to accessible programs and resources within the community	❑	❑
❖ family–to-family networking	❑	❑
❖ opportunities for informal conversation about parenting and other issues	❑	❑
2. Programs and services are based on families' identified needs, resources, priorities and concerns.	❑	❑

Diversity	*The program recognizes the cultural/linguistic diversity of families and values their strength.*

Quality Indicators:	Check ☑ yes or no YES	NO
1. Staff members communicate in the preferred language of Families and/or seek out specialized resources as needed.	❑	❑
2. Staff members demonstrate sensitivity to differences in family structure, social, religious and cultural backgrounds.	❑	❑
3. Family needs are addressed through diverse and flexible opportunities built on the family's strengths and differences.	❑	❑

Adapted from August 2003 Preschool Special Education:Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Guide Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities and the University of the State of New York the State Education Department http://www.vesid.nysed.gov

Appendix E

SCRIPT

Good Morning Committee Members and Attendees,

My name is Louise Marchini and I am a student in the Educational Psychology Ph.D. program at the Graduate Center of the City of New York (CUNY). I am here to share with you my dissertation study. It is entitled "Teacher and School Variables that Impact Special Education Preschool Teacher-Family Involvement Behaviors". This is a research study focusing on what teachers believe and practice regarding family involvement. This study will require the completion of various questionnaires to learn more about teacher beliefs and specific things teachers do as well as the school support they receive to involve the families of their students. What I would like to do today is ask for your participation in the study which would allow me to conduct the study with teachers in your school. The results of this study will help to improve teacher- family collaboration and involvement.

The questionnaires for your staff will take about 15 minutes each to complete. The first questionnaire can be completed and collected by me. In two weeks, I will ask them to complete another questionnaire which again only takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. The questionnaire for the school administrator (yourselves) will take less than 10 minutes to complete. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential. To ensure confidentiality, all questionnaires are coded and teachers/administrators names are not included anywhere. I will distribute, collect, and code all forms. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation without consequence. The risk involved in this study, is that it may make you question your family involvement practices and beliefs, however, it is also an opportunity to reflect on the family involvement practices and support you currently use. I may publish results of the study, but names of people, settings, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications.

At this point, I would like to circulate a sign in sheet for those of you who may be interested. Please include your name, school, email address or phone number.

Thank you for your time this morning and I look forward to working with you in the near future.

Appendix F

Ph.D. Program in Educational Psychology

The Graduate School and University Center
The City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016-4309
TEL 212.817.8285 FAX 212.817.1516

CONSENT FORM

Dear Administrator

My name is Louise Marchini and I am a student in the Educational Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled "Teacher and School Variables that Impact Special Education Preschool Teacher-Family Involvement Behaviors". This is a research study focusing on what teachers believe and practice regarding family involvement. We are using questionnaires to learn more about teacher beliefs and specific things they do as well as the school support they receive to involve the families of your students. I would like your permission to conduct the study with teachers in your school prior to filling out the questionnaires so I can use them in my research as well as a questionnaire from you regarding school support.

The questionnaires for your staff will take about 15 minutes each to complete. The first questionnaire can be completed and returned to your school social worker. In two weeks, the teachers will be asked to complete another questionnaire also to be given to them by the same person. The questionnaire for the school administrator will take less than 10 minutes to complete. Feel free to write comments on the questionnaire to let us know, for example, if you have any reactions to the questionnaire's content or format, or think some questions are not clear or are not relevant. There is an area for comments.

All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential. To ensure confidentiality, all questionnaires are coded and teachers/administrators names are not included anywhere. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation without consequence. The risk involved in this study, is that it may make you question your family involvement practices and beliefs, however, it is also an opportunity to reflect on the family involvement practices and support you currently use.

Ph.D. Program in Educational Psychology

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The City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016-4309
TEL 212.817.8285 FAX 212.817.1516

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at 917-686-9572 or lmarchini@nyc.rr.com, or my advisor Dr. Marian Fish at (212) 817-8290 or mfish@gc.cuny.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu .

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

"I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure, its possible benefits and risks, and give my permission to be included in the study."

Administrator's Signature	Date	Investigator's Signature	Date

Administrator's Title

Graduate School & University Center / CUNY
IRB
Approved
09-06-1778
Approved: 6/22/09 To 6/21/10 Expired:

Ph.D. Program in Educational Psychology

The Graduate School and University Center
The City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016-4309
TEL 212.817.8285 FAX 212.817.1516

CONSENT FORM

Dear Administrator

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Ph.D. Program in Educational Psychology

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I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at 917-686-9572 or lmarchini@nyc.rr.com, or my advisor Dr. Marian Fish at (212) 817-8290 or mfish@gc.cuny.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu .

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

"I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure, its possible benefits and risks, and give my permission to be included in the study."

Administrator's Signature	Date	Investigator's Signature	Date

Administrator's Title

Graduate School & University Center / CUNY
IRB
Approved
09-06-1778
Approved: 5/5/10 To 5/4/11 Expired:

Appendix G

Ph.D. Program in Educational Psychology

The Graduate School and University Center
The City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016-4309
TEL 212.817.8285 FAX 212.817.1516

CONSENT FORM

Dear Teacher

My name is Louise Marchini and I am a student in the Educational Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled "Teacher and School Variables that Impact Special Education Preschool Teacher-Family Involvement Behaviors". This is a research study focusing on what you believe and practice regarding family involvement. We are using questionnaires to learn more about your beliefs and specific things you do to involve the families of your students. I would like your permission prior to filling out the questionnaires so I can use them in my research.

The questionnaires will take about 15 minutes each to complete. The first questionnaire can be completed now and returned to the person who distributed it to you. In two weeks you will be asked to complete another questionnaire also to be given to you by the same person. Feel free to write comments on the questionnaire to let us know, for example, if you have any reactions to the questionnaire's content or format, or think some questions are not clear or are not relevant. There is an area for comments.

All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential. To ensure confidentiality, questionnaires are coded and your name is not included anywhere. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation without consequence.

The risk involved in this study, is that it may make you question your family involvement practices and beliefs, however, it is also an opportunity to reflect on the family involvement practices you currently use.

Ph.D. Program in Educational Psychology

The Graduate School and University Center
The City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016-4309
TEL 212.817.8285 FAX 212.817.1516

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study results, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at 917-686-9572 or lmarchini@nyc.rr.com, or my advisor Dr. Marian Fish at (212) 817-8290 or mfish@gc.cuny.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu .

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

"I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure, its possible benefits and risks, and give my permission to be included in the study."

Participant's Signature	Date	Investigator's Signature	Date

Graduate School & University Center / CUNY
IRB
Approved
09-06-1778
Approved: 6/22/09 To Expired: 6/21/10

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