**Aspiring Leaders Research Review**

**Interview Summaries** (Please include brief summaries of at least three interviews you conducted regarding your change project. You should include meeting location, time, and all attendees. Also, only include information pertinent to your project.)

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|  | **Location** | **Date/Time** | **Attendees** | **Summary** |
| **Interview 1** | Smith Family Center | 6/18/2015 11:30-1:00pm | Kiera Busching- self  Jennifer Beggs- Curriculum and Customer Service Specialist | I met with Jennifer to discuss Parent University and their engagement strategies. As I shared my original project vision, she was excited to hear about a more community-based approach. However, she did share her concern due to a lack of relationship-building in our schools that lay the foundation for improved engagement. This conversation led me to shift the scope of my project from planning parent PD to helping schools become better at relating to communities and building trust. |
| **Interview 2** | McClintock MS | 6/29/2015  2:30-3:30pm | Kiera Busching- self Paul Williams- Principal at McClintock MS | The interview was intended to see the steps Williams took when he took over at McClintock. His school has high parent/community participation in all their events due to the culture he created in the last 3 years. He holds weekly parent nights with food from church group, clubs for kids, and classes for parents. He provides parents with a google calendar of events and makes himself readily accessible for his people. His teachers are held accountable for contact log checks during data meetings in order to create a shared culture of responsibility. We discussed the Poverty Simulation offered through Crisis Ministries and I received positive feedback from his own experiences and that of his staff. |
| **Interview 3** | Arbor Glen | 6/30/2015 6:00-8:oopm | Kiera Busching- self  Rickey Hall Anna Zeuvskaya Community Members of WLC | The greatest concern among parents is the lack of relationships and opportunities to get into the schools. Although many feel as though there is a difference in “values” among the West Boulevard community (ie- a lessened stress on the importance of education), schools must take actionable steps to improving relationships |
| **Interview 4** | Phone interview at Atrium | 7/1/2015 11:30-12:15 | Kiera Busching- Self  Lauren Finley- Principal at Winsor Park | She reflected on the types of parent engagement she sees at her school and determined it to be “high volume, but low impact.” Parents are attending events like birthday parties and concerts but won’t engage in more “substantive” activities like reading with kids or working on PTA. The language barriers seems to be one of their largest challenges; sessions are conducted dually in English and Spanish which frustrates some parents. The Asian community is expected to attend English sessions because they can’t address all languages. We discussed a need for better teacher-training and determined that the Poverty Simulation is one of the most effective. |

**Academic/Scholarly Literature Review**

Within our Title 1 schools, parent and community engagement is a known factor in student success that is often passed over for testing, discipline and other major concerns. Research supports the need for parent engagement within this demographic in order to lessen the achievement gap. This research was primarily intended to determine major breakdowns in the system, both from the parents and the schools, and to determine best practices and next steps to improve engagement.

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| **Topic** | **Source 1** | **Source 2** | **Summary** |
| *The Importance of Family* | (*Jeynes, 2007*)  In this study, Jeynes examines four questions: academic benefits of family involvement, the impact of school-sponsored involvement programs, the specific aspects of parental involvement that are most beneficial, and relationship involvement and academics across racial and gender groups. One of the most salient trends that arose showed that parents who communicated clear expectations for school and felt a greater connection between school and home had children who showed greater academic growth. This study is a compilation of educational research down throughout the early 2000s. | (*Moles & Fege, 2011)*  This article, sponsored by the Center for American Progress, details the history of family engagement policy and implementation over the past 50 years. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was intended to bring a component of social justice to the public school system. In 1974, an amendment made parent advisory councils mandatory. These councils, similar to the modern SLT, gave parent advocates a change to evaluate instructional programs, the school Title 1 plan, and complaint procedures. This system was too “regulated” and led to great push-back in the 1980s. It wasn’t until 1988 that an amendment required LEAs to develop policies ensuring parent involvement in all aspects of Title 1 schools. Government entities realize the importance of families in education, yet are reluctant to mandate their involvement.  Current policies supporting parent engagement are someone unclear and unrefined. | A family support system has proven to be particularly important for low-income communities in order to break the cycle of poverty. Studies support the notion that school-family partnership show academic and character growth for students and can change their academic trajectory. Government organizations have tried to regulate and supervise school-family engagement but have proven to be quite unsuccessful. If schools want to implement true change, they must enforce policies at their campus. |
| Obstacles for Schools to Engage with Families in Low-Income Communities | (*McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000*)  This study compiles three major factors that make for negative relationships between school and home. 1) A difference in communication styles between teachers and home (speech patterns, values for literacy, etc) 2) Limited understanding of home cultures, including socioeconomic or linguistic differences.  3) Use of “low intensity” communication (letters/flyers) in place of face-to-face, personalized interactions. | (*Barynyak &McNelly, 2009*)  The authors compile an overview and review of current literature regarding school-level beliefs and practices regarding family involvement. The study echoes many of the thoughts from the section above: families contribute a great deal to the emotional and academic success of children in schools. The authors provide three actionable steps to improve home-school relationships: hire a dedicated parent involvement coordinator for each high-needs school, create mandatory systems for communication between school and home, and seek community-based interactions in lieu of school-based activities. | Schools often struggle to engage parents due to the lack of cross-cultural understanding between home and school. Research suggests that schools must intentionally plan to overcome these differences in order to engage parents more frequently and with greater impact. Schools need to implement accountability systems to guarantee that all faculty and staff share a vision of the role of family in education. They must also agree and actively act to positively interact with parents at all fronts (office, parent conferences, calls home) |
| Obstacles for Parent Engagement in Low-Income Communities | (*Van Veslor & Orozco, 2007*)  This article outlines the demographic, psychological, and school barriers impeding low-income parents from greater involvement in schools. The demographic barriers are as follows: work schedules that interfere with school-based activities, lack of transportation, or language barriers for immigrant parents. | (*McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000*)  Research identifies three psychological factors contributing to a lack of family involvement. The first is the family’s perception of their role/responsibility in school. Many low-income families viewed themselves as “outside” the system. The second barrier is a low-belief in the efficacy of their involvement. The third factor is the school-culture and its ability to make *all* families feel welcome and appreciated. | In order to better engage our families in their children’s education, we need to intentionally plan the activities and dialogue we have with parents. Distrust of education and those involved seems to be at the heart of the issue. Schools must purposefully build relationships within the community to leverage their support later for school-wide initiative. Schools *must* address the social-emotional needs of families in order to improve outcomes for students. |
| School Strategies to Enhance Engagement | (*United States Department of Education, 2013* )  The Dual Capacity Framework suggests the need for “organizational conditions” that foster improved family involvement; all initiatives must be systemic integrated), and sustained (involves district and school based leadership as well as community stakeholders and funder) in order to bring to change to the existing structures at play. Opportunities for families must also be linked to learning, relational, developmental, collective, and interactive. | (*Rhim, 2011)* This articles outlines the three main areas of family engagement: advocacy, academic support, and expertise. However, “regardless of its form or level, the first step to catalyzing families and communities… is to communicate the dire need for change.” Communication is at the heart of all suggestions provided in this article. If there is no clear way of meeting with families and sharing information, there will be no increase in engagement. The method and manner of communication must provide families with a consistent experience. | Many of our Title 1 schools in CMS are at the trust-building level of parent engagement. Schools must establish the “organizational conditions” first before families will flock to their programming. This requires school-wide policies that put engagement at the forefront of everything. Engagement is a top-down relationship; the expectations for administrators, faculty, and staff must be the same to create a cohesive system of support. |

The Family Engagement in Education Act of 2015 indicates the clear need for Title 1 schools to better address the relations between home and school. School Improvement Plans must incorporate steps to improve family engagement. The Act also requires principals and teachers alike to be trained to effectively engage families in education.

\*See RESEARCH file for a complete collection of articles and online resources\*

**Comparative Information**

Chancellor Carmen Farina of NYC made a drastic change to the 30 East Harlem schools under her charge. Her schools will implement a mandatory 40 minute window into their teachers’ schedules every teacher in the 2014-15 school year. Teachers are also expected to attend 80 minutes of in-school training on community engagement and cultural competency. I reached out to her office (7/8) and a few of the principals (7/1) involved in the program, but I have not received a response.

I have reached out to Wake County and Guilford County schools to access their family engagement component of their districts’ strategic plans. At the time of this research review, I had not heard about from either district.

**Miscellaneous Research**

I analyzed the parent communication data shared on high school websites. The schools with more balanced information—sharing equally the informational and celebratory news—tended to have better families relations. Schools with purely informational news (Garinger) have increased awareness but little involvement at school.

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| Informational | Parent Involvement | Student successes | STEM/Clubs | Total | School |
| 16 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 21 | MP |
| 34 | 10 | 25 | 31 | 100 | POB |
| 40 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 55 | HUHS |
| 129 | 0 | 1 | 75 | 204 | Garinger |
| 46 | 14 | 2 | 2 | 64 | Mallard Creek |
| 26 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 33 | West Meck |
| 23 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 30 | West Charlotte |