PARENTS AND PARTNERS: A WORKSHOP FOR PROMOTING
POSITIVE PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS IN THE
EARLY EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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Parents and Partners: A Workshop for Promoting Positive Parent-Teacher

Relationships in the Early Education Classroom

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my amazing and loving parents and family. Thank you for all the guidance and love that you all have shown me throughout the years. I would not be the woman I am today if it were not for all of you. Mom and Dad, I love you both so much. This is ALL for you! GOD is good.

“I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me.”

-Philippians 4:13
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Parents and Partners: A Workshop for Promoting Positive Parent-Teacher Relationships in the Early Education Classroom

by
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Research has indicated that positive parent-teacher relationships are key for a stimulating and welcoming learning environment for the children and their families. The Parents as Partners intervention program is an interactive workshop that targets early childhood educators and other school staff. The purpose of this intervention program was to help pre-school teachers/early childhood educators build positive relationships with the parents of the children they teach, and promote parental involvement in the classroom and at home. This program utilized research-based strategies that educators have found effective in creating positive and meaningful relationships with their parents and children. Elements the program used for implementation were: presenting research-based information, role playing activities, self-reflective discussions, evaluation forms, and a question and answer portion at the end of the workshop. The participants were 14 early childhood educators and school staff. The program was implemented during a staff meeting at Kinderhouse Montessori School in San Diego, California. A process evaluation of this intervention program was conducted that included assessing: fidelity, feasibility, participant satisfaction, and impact. The program was implemented with high fidelity, and implementation was feasible. The results also indicated that participants: were satisfied with the intervention program, enjoyed the role playing activities, and appreciated the willingness of the speaker to address questions and concerns the participants had. The participants were very receptive and engaged throughout the duration of the workshop, and they particularly appreciated the sections active listening strategies and recommendations for working with difficult parents. This program and process evaluation indicated that the workshop focused on engaging parents as partners in early childhood education settings that can be used to teach early education teachers and staff strategies for working positively with the parents of the children they serve. These programs can be implemented as part of the childcare center’s regular meetings and trainings to make the material accessible to all teachers and staff.
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INTRODUCTION

Substantial research has indicated that positive parent-teacher relationships are key for a stimulating and welcoming learning environment for the children and their families (Lazar, Broderick, Mastrilli, & Slostad, 1999). The purpose of this intervention program was to help pre-school teachers/early childhood educators build positive relationships with the parents of the children they teach and promote parental involvement in the classroom and at home. Specifically, the program focused on creating a welcoming environment in the classroom for all families. This intervention program aimed to utilize research-based strategies that educators have found effective in creating positive and meaningful relationships with their parents and children. Additionally, materials were developed for early childhood educators to pass onto parents.

Creating positive relationships with a child’s parents promotes the flow of communication between the school environment and the home environment. In order for children to get into a routine and become better academic performers, the home and the school should be synchronized and working as a team to positively influence the child’s learning. Research indicates that when collaboration is successful between the school and the home, communication between teachers and parents tends to be easier and more helpful to the child (Stone & Chakraborty, 2011).

Positive teacher-parent relationships beginning early in the school year will make the mid-year parent-teacher conferences more meaningful and in depth, because teachers will feel increased comfort in talking with the parents about their child’s performance in school (Lazar et al., 1999). Positive parent-teacher relationships from the start will set the classroom, the home, the parents, and most importantly the child up for success. Parent-teacher conferences can help create better plans for the child, plans for the future can include an in sync routine for the home and the school where both systems work together on common goals set for the child. The child’s wellbeing is affected when two systems work together to
help the child increase their learning potential (Minke, Sheridan, Kim, Ryoo, & Koziol, 2014). This intervention program targeted both family and school systems and interactions between them. This reflects a Systems Theory approach to intervention (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

In 1995, an article described the types of parent-teacher relationships in the 20th century (Powell & Diamond, 1995). These types of parent-teacher relationships in the 20th century consisted of parents and teachers working together to create a supportive environment with common goals for the child (Powell & Diamond, 1995). The researchers indicated that positive relationships were the most beneficial for the child (Powell & Diamond, 1995). The importance of creating positive parent-teacher relationships could be traced back to three main assumptions: 1) the parents have a primary influence on their young children, 2) the primary impacts on the child are within the early years of life, 3) education that is outside of the child’s home requires substantial support from the parents for optimal child learning (Powell & Diamond, 1995).

Pre-school teachers should always be encouraged to continue their education and play the expert role in child development in order to spread knowledge about child development to their families. The intervention program developed for this project introduced strategies to help pre-school teachers feel a connection with their parents and to work more collaboratively with them.

This intervention’s target audience was Early Childhood Educators/Pre-school Teachers, with the aim of influencing parents through improved parent-teacher relationships. The aim was to reach these early childhood educators because they can help spread their knowledge from the intervention to parents. The early childhood educators and the parents working together positively, and in synchronization, will create a rich learning environment for the children to thrive and grow in. This intervention taught early childhood educators simple ways to create positive relationship with the parents of their students so that the child has a strong and stable support system at school and at home.
LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will review literature on: theory influencing the intervention program, research on parent engagement in classroom settings overall, parent-teacher relationships in early childhood education settings, and approaches to parent-teacher collaboration (school and home working together). Applications relevant to the intervention program will be highlighted throughout the review.

GUIDING THEORY

Systems Theory

Whitchurch and Constantine (1993) describe Systems Theory in great detail. Key assumptions include: a system should be understood as a whole instead of broken up parts (or the sum of its parts), humans are unique in every way possible, and that there are reciprocal influence between systems and sub-systems. (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The Systems Theory emphasizes that all parts of the Family are crucial for the child’s development. When all parts of the system have a common goal, it creates a powerful support system for the child, and will definitely make for best learning outcomes for that child in the future. The Systems Theory emphasizes that parents and teachers are all contributors to the child’s overall development. All parts of the child’s system (Parents and Teachers) could work together to create an environment at home and at school to support the child in his/her problem areas. Then ideally the intervention plan created could assist in overcoming the difficulties that the child may be having or it can assist the entire system in moving forward in a positive direction. The Systems Theory is the primary guiding theoretical framework for this intervention program. The intervention will integrate the Systems Theory by targeting the entire family system along with the school in order to create an intervention that could significantly impact the child in a positive way. An adaptation of General Systems Theory, which is widely used in the Social Sciences, is developmental
psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This theoretical perspective places the child (or individual) in the middle of a series of systems embedded within systems. According to the Ecological Model, the child is at the center of the system. The microsystem surrounding the child is the child’s immediate environment (i.e. the child’s family, school, church, peers etc.). The child’s parents, the child’s teachers, and school are in the microsystem. The mesosystem includes the interactions between the different aspects of the microsystem, for example interactions between the child’s family and school systems. These interactions are thought to have reciprocal influences according to the Systems Theory perspective. There are five levels to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model, starting with the closest to the child or the center of the Ecological Model will be the Microsystem, which consist of the child’s family, school, neighborhood, and religious settings. The next level is the Mesosystem, which is the interactions between systems in the Microsystem, for example the Mesosystem could be the interactions between the child’s family and school. The third level of the Ecological Model is the Exosystem, this level includes mass media, local industries, the parent’s workplace, school board, and local government. The fourth level of the Ecological Model is the Macrosystem, this level consist of cultural beliefs, customs, and laws. The last level of the Ecological Model is the Chronosystem, this is time that is passing by as it relates to the child’s environment, and these could be historical events and death in the child’s lifespan.

This theoretical perspective also posits the best way to intervene with anything is to target the entire system, or at least multiple subsystems (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The current intervention program supported two important aspects of the microsystem of the child (i.e. early childhood education and families), and the interaction between these subsystems (reflecting the mesosystem). Specifically, the intervention program aimed to reach out to pre-school teachers, which will help reach out to the parents of these children, and to ultimately foster learning and enrichment for the children through the positive rapport and support between pre-school teachers and parents. Interactions between the mesosystem are important because these interactions have some kind of effect on the child. When the parents and teachers work together, the child is supported in the classroom and at home. When parents and teachers are not on the same page, it may be difficult for the child to excel in
learning because there may not be clear goals and communication within the child’s microsystem.

**Touchpoints Model of Parent Engagement**

T. Berry Brazelton (1992), a renowned pediatrician, wrote a book titled *Touchpoints*, which focused on promoting positive parent engagement. Although his work was focused in the healthcare setting, he indicated that parents evaluate all of their child’s caregivers’ behaviors in the environment (Brazelton, 1992). Brazelton proposed a center-wide model of parent engagement in which all members of the center’s staff should have the goal of positively engaging parents as partners, Brazelton’s theory was involving everyone in creating relationships with each other. This relationship-based approach by Brazelton is important because it helps create a warm and welcoming environment; it helps promote trust and positive relationships by including everyone and establishing clear communication. This would include everyone from doctors to receptionists to custodians in the healthcare setting. In the early childhood education setting using this model, this would include teachers and all other school staff, ranging from the director to the teaching aids and administrative assistants. The Touchpoints Model of parent engagement influenced the intervention program in that the program targeted all staff in the early education setting.

**COLLABORATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL**

This intervention program focused on helping pre-school teachers promote parent involvement and engagement in the classroom for their children. Research has indicated that increased parent involvement in a child’s classroom can help create the best learning outcomes for their child, but some pre-school teachers do not know how to create those positive relationships with their parents and children, and that makes it hard for them to increase the level of parental involvement in their classrooms (Knopf & Swick, 2007). The current intervention aimed to give pre-school teachers the skills and knowledge to create positive relationships with the parents of the children they teach.

In 2014, Abel did a study addressing the need for teachers to experience instances of parent engagement in order to prepare teachers to better implement their parent engagement concepts in their own classrooms. The teachers in this study had the opportunity to engage in
an array of family engagement activities, some examples of these family engagement activities were homework assignments where parents could do these activities with their children at home together, the classroom had a resource binder that could be used as two-way communication between the teacher and the parents to help increase parental involvement in the classroom, and newsletters for parents to know what is going on in the classroom so parents could support their child’s learning at home. The study documented their feedback on how well it worked for them and how it affected their implementation of the activities in their own schools. The study found that increased parent involvement in school predicted positive learning outcomes for their children (Abel, 2014). The study described the ways they incorporated parent engagement into their classroom. Some examples of the ways that they incorporate parent engagement into the classrooms included, creating intervention plans for children who needed more help, and creating newsletters to communicate about the school to the parents. They also made resource binders to create a two-way communication path between the teacher and the parents, to enable parents and teachers to work in synchrony in the way they supported each child’s learning. All of these engagement methods helped create a positive relationship between the two systems (family and school) to better support the child’s learning. Abel’s study indicated that multiple methods could be used to create parent-teacher partnerships. This is important because parent involvement is an ideal way to get support from the home into the school, research identifying strategies to increase parent involvement can give teachers resources to create an effective partnership.

Joyce Epstein, a well-known researcher in the field of Education, incorporated the idea that it may be beneficial for teachers to see their “students” as “children” (Epstein, 1995). Epstein wanted teachers to care for their students as if they were their own children because she felt that this would create a closer relationship between teachers and parents (Epstein, 1995). Epstein’s theoretical model supports the idea that increased parent engagement makes for a better learning environment for everyone. These positive relationships help stimulate learning in its own right. The child will feel comfortable at school and will be more able to learn, and the parents and pre-school teachers will be supporting the child together in a partnership.

Another team of researchers (Knopf & Swick, 2007) introduced strategies that could help pre-school teachers in their classrooms increase parent involvement. The authors
indicated that parent involvement resulted in more effective teaching, but some early childhood educators found it hard to interact with parents to a degree that would show a substantial change in the classroom. The article indicated that parent involvement predicted good performance for the child. Often early childhood educators do not know the right way to create a meaningful relationship with their parents within the classroom and school setting. The type of relationship that the parent has with their child’s teacher is important because it helps the parent feel a sense of trust and confidence in the care and education that the teacher is providing for their child (Knopf & Swick, 2007). A relationship with trust between the parent and pre-school teacher helped the parents feel confident in the care and education that pre-school teacher was giving to their child, and when the parents were happy the children were happy. A welcoming and happy mindset is a good way to start the school year off for pre-school teachers (Knopf & Swick, 2007). If pre-school teachers welcomed the parents and children into their classrooms and created positive rapport with the parents on the first initial meeting, then it will plant the seed for the positive relationship quickly.

In 2008, Knopf and Swick conducted another study focused on assisting pre-school teachers in becoming more sensitive to the needs and specific context of families of children in their classroom. The study described ways that parents and children change throughout their lives. The authors emphasized that pre-school teachers must understand that families change all the time, and pre-school teachers need to be encouraged to understand the diverse family backgrounds to help the child to the best that they can while that child is in their classroom. The study identified the concepts and strategies that have worked for early childhood educators to increase their cultural sensitivity and parental involvement in the classroom. These concepts and strategies that worked for early childhood educators are to understand: the cultural values of the family, the goals that the family may have, the experiences the family had before being in the classroom, and the social support that the parents bring into the school and classroom (Knopf & Swick, 2008). The authors encouraged early childhood educators to dig deep into the family and understand the context in which they live, so it will be easier for the pre-school teacher to create a way to build a relationship with that family. The study takes into account the current context of family stress, specifically they took the perspective that families today tend to have more stress from work and home than previous generations, and people have more roles to fulfill and more things to
take into account (Knopf & Swick, 2008). Pre-school teachers must also look at the context of society, how media has changed the world, and how children are more dependent on computers and iPads than ever before. Children come from different backgrounds and homes, and without knowing anything about the child and their family, we as educators cannot properly reach out to parents positively.

Another study (Lawson, 2003) addressed the pre-school teachers and parents’ ideas of meaningful parental involvement. The sample size used in this study was 12 pre-school teachers and 13 parents, and they all participated in ethnographic interviews. The pre-school teachers and parents were either working at a low-income ethnically diverse school or volunteered in these types of schools. Lawson’s research incorporated ethnically diverse points of view. The United States is comprised of diverse cultures and beliefs, and thus being able to include research that comes from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds is crucial in making research credible and generalized. This study found that parents and pre-school teachers had contrasting perceptions of what parent involvement consists of. Parents thought parental involvement meant that they should fight for their child’s needs in school, but pre-school teachers perceived parental involvement as parents cooperating and being interested in their child’s education (Lawson, 2003). These different views are rooted in their personal cultural beliefs and values and different backgrounds that they were raised in (Lawson, 2003). However, both pre-school teachers and parents did agree that some type of relationship between the teacher and parent is needed in order for the child to develop in a healthy and supportive environment, and to support the learning outcomes for the children (Lawson, 2003). Parents are a child’s first teachers, and the child’s first teacher in school must be comfortable enough with the parent to take on that teacher role for the child. Parents and pre-school teachers should have somewhat of the same, if not identical perceptions of what parental involvement in the classroom consist of so that they can work together to stimulate and teach the children (Lawson, 2003). Lawson concluded that pre-school teachers should not feel like they are alone in teaching the children. Further, parents should never feel like they are alone in raising their child, because there is a system out there that is willing to cultivate and raise that child alongside the parents.

In 1999, Lazar and three other teacher-educators investigated the need for parent-teacher collaboration in the classroom, and the process through which teachers engaged
parents. (Lazar et al., 1999). Lazar and his team of teacher-educators used interview data they collected from their investigation to create scenarios that illustrated ways to promote parent-teacher collaborations. They also described the significance of parent engagement in effecting the children in school, teacher’s perceptions regarding parents, and the author’s perspectives regarding parent involvement (Lazar et al., 1999). The article indicated that teachers are expected to create positive relationships with their parents, but sometimes do not have the education to do so, and that this puts stress on the teachers. Thus, Lazar and his team concluded that it is important to give teachers the best skills to accomplish this task.

The intervention program in their study helped early childhood educators develop skills to better engage parents in their classroom and help them engage parents as partners rather than viewing them as additional stressors. Additionally, the intervention program provided early educators with self-care tips to help reduce their stress.

Mendez (2010) examined an intervention designed to promote parent involvement in ethnic minority families in Head Start Preschools. The sample size was 288 mostly African American families from a southern city. Mendez found that parental satisfaction with the program was fairly high, but the engagement of parents was still low. After the parents attended the intervention at the Head Start Preschool, Mendez found an increase in parents engaging in activities that promoted literacy with their child. Specifically, parents read to their child more often than before the intervention. Mendez also found that parent engagement in literacy activities was associated with positive parent-teacher relationships. The children showed better academic performance in the levels of vocabulary, and the parents felt more competent socially after participating in the intervention (Mendez, 2010).

Mendez concluded that schools could encourage parental involvement by having various opportunities for parent participation, including conducting meetings with parents based on the parents’ schedule, and creating opportunities for parents to be involved on the weekends (2010). Mendez (2010) also highlighted the needs of low-income and ethnically diverse populations who have the most difficulties in school and behavior. Intervention programs such as the one Mendez examined have the potential to stimulate parents from diverse cultures to take a step into their child’s classrooms and get involved with the pre-school teacher and their child’s learning. Diverse family cultures are definitely something that preschool teachers must understand and be sensitive too. Some families are more adapted than
others when it comes to traditions in America versus traditions in other countries. Technology can also be a limitation for some families, and that could be an obstacle for pre-school teachers to increase parent involvement in their classrooms.

A recent study by Olmstead (2013) was done to investigate the connection between the use of technology and parental involvement in the classroom. Olmstead collected data by utilizing surveys and interviews. The findings indicated that increased use of technologies (i.e. online curriculum, websites, calling systems, and parent portals, etc) enabled parents to be more involved because they did not have to physically be in the classroom to be involved, and it was more convenient to them to just be able to access their child’s school activities and academic levels through an online source. Unfortunately, not all parents have five to 10 minutes to spare at pick up and drop off of their child to talk about their child’s day with the pre-school teacher. Using technology is a tool that all schools should definitely look into for promoting parent involvement. Technology could be a great tool for families who have access to the Internet, but there could be families who do not have the same resources.

**Active Listening**

A study by McNaughton, Hamlin, McCarthy, Head-Reeve, & Schreiner (2007) was done to investigate parent-teacher communication. The researcher studied the pre-school teacher education professional listening skills needed for optimal communication between parents and pre-school teachers. McNaughton wanted to explore the effectiveness of instruction for active listening (McNaughton et al., 2007). McNaughton taught the early childhood educators through the use of informative videotapes and play conversations (McNaughton et al., 2007). Active listening skills were found to be the best thing to teach early childhood educators because this is what parents found essential in building relationships with those teachers (McNaughton et al., 2007).

McNaughton and Vostal (2010) conducted a recent study examining listening as a helpful concept of parent-teacher communication. This article suggests a “LAFF Don’t CRY” strategy, which is a concept that teachers can use to display listening behaviors and elicit respect and empathy (McNaughton & Vostal, 2010). LAFF Don’t CRY is an acronym. LAFF stands for LISTEN, empathize, and communicate respect, ASK questions and ask permission to take notes, FOCUS on the issues, FIND a first step. Don’t CRY (the things not
to do) stand for CRITICIZE people who are not present, REACT hastily and promise something you cannot deliver, YAKETY-yak-yak (McNaughton & Vostal, 2010). The article states that these active listening strategies can help pre-school teachers communicate more effectively with their families and listen to their interest and opinions. This article talks about teachers’ need for developing a sense of empathy towards the parents so it will be easier to understand their perspectives. This concept is similar to active listening. Ultimately this “LAFF Don’t CRY” strategy has the potential to create clear communication through the use of active listening skills because the pre-school teachers will understand where the parents are coming from. Strong home and school relationships can help create better learning outcomes for children (McNaughton & Vostal, 2010). This study found that parents were glad to know that their contributions were honored by educators and taken into account by them (McNaughton & Vostal, 2010).

Parents want to feel respected and listened too, if pre-school teachers know how to actively listen to their parents and really understand their family contexts, then it will make the classroom more of a welcoming and safe environment. Research is evolving and introducing many strategies to encourage involvement of parents in the classroom. This intervention program included education regarding active listening to help teachers promote positive parent-teacher relationships.

**EARLY EDUCATION**

A study by Laverick (2008) found that support is needed for children during their transition into school. This study suggests that the transition processes should be proactive and responsive to whatever the child may need. The author indicated that support for the child is needed while the child is in any type of school especially during the transition into early education. The study addressed four key components of appropriate support for children during these transition times. These components are: developmental characteristics of young children, factors that can affect the adjustment of the child to new places and situations, the relationships between the teacher and family, and the strategies that are to be implemented to help the children succeed (Laverick, 2008). The study suggests that pre-school teachers should not feel like they have to take everything on all at once. Pre-school teachers can do things one at a time to make sure they are doing the best that they can to
ensure their children the best classroom and learning experience possible, and their parents the best support in educating their child. Some key strategies that this study discussed were: planting seeds of relationships early on with parents, promoting familiarity with the school to ease the transition, and conducting home visits (Laverick, 2008). Parents and children will feel an increase of comfort when they visit the school before attending their first day of school. The pre-school teachers can meet the family prior to the child starting their first day, the parents can ask their child’s teacher any questions or address concerns they may have. Home visits and meeting the pre-school teacher prior to the child’s first day of school could happen, but typically in schools the orientation or first day of school would be the first time the pre-school teachers meet the parents and children.

In 2006, Xu and Gulosino compared the effects on parent-teacher relationships based off teachers’ credentials versus what the teacher actually does in the classroom with the children. A pre-school teacher could have the highest education possible, but if they are not friendly and welcoming to the children and the families, that pre-school teacher will have a difficult time connecting with them. The authors speculated that a qualified teacher is good, but a quality teacher is what all teachers should aim to be (Xu & Gulosino, 2006). A quality teacher according to the authors is a teacher who will engage and share their knowledge with their students in order to promote increased learning in the classroom, establishing communication and create positive parent-teacher relationships in order to provide the child with the best support system (Xu & Gulosino, 2006). Being a quality pre-school teacher is a great way to bridge that gap between the parent and the pre-school teacher once an initial meeting has happened between the two parties. Teacher quality is becoming increasingly important to parents. Parents want to see investments of time and love from the pre-school teachers and the pre-school teachers want to see investment and support from the parents.

In 2014, Minke et al. examined positive relationship perceptions of parents and teachers, as predictors of the child’s academic, social, and behavior outcomes. The sample consisted of 175 children that were referred for a behavioral consultation (Minke et al., 2014). The study measured the congruence of parent and teacher relationships based on their own perception of the quality of their relationships with each other. The researchers used a Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale that consisted of two parts, one about joining and communication to others and another part about communication to others (Minke et al.,
The result of this study was that the way teachers rated children’s social skills problems, were associated with the teacher having emotionally charged relationship with them (Minke et al., 2014). Emotionally charged relationships are relationships that can make all involved people feel uncomfortable and unprepared which can lead to misunderstandings (Minke et al., 2014). Reflection and shared positive outlooks on these relationships with parents can help teachers understand the child’s behavior and find ways to support that child, which can be an important component of creating positive and understanding relationships with their families. Parents and pre-school teachers both feel equally uncomfortable when a child is having difficulties in school or at home, so empathy is important in this setting. Minke’s intervention focused on helping both systems work as a team within a child’s microsystem. Parents and pre-school teachers working together can help with whatever challenges the child may have.

In 2012, Serpell & Mashburn conducted a study to examine parent-teacher relationships and the teacher’s perception of their relationship with the children. The sample size for this study was about 2,966 four year olds who attended publicly funded programs for early education. The study was measuring the frequency of parent-teacher contact and the quality of parent-teacher relationships in relation to the teacher’s relationship perception with children and their social development (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). The results of this study were that the perception of the teachers on the child’s individual development affected their relationship with the child. The likelihood of positive relationships with those children who had more economic/social risks and concerns were at higher levels with the teacher (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). This study emphasized that the more at-risk children and families had positive relationships with their pre-school teachers because they needed it the most. In this intervention, pre-school teachers were given strategies on how to reach out to all their parents, but especially to the parents and children that need their help and guidance the most. These strategies will include ways to build trust with the parents by using active listening when speaking with the parents and ensuring that the pre-school teachers are listening and understanding the parents.

In 1995, Powell & Diamond wrote an article to describe the types of parent-teacher relationships in the 20th century. These types of parent-teacher relationships in the 20th century consisted of parents and teachers working together to create a supportive
environment with common goals for the child (Powell & Diamond, 1995). The researchers indicate that positive relationships as the most beneficial for the child (Powell & Diamond, 1995). The research found that the importance of creating positive parent-teacher relationships could be traced back by three main assumptions: 1) the parents have a primary influence on their young children, 2) the primary impacts on the child are within the early years of life, 3) education that is outside of the child’s home requires substantial support from the parents for optimal child learning (Powell & Diamond, 1995). Pre-school teachers should always be encouraged to continue their education and play the role of an expert in child development in order to spread knowledge about child development to their families. The intervention program introduced strategies to help pre-school teachers feel a connection with their parents.

**Classroom Setting**

A recent study by Asiyai (2014) examined the perception of children, their learning environments, and the degree of their motivation and learning while in early education classrooms. The classroom is an area where students and the pre-school teachers interact daily, and where teaching and learning should always be happening throughout the day (Asiyai, 2014). The author indicated that having a stimulating learning environment is about all the physical sensorial elements (Asiyai, 2014). Physical sensorial elements refer to things in the immediate environment that consistently stimulate the children, this could include the walls of their classroom, the children’s desks, the centers in the classroom that have activities for them to play with, and their personal area where they keep their backpacks, extra clothes, blankets etc (Asiyai, 2014). The classroom environment depends on which age the children are and each classroom should be set up to fit that developmental age appropriately. Results from the study suggested that the condition of their classroom environments effected the student’s participation and motivation in school (Asiyai, 2014). The environment also affects the pre-school teacher. Their classrooms should be a happy place where the pre-school teacher feels safe and secure enough to teach their students the best way they can (Asiyai, 2014). Teachers typically know that their classroom should be always clean and welcoming, but sometimes some teachers do not know what it means to make their classroom
“welcoming”. Asiyai’s study suggests that creating a welcoming classroom environment may be important for promoting parent, as well as child, comfort in the classroom.

Asiyai’s study discussed simple ways to make the classroom inviting and welcoming for their families and children. Some ways early childhood educators can make their classroom inviting is by sending out a letter to parents welcoming them into their classroom (Asiyai, 2014). This letter could address the opportunities parents have to participate in the classroom activities as well as participate in their child’s schoolwork.

In 2011, Stone & Chakraborty wrote an article identifying tips that teachers could use in their classrooms to involve parents through creating relationships with them. Some tips that the article suggested was using a welcome letter to promote a good start to a positive relationship with parents and teachers (Stone & Chakraborty, 2011). Another tip the article suggested was the use of parenting workshops. These workshops could help pre-school teachers get to know the parents beyond their child, the parents and teacher can have open discussions about whatever they wish, and from there both parties can create a support system that works for them (Stone & Chakraborty, 2011). The intervention program helped empower teachers to create good rapport with parents simply by showing them their abilities as a pre-school teacher and as a person. Note that this article written by teachers for teachers was not a research study, but includes strategies also reflected from other studies reviewed above.

THE INTERVENTION PROGRAM

The intervention program designed for this project aimed to help pre-school teachers create positive parent-teacher relationships through utilizing strategies that previous research has indicated are helpful for establishing and nurturing positive parent-teacher relationships. The program helped guide pre-school teachers on how to create a warm and welcoming classroom that will foster positive relationships with not only the children, but also with the parents. The intervention targeted early childhood educators/pre-school teachers in order to reach the parents, so these two systems (families and schools) can help the child reach their highest potential in learning through positive parent-teacher relationships.
Table 1. Summary of Tools for Engaging Parents and Associated Outcomes Identified in the Literature Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool for engaging parents</th>
<th>Study outcome or theoretical goal</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Theory / Goals</th>
<th>Source (Authors, year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervention plans</td>
<td>- Student growth in goal areas&lt;br&gt;- Increased parent participation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abel, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td>- Continuity between school and home&lt;br&gt;- Increased parent participation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abel, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource binder</td>
<td>- Increased two-way communication,&lt;br&gt;- Parents reinforced activity-specific student learning at home</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abel, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming Environment</td>
<td>- Increased student motivation to learn&lt;br&gt;- Better student attendance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Asiyai, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship approach</td>
<td>- Increased communication&lt;br&gt;- Building trust with parents and teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brazelton, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View children as your own</td>
<td>- Closer relationship&lt;br&gt;- Parent and children feel comfortable&lt;br&gt;- Parent and teacher support child</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Epstein, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>- Easier to contact parents who cannot physically be in the classroom&lt;br&gt;- Quick view of what is going on in the classroom</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Swick, Da Ros, &amp; Kovach, 2001.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Teacher Conferences</td>
<td>- Discuss progress of the child with parents&lt;br&gt;- Teachers listen to parents and show empathy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knopf &amp; Swick, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication Journal</td>
<td>- On going communication with parents&lt;br&gt;- Parents are informed of what is going on in the classroom everyday</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knopf &amp; Swick, 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 1. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool for engaging parents</th>
<th>Study outcome or theoretical goal</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Theory / Goals</th>
<th>Source (Authors, year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Orientation with parents  | - Get support and insight from parents  
                      | - Understand parents to increase parental involvement in the future  | X (qual.)  | Lazar et al., 1999  |
| LAFF Don’t CRY: Active Listening | - Improved teacher active listening  
                      | - Parents reported better teacher-parent communication  
                      | - Parents satisfaction  | X  | McNaughton & Vostal, 2010  |
| Cultural Sensitivity      | - Satisfaction and literacy building of ethnic minority parents  
                      | - Better school readiness in ethnic minority children  | X  | Mendez, 2010  |
| Educational Activities for Parents | - Better school readiness (better receptive vocabulary and social competence)  | X  | Mendez, 2010  |
| Teaching quality: investing time and love | - Higher student academic achievement scores  | X  | Xu & Gulosino, 2006  |
| Target Entire System      | - Impact across systems (family and school)  
                      | - Holistic approach to the child  | X  | Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993  |
| Understand Needs of Family | - Better student social development (teacher rating)  
                      | - Parents more receptive to teachers  | X  | Serpell & Mashburn, 2012  |

The intervention program gave pre-school teachers the skills to promote parental involvement in their classrooms to ensure that each child is given the best opportunity to learn. Collaboration of the family and pre-school systems was a major goal of the intervention. A goal of the program was that pre-school teachers would learn that including the parents in their classrooms will help them as pre-school teachers significantly impact these families as a whole system. Collaboration between the school and the home of the child will create positive learning environments in school and outside of school. Teaching pre-school teachers simple skills to create these meaningful relationships with their parents will ultimately help these children reach their full potential.
The aim of the intervention program was for Early Educators that teach 0-5 years old to build positive parent-teacher relationships in their early education classrooms. Early Education is a critical part in a child’s life and it can also be a stressful time for pre-school teachers and parents. The intervention taught pre-school teachers best practices in order to establish positive relationships and build positive rapport between them and the parents of their children.
METHODS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The intervention’s main purpose was to teach early childhood educators/pre-school teachers and early childhood education related staff, and assist them in building positive relationships with the parents of the children they teach in their classroom. The program gave pre-school teachers strategies to use in order to promote parental involvement in their classrooms. The intervention program was implemented in a workshop format, which consisted of interactive discussions, self-reflection time, role-playing activities, icebreaker activities, and question and answer time throughout the workshop to address any concerns or questions in a timely manner. The workshop was implemented during the school’s weekly staff meeting in the pre-school setting.

I presented the target audience of pre-school teachers and staff relevant and up to date information about how to promote positive parent-teacher relationships in the classroom. The PowerPoint consisted of pictures, information, and diagram/charts about the importance of positive relationships in the classroom. I incorporated education on the key developmental domains for children in early education so early childhood educators will be able to share their knowledge with their parents on child development.

I discussed relevant research and how it is so important that both systems, family and school, work together in order to provide the best support possible for the child during early educational years (Minke et al., 2014). I emphasized that supporting children at a very young age in early education is the best thing any pre-school teacher could do, and that helping parents support their child in school is a great way to establish a positive relationship with their families. When parents create a partnership with the pre-school teachers of their children, it is associated with better learning outcomes (Knopf & Swick, 2007). I incorporated some personal experiences I have had through teaching preschoolers and infants and toddlers with the audience to hopefully give them a better understanding. Learning with
the help of authentic supporting examples creates a better understanding of the information (McNaughton & Vostal, 2010).

The intention of the intervention was to help pre-school teachers develop collaborative relationships with parents using simple strategies to better serve the children in their classroom. Simple strategies were introduced during the workshop through role-playing and reflective talks with the entire audience. The workshop incorporated what the audience experienced through active listening, we created a safe environment for everyone to be able to share their personal experiences and we used that as a way to guide our workshop for the needs of the audience. The intervention program taught pre-school teachers and other pre-school staff simple skills that can be used in the classroom, to help promote and establish positive parent-teacher relationships. I believe that having parents as a teacher’s partner in educating these children is the best way for education to significantly impact the child at a young age. I used the early childhood educators as a way to get to the parents to ultimately help the children thrive in their academic careers.

**Participants**

The targeted audience for the intervention is Early Childhood Educators and all early education center related staff. I wanted to reach out and teach early childhood educators so they can be given the knowledge and education needed for them to better serve their children and parents. The intervention program was given to pre-school teachers and staff at the Kinderhouse Montessori in San Diego, California. The participants in the intervention were 14 pre-school staff, which consisted of pre-school teachers, pre-school aides, pre-school director, and assistant director. This pre-school was chosen because the primary investigator established a positive partnership with them. There were no specific inclusion criteria in selecting this pre-school, other than the desired focus being an early education setting.

**Procedures**

The intervention lasted an hour and a half and took place on a day where there were no students on campus. The participants were already in the meeting room and a folder of handouts needed for the intervention program was passed out. There were handouts for some of the slides in the PowerPoint for the audience to refer too and a couple pieces of blank
paper for notes or questions, a copy of all the handouts given to the participants for the program implementation could be found in Appendix B. There were refreshments served to create a warm and welcoming learning environment for the participants.

There was a formal introduction of the intervention program; I introduced myself as the creator and facilitator of the intervention program, and my goals for it. I thanked everyone in the room for the time and patience in attending the intervention program. I began the intervention program by introducing the main goal, which is to reach out to early childhood educators in order to promote positive parent-teacher relationships in the classroom. Then I did an icebreaker activity where everyone introduced themselves to the audience and they stated their name, the age(s) they taught, and shared one thing parents loved about their classroom. After that, I asked the audience what they thought positive parent-teacher relationships meant to them. I wrote their answers on a white board for everyone to see. I shared with them the meaning of positive parent-teacher relationships according to the research and the intervention program. The meaning of positive parent-teacher relationships is “both parents and teachers working in collaboration to positively support the child in and out of school.”

Next I went into the presentation of research about the importance of positive parent-teacher relationships in the classroom in order to help the children learn effectively. I introduced the guiding theory for the intervention, which is the systems theory. I shared research about why positive parent-teacher relationships are important in schools. I shared ways to create a welcoming classroom for children and families and how to create meaningful relationships with their families. I mentioned the importance of being culturally sensitive in the classroom with families and children of different ethnic backgrounds. I concluded by sharing some personal life connections I have had about culture and meaningful relationships in my profession. Then we had the audience share what they felt made their classroom welcoming and I created a list on the whiteboard to show the different responses.

Next I did a role-playing activity where the participants chose a partner and they chose a piece of paper from a hat. The paper described scenarios that the pair acted out with each other. The scenarios were a mixture of positive situations, neutral situations, and negative situations in order to give the participants a variety of real life situations to role-play
with. An example positive scenario used was the child was showing great progress in transitioning into the classroom, how would the teacher reach out to the parents to share the great news with them. There were scenarios of neutral situations, an example scenario used in the program activity was, the child is crying at school at drop off and the parent asks the teacher if this is normal, how would the teacher respond to this parent? An example negative scenario used in the program activity was that a child was extremely sleepy during the school day and the parents have not done anything to change things up at home because the child has been sleepy at school for a few days, how would the teacher address this concern again to the parents? All scenarios used for the role playing activity for the program could be found in Appendix D. The participants were given the opportunity to go up in front and act out their scenario to the entire audience, but there were no volunteers to act out the scenarios. Due to time constraints there was not enough time to discuss scenarios with the participants.

Throughout the workshop I asked questions that lead to discussions within the audience about what they thought they did that related to the topic being discussed. I ultimately wanted to create a self-reflective group where it was safe to voice opinions and concerns openly and everyone there would listen and give advice and support.

In concluding the workshop, I re-iterated the importance of positive parent-teacher relationships and thanked the participants. I introduced the Self-Care Steps Handout and emphasized the importance of making sure teachers are taking care of themselves. I gave them time to answer the evaluation form in the folders they received at the beginning of the workshop. The evaluation form was completely anonymous. The evaluation form was used for informal feedback from the audience. The questions were designed to evaluate how well they liked the workshop and what they felt could be improved along with strengths of the workshop and weaknesses. There was a teacher satisfaction survey within the evaluation about how they felt the workshop impacted them. I collected the evaluations at the conclusion of the intervention, a copy of the evaluation form used for the program could be found in Appendix C and an outline of the program could be found in Appendix A.

**EVALUATION PLAN**

The evaluation plan for the intervention program was to measure fidelity, feasibility, and satisfaction.
Fidelity
Fidelity was measured to ensure that I did exactly what I had planned to do. A checklist of things that I wanted to accomplish was filled out at the end of the workshop.

Feasibility
Feasibility was determined through the facilitator’s reflections on the programs ease of administration. This feasibility reflection included an assessment of: 1) receptiveness of Early Childhood Education Centers to this type of program, 2) receptiveness of the participants to the program, 3) aspects of workshop that were challenging to implement as planned due to logistical factors (e.g. time, space, receptiveness of the participants).

Satisfaction
Evaluation sheets were created to assess participant satisfaction with the workshop and to get their feedback regarding recommended additions and changes. Both quantitative and qualitative items were included. Means and standard deviations will be reported for quantitative data, and emergent themes will be reported regarding the qualitative questions.

Impact
Impact of the workshop will be qualitatively assessed through: 1) participant responses to the evaluation form, 2) the facilitator’s reflections regarding the workshop, and 3) follow-up feedback from the Center administrators and from postings on the Parents as Partners Facebook page. Informal feedback in the form of emails and personal communications with the Center Administrators and Facebook posts will help reflect whether the goals for the proposed intervention were achieved.

Qualitative Analysis
The majority of the data gathered was analyzed in a qualitative manner. The qualitative evaluation survey items were analyzed qualitatively to identify emergent themes that may reflect satisfaction and effectiveness of the proposed intervention, and used to show the effectiveness or impact of the proposed intervention. The satisfaction scale items were used to determine how happy the participants were with the workshop and if they gained any new knowledge or skills from it. Qualitative themes from the facilitator’s reflections on the
workshop were also examined and summarized. Specifically the facilitator reflected on what went well and what could be improved on for further implementations of the proposed intervention.
RESULTS

FIDELITY

Fidelity of program administration was good overall in that all 59 out of 62 items were successful implemented as planned. There were only three items that were not covered as planned. These were skipped over due to time constraints, and because the workshop facilitator made the judgment that the content related to these items were already well covered and understood by the participants. One item that was not completed from the Fidelity Checklist was for the audience to come up with their own definition of positive parent-teacher relationships and create a group definition from their list to hopefully promote a better understanding of positive parent-teacher relationships. This task was not completed because there was not enough time to get through the entire workshop. The other items that were not completed during the workshop were welcoming any personal experiences from the audience about cultural sensitivity and discussion time for the role-play activity. These items were not completed because there was not enough time to go through the workshop. If implemented in the future, adequate time will be important to ensure that all tasks on the Fidelity Checklist can be implemented. The completed fidelity checklist could be found in Appendix F.

FEASIBILITY

The intervention program was implemented at the end of the Kinderhouse Montessori School’s Staff meeting to 14 Early Childhood Educators and other Center Staff. The workshop started at approximately 9:15 a.m. and concluded at 10:35am. The time that was originally planned was from 8:30am -10:30am, but the staff meeting took a little longer than expected. Overall, the implementation of this workshop demonstrated its feasibility in terms of ease of implementation. Early Education Centers were receptive to the idea of the workshop. The workshop was successfully implemented, and teachers and facility staff seemed engaged. The only thing that did not work during the workshop implementation was
the time allotted for the workshop. As the facilitator I felt a little rushed and on a time crunch when trying to do activities with the audience. I would have liked more time to do more role-play with difficult scenarios and a time to discuss each scenario and talk with the audience ways that we could solve the issues addressed in some of the scenarios.

**PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION**

*Satisfaction Questionnaire*

An evaluation form was given at the end of the workshop for the audience members to fill out and return to the facilitator. Twelve participants submitted an evaluation form \((N = 12)\). Two evaluations were not filled out. One participant (the preschool owner) left early, and the reason the other evaluation was not filled out is unknown.

The results reflected overall satisfaction with the presentation. The majority of participants indicated that they strongly agreed \((n = 9)\), or agreed \((n = 3)\) with the statement that the presenter was knowledgeable and informative (See Table 2.1). The majority of participants also indicated that they strongly agreed \((n = 9)\), or agreed \((n = 3)\) with the statement that the information was clear and easy to understand. Participants also indicated that they felt very confident in applying the material in their classroom as reflected by the high mean score of 8.88 on a scale of 1 to 10 \((SD = 1.00, n = 12)\). Participants also indicated that they understood how to create warm and welcoming environment as reflected by the high mean score of 9.63 on a scale of 1 to 10 \((SD = .48, n = 12)\).

**Table 2. Post Workshop Evaluation Form Questions 1-2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Speaker was knowledgeable and informative.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The slides and information presented were clear and easy to understand.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EMERGENT THEMES FROM THE RESPONSES TO THE QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

Aspects of Workshop Identified as Most Helpful in Your Classroom

Overall the participants found that the Tools and Tips Handout was extremely helpful. The participants reported that the Difficult Parent Handout was very informative and an easy reference for them to take into their own classrooms. Different participants liked specific tools from the Tools and Tips handout. Specific tools identified as being potentially useful included: the LAFF Don’t CRY approach, the Resource Binder for two way communication with parents, and the welcome letter for parents. Several participants identified the information about dealing with difficult parents helpful.

Aspects of the Workshop Participants Liked Best

Participants indicated that the role-playing activity was helpful, the 12 steps to self-care handout was helpful, and brainstorming during different exercises about strategies to engage parents. They also stated that the willingness of the facilitator to address issues that the participants brought up made it a welcoming environment.

Suggestions for Improvement

Participants indicated that they would recommend more time to role-play different scenarios. Several participants suggested making the workshop’s approach more related to the childcare facility, this specific facility was a Montessori School and they wanted the information in the workshop that was more specific to Montessori schools. The specific qualitative responses are detailed in Appendix D.

IMPACT

Reflective Writing

I was very satisfied with the outcome of the workshop, and felt it had a positive impact in that participants appeared to understand the material presented and were excited to apply it in their classrooms. I felt like the audience of educators understood the materials and the handouts very well. The audience participated and they were very involved in the self-
reflective discussions throughout the workshop. I think that the pictures on the PowerPoint were very helpful in displaying the different types of classrooms settings that foster positive relationships and the handouts gave the educators take home tools that they can use and refer to at any time in their own classrooms. I feel like the educators that I did the workshop with will have the tips needed to create a welcoming classroom and the strategies that can help them deal with difficult parents in their classrooms. I wish that I had more time to do the workshop, I felt like there was a time crunch, which did not give the audience enough time for the role-playing activity. I would have liked to have each pair share their scenarios and have time to discuss each one and talk about how they would deal with each scenario so that the audience would hear multiple perspectives on dealing with certain situations in the classroom. I think that would have been a great self-reflection discussion for the workshop and it would be a great learning opportunity for the educators.

There were several things that worked well when implementing the workshop. One thing that worked well was promoting self-reflective discussions with the audience after each topic or section was covered. I felt as the facilitator, encouraging conversations with the audience about their own personal experiences helped make the workshop more personalized for the specific center and Staff. Another thing that worked for the workshop was providing specific examples of the LAFF Don’t CRY handout and the Difficult Parent handout. Going through and reviewing each tip on the handouts made it easier for the audience to understand the materials. This also gave them a chance to ask questions when things were not clear. The post workshop evaluation forms also worked out at the end of the workshop because it will help make the workshop better for future possible implementations.

Follow-Up With Participants

The teachers were contacted after one week of the workshop implementation and they were asked to provide some feedback about whether and how they have used the workshop strategies in their classrooms. The two school directors responded that it was a great help in their classrooms and that both they and their teachers had been trying to incorporate the Difficult Parent tips when dealing with parents in their center. The Directors also stated that their boss had referred to the workshop a few times during their weekly staff meeting and had incorporated the workshop’s strategies when talking about issues in the center and how they
can solve those issues together. As of one month from program implementation, the participants had not responded to the email and Facebook page follow-up. It is noteworthy that this period was also during the busy holiday season (late November and early December).
DISCUSSION

The Parents as Partners intervention program was designed, implemented, and evaluated for the current project. The intervention’s main purpose was to teach early childhood educators/pre-school teachers and early childhood education related staff, and assist them in building positive relationships with the parents of the children they teach in their classroom. The results overall suggested that the intervention program was successful at least in terms of participant engagement and satisfaction. The participants reported that they felt very confident and excited to implement the tools and tips that were presented in the intervention program. The participants were actively involved in both discussions and activities during the program. The results indicated that the participants really enjoyed the role-playing activity. The participants found the Difficult Parent, LAFF Don’t CRY handout, and the 12 Steps to Self-Care handout very useful. The LAFF Don’t CRY handout was an active listening tool that educators could use when engaging in meaningful conversations with parents, to ensure that parents and educators would feel respected and listened to. The 12 Steps to Self-Care handout are 12 tips that anyone could use whenever they need to just take time away from what they are doing just to relax and find peace of mind. The participants were interested in discussing each handout together as a group; they enjoyed being able to address their own personal issues in their classrooms to the entire audience. The participants were very involved in each discussion opportunity and shared a lot of their own personal experiences in their classroom during the icebreaker activity. The participants enjoyed discussing cultural sensitivity and their own experiences with culture in their classrooms. The participants indicated that the facilitator was very friendly and created a warm environment to learn. I feel very honored that the workshop has been a positive asset to Kinderhouse Montessori School, and I am glad that I was able to help their educators out with things that they deal with every day. The overall implementation of the Parents as
Partners workshop was outstanding and all the feedback I received from the audience will be taken into account for the future of this workshop.

**Program Implementation**

The ease of implementation or feasibility was excellent. The program was very easy to implement, the PowerPoint and folder of handouts helped increase the ease of implementation. The PowerPoint displayed visuals of important research and pictures and the folder of handouts made it easier for participants to refer to and follow along with the program facilitator. The folder of handouts gave participants something to take home with them for reference, in case the participants wanted to implement the tools and tips that were presented during the intervention program. During the implementation of the program, the participants were given opportunities to self-reflect and address issues that were occurring in their own lives. The self-reflective discussions helped create a welcoming environment for the implementation of the intervention program, and this helped tailor the program to fit the needs of the participants of the Center. The only part of the implementation process that was difficult, was the time allotted for the workshop. The Center had an early Staff Meeting that went over the scheduled time and took 45 minutes of the workshop time; the original plan for the workshop implementation was 8:30-10:30 a.m. but the approximate time implemented was 9:15-10:35 a.m. Overall, the implementation of the intervention program was a success, the participants enjoyed the program and the facilitator had an easy time with the implementation.
LIMITATIONS

The evaluation of this program was not able to get at whether or not parents were actually more involved due to the program or what the impact on children was. A longitudinal study would be needed to assess these results. An email was sent out to the participants informing them about the Facebook page for the program and an offer to email out the handouts if needed. No participants have responded to the emails due to unknown factors, but this program may not be a priority to the participants because the holidays and end of the year are approaching. The Facebook page has not had any activity because there has been no response from participants via email and Facebook invite. Some participants may be limited in their technology capabilities or Internet access, therefore they may not be able to respond and/or join the Facebook page or reply to the email sent out. A limitation to the intervention program was that it was only given one time. For future implementation, including additional days for the workshop would be ideal in order to focus more on certain aspects of the program that the participants indicated were very helpful and important. If the workshop were given on a two-day or two Saturday time frames there would be a good amount of time to be able to implement all 62 items on the Fidelity Checklist successfully. The icebreaker activities could be expanded and discussions about the role-playing activity could be included in the implementation. The advantage of the implementation of the program was that it was included during the Center’s Staff Meeting Day, but the disadvantage was there was not enough time for the entire program to take place. Another limitation to the program was that the Center that the program was implemented at was a Montessori School. The participants indicated that for future implementation of the intervention program, it should be tailored for the Montessori type of school. The participants wanted to see strategies specific to the Montessori style Center, but the program was not designed to be specific to a specific type of center, rather to be useful for any early childhood educators and other early childhood education staff.
IMPLICATIONS

This program and process evaluation indicated that the workshop focused on engaging parents as partners in early childhood education settings that can be used to teach early education teachers and staff strategies for working positively with the parents of the children they serve. These programs can be implemented as part of the childcare center’s regular meetings and trainings to make the material accessible to all teachers and staff. Material focused on helping teachers work with challenging parents and engage in positive listening strategies are particularly recommended based on participant feedback. One challenge regarding program implementation was having a limited time frame for conducting the workshop. Thus, it is recommended that workshops administrators schedule ample time for their workshops and also have a workshop curriculum that is flexible enough that it can adapt to changes in the timeframe allotted for their training session to adapt to the changing needs of the early education centers.

Feedback received from the evaluation forms and the overall implementation of the intervention program, there are some things that can be improved and further researched in order to create a better and well-rounded program in the future. One implication is that additional research on specific approaches on parent involvement for specific types of programs and schools is needed in order to cater to the various types of schools and childcare centers. This could create a program that is specific to a school’s approach, which could significantly impact the school more because the staff could definitely take the strategies they learn and implement it in their classrooms immediately. With a program that is not specific to a certain school approach, it may take time for the participants to implement what they learned from the program because they will need to change the strategies to conform to the approach of the school.

Other recommendations that could be implemented are to include more opportunities to discuss ways to effectively deal with difficult parents. The participants indicated that the
Difficult Parent handout was very helpful because it was a quick guide on how to communicate better and effectively with parents who are difficult. More material and research on dealing with difficult parents would be a great addition to this intervention program.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

A. Introduction of workshop

- Facilitator will introduce the workshop and the name of the workshop.
- Ice Breaker: Audience will stand up and introduce themselves to the entire room.
  1. Name?
  2. What age do you teach?
  3. Share one thing you love about your classroom.
  4. What do parents love about your classroom.

B. Creating a Welcoming Classroom Discussion

- Have audience share what they think makes their classroom welcoming.
- Make a list so everyone can see what other classrooms use.
- Give tips on how to establish good communication and positive relationships with parents in the classroom.

C. Ask the audience what “Positive Parent-Teacher Relationships” mean to them.

- Facilitator will write on a big board what the audience comes up with.
- From the answers the audience came up with, a group definition will
be generated to create a better understanding of what positive parent-teacher relationships mean to them.

- Facilitator will share the meaning of positive parent teacher relationships according to the research and the workshop: Positive parent-teacher relationships consist of both parents and teachers working together in synchronization to positively support the child in and out of school.

D. PowerPoint presentations on promoting parent-teacher relationships:

- Introduce systems approach (importance of interaction between family and early childhood education systems)
- Research based information on: a) why parent-teacher relationships are important, and b) how to create meaningful relationships between parents and teachers in the classroom and c) how to create a welcoming environment.
- Highlight importance of cultural sensitivity: It is important to be aware and sensitive to the cultures all around the school, especially in each classroom.
- Conclude by sharing personal experiences, and have the floor open for reflective discussions among the audience.

E. Tips and Tools for engaging parents: (Give handouts to audience)

- LAFF don’t CRY: Actively listen and understand.
- Epstein’s theory: View students like they are your own children.
- Newsletters for parents to know what is going on in the classroom.
- Resource binder for two-way communication with parents.
- Cultural sensitivity: Be aware of cultures all around you.
- Welcome letter inviting parents into the classroom: Planting seeds with parents early to establish a positive relationship.
- Intervention plans for children that need help.
- Incorporate technology in the classroom: Face Book page, emails, text, etc.
- Parenting workshops.
- Tour of school for families.
- Relationship focused approach to include everyone.
- Home visits (if appropriate).
- Orientation to classroom and teacher if possible.

F. The Difficult Parent

- Talk about how not all parents will be happy and easy going.
- Give audience chance to share some of their experiences.
- Share 10 Strategies on Dealing with Difficult Parents
- Go through and talk about strategies.

G. Role Play Activity

- Audience will be asked to get a partner to work with.
- Each pair will draw a scenario from a hat.
- They will have to act out the scenario with each other.
- Have an open discussion with audience about the role-playing and ask for volunteers who want to share their experience or even act out their
scenario to the audience.

- Welcome any personal experiences of audience members.

H. Conclusion

- Re-iterating the importance of parent-teacher relationship and encouraging participants to build them.
- Share the “12 Steps to Self-Care” handout.
- Question and Answer time.
- Hand out post workshop evaluation form.
APPENDIX B

INTERVENTION PROGRAM HANDBOUTS

The Difficult Parent

11 Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Parents

1. Let upset parents know that your goal is to help every child succeed.
2. Be sensitive: Start with positives to lead up to negatives and keep in mind Epstein's theory!
3. Document notes from parent meetings and conversations.
4. Be proactive: Contact parents ASAP with the good & bad.
5. Be prepared to give specific examples (ex: hard copies)
6. Don’t be put on the spot: Let parents know that you can get back to them in one or two days which can give you time to explore your options.
7. Don’t be afraid to end a meeting with parents on a bad note: give both parties time to reflect on the issues & set a next meeting time.
8. Remember your focus: Parents may share too much information with you. Remember your main priority is the children.
9. Don’t get caught up in the drama between families - your concern is the children
10. Be aware of parents who hover over their children: Give them specific opportunities to be involved.
11. Be prepared for the worse case scenario: Read over your rights and Center procedures and inform Center Director or Supervisor of issues.

(Gruber & Gruber, 2008)
Parents as Partners Workshop:

“Tools and Tips”

- Have a welcoming classroom (Asiyai, 2014)
- Welcome letter: planting seeds with parents early to establish a positive relationship (Asiyai, 2014)
- Tour/orientation for families (Lazar et al., 1999)
- View students like they are your own children (Epstein, 1995)
- Relationship focused approach to include everyone (Brazelton, 1992)
- Cultural sensitivity: Be aware of the cultures around you (Knopf & Swick, 2008)
- LAFF don’t CRY: Actively listen and understand (McNaughton & Vostal, 2010)
- Newsletters for parents to know what is going on in the classroom (Abel, 2014)
- Resource binder for two-way communication with parents (Knopf & Swick, 2007)
- Intervention plans for children that need help (Abel, 2014)
- Parenting workshops (Stone & Chakraborty, 2011)
- Home visits (if appropriate) (Knopf & Swick, 2007)
- Incorporate technology: Facebook page, emails, text, etc (Knopf & Swick, 2007)
Dear Parents,

Welcome to Room 3! We are so excited that Matthew will be joining us this school year! I look forward to working with Matthew and making this school year a very memorable one. My classroom is your classroom, and with that being said please feel free to come to me with any ideas or tips that you may have to make Room 3 a better place! You may contact me with any questions or concerns at (858) 123-4567 and through email at 123@gmail.com. I look forward to working with Matthew and your family this school year!

Sincerely,

Ms. Isabelo
LAFF, Don’t CRY

Active listening strategy that educators can use to establish clear communication and show parents empathy, respect, and interest in their opinions.

- **Listen, empathize, and communicate respect.**
- **Ask questions and ask permission to take notes**
- **Focus on the issues**
- **Find a first step**
- **Don’t Criticize people who are not present**
- **Don’t React hastily and promise something you cannot deliver**
- **Yakety-yak-yak**

(McNaughton & Vostal, 2010)
APPENDIX C

EVALUATION FORM

*Parents as Partners: Post Workshop*

Evaluation Form

Please answer all questions. ☺

1. Speaker was knowledgeable and informative.
   _____ Strongly Agree _____ Somewhat Agree
   _____ Somewhat Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

2. The slides and information presented were clear and easy to understand.
   _____ Strongly Agree _____ Somewhat Agree
   _____ Somewhat Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident do you feel implementing strategies and using tips from the workshop in your classroom?
   1-------2-------3-------4-------5-------6-------7-------8-------9-------10
   I have no clue. 😞 I understand it. ☺ I can teach this! ☻

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you understand what a warm and welcoming classroom consist of?
   1-------2-------3-------4-------5-------6-------7-------8-------9-------10
   I have no clue. 😞 I understand it. ☺ I can teach this! ☻

5. What is something you will take home with you, and implement in your classroom from the workshop given today?

     ______________________________________________________________
     ______________________________________________________________
     ______________________________________________________________
6. What thing(s) did you like best from the workshop given today?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

7. What thing(s) would you have liked to see included in the workshop given today that were not addressed?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

8. Any comments/suggestions?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX D

WORKSHOP ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY

SCENARIOS

1. Kingston has been attending the school for 2 days and has trouble at drop off. He cries and screams for an hour or two. What do you tell the parents of Kingston when they ask you if this is normal?

2. It is Keilani’s first day of school; she has never been in any type of childcare before. The parents ask you what do you want them to do to help with Keilani’s transition into school. What would you tell these helpful parents?

3. It is Layla’s first day of preschool! What would you do to welcome that family and Layla to your classroom?

4. Xavier is almost fully potty trained but the parents tell you that they remind him to go throughout the day to help him some more. The parents ask you if you could do the same for Xavier at school. What would you say to these parents and what would your plan be with reminding Xavier?

5. Ezekiel’s family does not celebrate some holidays, and Halloween is one of them. You decided to have a Halloween Spirit day in your classroom, how would you tell Ezekiel’s parents of the event and how would you accommodate that families culture into your classroom?

6. Kamron’s parents do not like it when he gets his clothes dirty at school. They do not like paint, food, or anything dirty on him. How would you inform Kamron’s parents that you do a lot of arts and crafts and messy things in school and that he may get dirty?

7. Jennalynn has improved so much, from crying and screaming at drop off to playing and loving school! You are so excited to share her progress and you want to have a short conference with her parents, how would you go about doing this? When will you have the conference and how would you ask them?

8. Aleia has been very sleepy during school for the past couple of days, she falls asleep before lunchtime and she has a hard time waking up after naptime for her afternoon snack. Her parents have told you at drop off that she would not go to bed at night and she sleeps late. This has been going on for a whole week and you feel it is important to talk with her parents. What advice would you give the parents and how would you address this concern with her parents?
APPENDIX E

RESPONSES TO QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS
FROM SATISFACTION SURVEY

5. What is something you will take home with you, and implement in your classroom from the workshop given today?

| An adapted version of parent-teacher journal. |
| How to talk with parents, and the importance to communicate with them. |
| All. |
| Tips for dealing with difficult parents. |
| “Don’t respond hastily and promise something you cannot deliver”. |
| Relationships with parents are based on trust, respect, and work with both of the parties to bring a great relationship. |
| How to deal with “that” parent! |
| More communication with parents and plan for children with difficult parents. |
| Individualized welcome letters. |
| Being proactive with parent communication both good and bad. |
6. What thing (s) did you like best from the workshop given today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role-play.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The points that relate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refreshing common sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative, easy to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 steps to Self-Care handout!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed the speaker’s confidence, knowledge, and how well prepared she was.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to address issues we had.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All were good information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The speaker was warm, friendly, and created an atmosphere to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very hard, everything!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. What thing (s) would you have liked to see included in the workshop given today that were not addressed?

None.

Maybe more opportunities to role-play difficult situations.

None.

None.

None.

None.

This was pretty good!

None.

None.

None.

None.

More Montessori stuff.

Emphasis on teacher being in control and setting the tone (being proactive) for the nature of parent-teacher communication.
8. Any comments/suggestions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thank you. P.S. Examples ought to be Montessori specific as this is a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montessori audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Job!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really great workshop!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was great!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was great!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perhaps more tailoring to a Montessori environment/Kinderhouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good luck!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great workshop! Thank you!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

FIDELITY CHECKLIST

√ Introduction: Thank everyone for coming out and attending.

√ Share E-card

√ Facilitator will introduce the workshop and the name of the workshop and give background information about self.

√ Ice Breaker: Audience will stand up and introduce themselves to the entire room.

√ Answer the following questions: Name? What age do you teach?

√ Share one thing you love about your classroom. What do parents love about your classroom.

√ Speaker will be the first one to do ice breaker.

√ Creating a Welcoming Classroom Discussion: Ask audience what does a welcoming classroom look like to you?

√ Make a list so everyone can see what other classrooms use.

√ Show pictures on PowerPoint.

√ Give tips on how to establish good communication and positive relationships with parents in the classroom: (i.e. How to create a welcoming classroom slide.)

√ Refer to “Sample Welcome Letter” Handout and discuss letter.

√ Ask the audience what “Positive Parent-Teacher Relationships” mean to them.
√ Facilitator will write on a big board what the audience comes up with.

_ From the answers the audience came up with, a group definition will be generated to create a better understanding of what positive parent-teacher relationships mean to them.

√ Facilitator will share the meaning of positive parent teacher relationships according to the research and the workshop: Positive parent-teacher relationships consist of both parents and teachers working together in synchronization to positively support the child in and out of school.

√ PowerPoint presentations on promoting parent-teacher relationships:

√ Introduce systems approach (importance of interaction between family and early childhood education systems)

√ Research based information on:

√ a) Why parent-teacher relationships are important, and

√ b) How to create meaningful relationships between parents and teachers in the classroom.

√ c) How to create a welcoming environment.

√ Highlight importance of cultural sensitivity: It is important to be aware and sensitive to the cultures all around the school, especially in each classroom.

√ Conclude by sharing personal experiences/Self-Reflection.

√ Floor open for reflective discussions among the audience.

√ Tips and Tools for engaging parents: (Give handouts to audience and go through handout together.)
√ Discuss tips already covered in presentation so far.
√ LAFF don’t CRY: Actively listen and understand/ Review the handout
√ Discuss slide on LAFF Don’t CRY.
√ Epstein’s theory: View students like they are your own children.
√ Newsletters for parents to know what is going on in the classroom.
√ Resource binder for two-way communication with parents.
√ Show resource binder example and explain.
√ Cultural sensitivity: Be aware of the cultures around you.
√ Welcome letter inviting parents into the classroom: Planting seeds with parents early to establish a positive relationship.
√ Intervention plans for children that need help.
√ Incorporate technology in the classroom: Face Book page, emails, text, etc.
√ Discuss Face Book private page.
√ Parenting workshops.
√ Tour of school for families.
√ Relationship focused approach to include everyone.
√ Home visits (if appropriate).
√ Orientation to classroom and teacher if possible.
√ The Difficult Parent/ Review the handout.
√ Talk about how not all parents will be happy and easy going.
√ Give audience chance to share some of their experiences.
√ Share 10 Strategies on Dealing with Difficult Parents
√ Go through and talk about strategies.

√ Role Play Activity: Introduce Activity

√ Pass bag around for partners to pick scenarios.

√ Audience will be asked to get a partner to work with.

√ Each pair will draw a scenario from a hat.

√ They will have to act out the scenario with each other.

_ Have an open discussion with audience about the role-playing and ask for volunteers who want to share their experience or even act out their scenario to the audience.

_ Welcome any personal experiences of audience members.

√ Conclusion: Re-iterating the importance of parent-teacher relationship.

√ Talking about importance of being culturally sensitive all the time!

√ Re-iterating how participants can build positive parent-teacher relationships through their classroom environment.

√ Use Tools and Tips handout for reference in the future.

√ Teamwork is the BEST work!!

√ Share the “12 Steps to Self-Care” handout.

√ Question and Answer time.

√ Follow up on Face book page.

√ Refer to evaluation form in folder.

√ Thank audience for time and participation!