Supporting Students Through School-Family-Community Partnerships

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Executive Summary

CBA, our partner organization, provides coeducational preschool through eighth-grade education for 234 students in a North-Central New Jersey city, many of whom live under challenging socioeconomic conditions. CBA focuses on building a strong appreciation for learning grounded in the values and teachings of the Catholic Church. There are thirty-three faculty and staff employed at CBA.

CBA's leadership expressed concern regarding the challenges related to engaging parents about perceived increases in student misbehavior. This apprehension led the project team to gauge the effectiveness and perceptions of the communication and collaboration process between CBA and its families. Our project questions examined the current state and perceptions of CBA's communication and collaboration with families, asking how CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs; and how CBA and its families perceive the current state of school-home-community collaboration and communication.

Our conceptual framework came from Epstein's (1995) spheres of influence model, emphasizing the partnerships formed by schools, families, and local communities that support student success through overlapping institutional and interpersonal networks. The resulting relationships enable a caring, supportive learning community for children and mitigate student misbehavior. Our findings and recommendations offered CBA a pathway to an improved school climate and student success through school, family, and local community partnerships.

Our project findings resulted from quantitative data culminating in descriptive statistics and qualitative data from coded transcripts assessed through thematic analysis. These data were derived from parental and CBA staff surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Specifically, we found that CBA's communication practices lack clarity, consistency, and follow-through,

resulting in parental frustration or reliance on informal channels, and the school's ill-defined practices for addressing student misbehavior have resulted in an overreliance on the principal's expertise or teachers managing situations inconsistently and/or independently. We also assessed that CBA does not have sufficient human resources to address the full range of communication and collaboration needs of staff and families.

Moreover, CBA parents and staff perceive shortcomings in each other's demonstrated ability to communicate and collaborate, although parents have an appetite for more ongoing, robust home-school communication. Also, parents and staff did not perceive a link to the external community, effectively negating a vital component of the partnership triad. Finally, we found that parents and staff have a divergent understanding of the expectations for the roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for volunteerism at CBA.

Our recommendations for CBA include the development of a staff handbook incorporating policies and procedures for student misbehavior, related communication, and family collaboration. We also suggest that CBA should re-establish roles and responsibilities through updated job descriptions and assign a school communication officer. Interdisciplinary workshops to train families and teachers on communication and collaboration skills would help strengthen ties between the school and families.

We also recommend that CBA should delegate a community outreach volunteer from among Home School Association members and establish guidelines for volunteerism that address the concerns of families and the school staff. Finally, CBA should establish an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) to oversee school partnership programs that serve communication and collaboration.

Organizational Context

Our partner organization, a Catholic-based elementary school (for privacy concerns hereafter referred to as CBA), provides coeducational preschool through eighth-grade education for 234 students in a city in the north-central New Jersey area, many of whom live under challenging socioeconomic conditions (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022). Operating under the auspices of the local archdiocese, CBA focuses on building a strong appreciation for learning grounded in the values and teachings of the Catholic Church. Thirty-three faculty and staff support the academy's mission, focused on "generating a lifetime of intellectual curiosity, spiritual growth, and a sense of service to society" (CBA, 2023).

Founded in the early 1950s, CBA currently serves as 1 of 12 Catholic elementary schools in its diocese and county (Essex County, n.d.). In 2013 the Department of Education recognized CBA as a National Blue Ribbon School, citing the school's cultural diversity, rigorous academic standards, multidisciplinary STEM approach to learning, and community outreach (CBA, 2023; (National Blue Ribbon Schools, n.d.). CBA maintains a 10.2 student/teacher ratio with a full-time equivalent of 16.6 classroom teachers (Search for Private Schools—School Detail for AQUINAS ACADEMY, n.d.). Led by a relatively new principal and seasoned assistant principal, the staff is lean compared to its public school counterparts, with minimal support staff (i.e., school counselor, psychologist, instructional coach, special education teacher, etc.) outside of classroom teachers (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022). Yet, its longstanding reputation attracts students from several neighboring communities, and students attend CBA for $8,074 per school year (CBA, 2023), well below the average tuition cost for New Jersey private elementary schools of $14,695 annually (New Jersey Private Schools By Tuition Cost (2023), n.d.).

The project team's visit to CBA on March 3, 2023, created an impression of the school as a small, close-knit community, diverse in its student population (personal communication, March 3, 2023). The school sits on the parish campus in several separate buildings but within easy walking distance of one another. The facilities are older, but the classrooms seemed well-appointed with education aids. The teaching staff varies in experience, with almost 30% of teachers having taught for more than 15 years, generally or at CBA. Over 20% of the staff have a graduate-level education.

Significance of the Problem of Practice

Over the past two years, CBA leadership perceived an increase in student disruptive behavior detrimental to the children exhibiting such deportment and, consequently, to other children and staff (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022). Even without deep historical data, CBA's recorded student misbehavior incidents (September 2022 – February 2023) included 35 detentions, two in-school suspensions, and one out-of-school suspension, representing an uptick in disruptive student behavior (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022).

Our initial discussions with the CBA principal identified a lack of parent engagement and collaboration as her primary concerns and the major impediments to addressing students' behavioral issues (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022). Moreover, the resulting classroom disruptions, diverted teacher attention, fatigue, and lack of an effective intervention strategy affected the school and its teaching staff (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022). The CBA principal (Personal communication, July 20, 2022) also expressed concern that left unaddressed, inappropriate childhood behaviors can develop into more aggressive forms of socially dysfunctional relationships (Tremblay et al., 1996). The seriousness of these short- and

long-term effects persuaded the CBA leadership to explore evidence-based strategies for effectively addressing and mitigating disruptive behaviors.

The seriousness of these short- and long-term effects persuaded the CBA leadership to explore evidence-based strategies for effectively addressing and mitigating disruptive behaviors. However, the inability of some families to accept accountability for their children's misbehavior, the lack of staff teamwork, and the lack of a community outreach approach mitigated the CBA leadership's efforts to initiate an early intervention strategy (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022). Thus, even though a child at CBA demonstrates solid academic skills, their needs might be overlooked as they struggle with social and peer interactions, exhibit irrational and aggressive behavior, or repress anger. Such conduct places the immediate community at risk and, unaddressed, potentially leads to more severe manifestations of misbehavior (Sancassiani et al., 2015). An early, holistic intervention strategy seeks to reverse such a trend and mitigate misconduct through a supportive environment of parents, teachers, and caregivers. However, a lack of awareness or support from any of the three jeopardizes a corrective program's efficacy (Sancassiani et al., 2015).

Due to these concerns, the CBA principal's experience with childhood behavioral issues led to several professional development workshops with the staff and mental health sessions with the student body focused on self-esteem (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022). The principal (Personal communication, July 20, 2022) still believes that CBA teachers require more practical experience and motivation to identify and address student needs. Subsequently, CBA aims to improve its staff's capacity to identify children in need and develop an adequate intervention strategy that disrupts the trend toward misbehavior.

Parallel with their strategy development efforts, CBA also struggles to garner parental support for intervention efforts that might assist children with emotional health and maladaptive issues (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022). While they admit the need for more school resources, even when teachers identify a need for intervention, the lack of parent-teacher collaboration impedes effective in-class and at-home intervention efforts and dampens the hope for improvement. The lack of cooperation complicates a process in which completing a pediatric neurologist evaluation may take up to a year. Therefore, the school aspires to improve lines of communication with parents to foster collaboration generally and in intervention efforts, explicitly stressing the need for urgency and the consequences of non-intervention.

Communication and collaboration between schools, families, and communities create opportunities for parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and community collaboration (Epstein, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Ultimately this concept of engagement between families and schools serves as a framework to support students and build trust and respect through communication and collaboration. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) and Walker et al.'s (2005) models of parent empowerment further clarify appropriate and beneficial roles for teachers and parents. Thus, our conceptual framework creates a normative model for parents and teachers/schools to discuss and address student misbehavior concerns as collaborative partners in a student's education.

As the project team journeyed through the process of refinement inherent in defining the problem of practice, determining the appropriate questions to guide the project, and familiarizing ourselves with the partner organization, we realized that an oblique approach to this undertaking was necessary. Tackling head-on student misbehavior with the parents of said children seemed ill-advised and potentially counterproductive. Moreover, the CBA principal expressed reluctance

to identify families with children exhibiting such behavior (Principal, personal communication, July 20, 2022). Subsequently, we decided to approach the project from the perspective that a baseline of school-family-community engagement (in other words, communication and collaboration) established a foundation for more sensitive discussions. Following several team deliberations, we decided that our work with CBA stakeholders would investigate the challenges they were experiencing in school-family-community partnerships, intended to help that community develop the trusting relationship essential to better supporting students with behavioral challenges.

Research Questions

Based upon the identified problem and organizational context, a consideration of the scholarship, and our conceptual framework (Epstein, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2005), we developed the following research questions to guide this study:

- How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs?
- How do CBA and its families perceive the current state of school-home-community collaboration and communication?

Literature Review

A review of relevant literature considered the broad role of communication and collaboration in supporting students with behavioral needs. The review also focused on parent training, early intervention, parent-teacher collaboration, home-school partnerships, parental involvement, school violence, and behavioral risk factors. The search initially concentrated on the origin of behavioral issues in elementary students and appropriate interventions. However, as

we generalized the project's scope, we broadened the literature review to include family, school, and community partnerships.

In exploring behavioral concerns among children, we examined an extensive age range (infant through adolescent) to highlight the continuum of mental health issues throughout childhood. We surveyed any terms related to mental health issues among children, specifically: behavior problems; conduct problems; disruptive behavior; antisocial behavior; and delinquency. We also found that collaboration involves reciprocal communication, trust, respect, and a shared purpose (Avendano & Cho, 2020). A consistent link appeared between parent/family involvement in student education and academic accomplishment (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Schultz et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2005). Consequently, our project evolved from solely concentrating on student misbehavior to including family, school, and community influences affecting the communication and collaboration of parents and teachers at a private, parochial elementary school. Our research questions began considering the current communication and collaboration practices of families and the CBA school related to children with behavioral needs and identifying effective school-home-community collaboration to support these students.

The search concentrated on peer-reviewed scholarly journals. However, it also included some governmental reports. Studies included qualitative and quantitative methodologies, mixed methods, and meta-analyses. We reviewed all post-1980 articles but prioritized post-2000 articles and chose only papers in English, utilizing Google Scholar as our search database. Studies focused on all age groups, from infancy through adulthood. We prioritized school and family/home contexts and excluded non-peer-reviewed research and opinion-based information.

Two criteria determined a source's quality: 1) peer-review and 2) the frequency with which other relevant literature cited the source.

Behavioral Challenges at School

Poor socioeconomic conditions can create challenges in early childhood development with implications for emotional and social maladjustment evidenced in school relationships among peers and teachers (Offord et al., 1987; West et al., 2001). These adjustment trials can affect children's personal and social adjustments in their early school years that correlate to successful academic development (Shala, 2013).

Children with disruptive behavior present multiple challenges to their immediate community and, if untreated, may lead to academic issues, substance abuse, maladjustment, and antisocial and behavioral issues (Semke et al., 2010; Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). Antisocial behavior can begin when a child enters the school system and becomes involved in aggressive or malfunctioning peer relationships, hampering social competence (Reid et al., 1999). Patterson et al. (2000) identified a continuum of children demonstrating behavioral issues and social incompetence, offering limited research on the progression of childhood hyperactivity to antisocial behavior, eventually evolving into early-onset delinquency. Data from Webster-Stratton et al. (2004) further suggest that without early intervention, behavioral or conduct problems may manifest as normative behavior by age eight and progress to academic instability, delinquency, and violence.

Negative relationships with teachers and peers may also perpetuate conduct problems (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). Teachers who do not manage aggression and social isolation in the classroom and withhold nurturing and praise from these students with behavioral problems may intensify their mastery of social acceptance and academic competence (Webster-Stratton et

al., 2004). However, removing children from the classroom or isolating them from peers may exacerbate this behavior (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004).

Unfortunately, a lack of mental health screening has resulted in neglected treatment for children in need (Cunningham et al., 1995; Jenkins et al., 2021). A 2019 U.S. Department of Education report cited inadequate funding and access to licensed mental health practitioners as the primary hurdles to providing adequate mental health services to students (Wang et al., 2020). Due to the negative consequences of untreated mental illness, early identification of at-risk students is paramount (Jenkins et al., 2021). While many behavioral screening tools exist, the timing and accuracy of their application remain critical factors for this vulnerable population (Cornell, 2020; Jenkins et al., 2021). As a result of this care deficiency, schools have become the essential provider of mental health assistance for this student population (Jenkins et al., 2021).

Compounding the lack of professional care, behavioral issues not addressed early in the educational setting may progress into antisocial behavior, delinquency, and violence. Eddy et al. (2000) suggest negative reinforcement exacerbates delinquent behaviors, asserting that peers and adults frequently shun children who exhibit deviant behavior and drive them into relationships with other troubled teens, setting the stage for criminal and violent behavior (Eddy et al., 2000; Reid et al., 1999). Eddy et al. and Reed et al. cite antisocial behavior among young children as the most significant predictor of adolescent delinquency and violence.

Equally concerning, despite evidence that positive, nurturing parenting skills can strengthen childhood resilience and the ability to manage increasingly complex social behaviors and classroom learning (Gardner et al., 2006; Webster-Stratton & Fjone, 1989; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2006), parents experiencing personal, home, or work-related stress sometimes become compromised to build strong protective, emotional support for their children (Reid et al., 2007).

Thus, defiance and hostility on the part of the child and lack of discipline and supervision on the part of the parents represent behaviors associated with delinquency (Eddy et al., 2000; Gardner et al., 2006).

Parental Risk Factors

A link exists between the risk factors associated with children's behavioral aberrations and particular pregnancy and birth factors (Eddy et al., 2000; Reid et al., 1999). Indices surrounding the pregnancy, including maternal health, substance abuse, and acceptance, may relate to issues with infant temperament and early-on cognitive insufficiency (Baydar et al., 2003; Reid et al., 1999). Poverty, depression, social isolation, and lack of support may also negatively affect nurturing and bonding (Reid et al., 1999; Reid et al., 2007). Semke et al. (2010) identified parenting stress as a consistent risk factor for disruptive behavior in children, affecting child and parent interactions and the child's engagement in academics, perpetuating antisocial behaviors. Moreover, a consistent link exists between inadequate, coercive, and ill-tempered parenting and the development of behavioral issues (Gardner et al., 2006; Reid et al., 1999). Extensive data links Patterson et al.'s (2000) theory of the "coercive process" (p. 91) to the development of aggression in children, whereby children intensify negative behavior to evade parental condemnation (Eddy et al., 2000; Reid et al., 1999; Webster-Stratton et al., 2004).

Further evidence proposes that socioeconomic disadvantage can influence children's social, emotional, and behavioral issues (Keenan et al., 1997; Reid et al., 2007; Santiago et al., 2011). Studies concur that these early behavioral issues may escalate to antisocial behavior and academic issues without proper intervention (Reid et al., 2007; Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). Sadly, Cunningham et al. (1995) posit that many parents with economic instability will not

participate in parent training even when their children are at high risk of mental health challenges.

Parenting Classes and Early Intervention

Parenting style may represent the most influential factor in building children's resilience, with positive parenting acting to support healthy emotional development and hostile or harsh parenting linked to behavioral issues (Baydar et al., 2003; Reid et al., 2007; Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). Parenting training programs can supplement that process and offer an effective modulation for decreasing behavioral issues and disruptive disorders (Cunningham et al., 1995; Gardner et al., 2006; Leijten et al., 2019; Reid et al., 2007; Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). Moreover, early intervention programs offered to high-risk populations may encourage social and emotional adaptation and minimize behavioral issues early (Eddy et al., 2000; Reid et al., 2007; Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). The curriculum of such programs should address parenting styles, parent-child interaction, and synchrony between home and school (Reid et al., 2007; Webster-Stratton et al., 2004), supported by a combination of classroom-based interventions and parent training (Cunningham et al., 1995; Reid et al., 2007; Semke et al., 2010; Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). Training programs that incorporate teachers and focus on classroom strategies, in addition to the teacher-parent connection and continuum between school and home, have proven very successful (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004).

According to Leijten et al. (2019), many programs incorporate skills that focus on positive reinforcement, nonviolent discipline, and problem-solving. These multidimensional programs address emotional and behavioral techniques for successful parenting. However, many behavioral parenting programs adapted their approach because of a focus shift from treatment to prevention (Fearon & Sonuga-Barke, 2022), but the effects related to long-term sustainability

remain questionable. Parenting programs tailored to the audience's needs proved successful, and programs focused on prevention and treatment yielded more success than a universal prevention approach. Programs focused on positive reinforcement and affirmative parent-child interactions delivered the most significant positive results (Leijten et al., 2019).

The more accessible and practical the intervention, the more likely parents are to implement it with their children. Subsequently, the field shifted from testing for efficacy to focusing on implementation issues (Fearon & Sonuga-Barke, 2022) based on the evidence supporting parenting intervention programs. However, parenting interventions for children with disruptive behaviors can be complex with questionable cost-effectiveness, creating an accessibility issue for many families (Leijten et al., 2019). Prioritizing cost-effectiveness and intervention approaches that can be implemented successfully at scale help cut families' time, effort, and financial burden (Leijten et al., 2019).

Family-School Collaboration and Communication

Supplementing the literature on behavioral issues, an association exists between parent/family involvement and student success in school and provided the project team with a way to examine the issues at CBA with an alternative approach (Garbacz et al., 2022; Gibbs et al., 2021; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Schultz et al., 2016). Family involvement in their child's school results in positive psychological attributes, including motivation and cognition (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) and, as Neece et al. (2012) suggest, reciprocal benefits follow for parental stress. Positive outcomes affiliated with family-school collaboration also correlate with interactions characterized by trust, equality, mutual respect, and collective accountability to common goals (Avendano & Cho, 2020; Garbacz et al., 2022; Minke & Anderson, 2005, 2005; Muscott et al., 2008). Interdependence between families

and schools, in the context of mutual advocacy and participatory decision-making, represents a key precedent of collaboration (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Minke & Anderson, 2005).

Open communication between home and the school empowers families to assist in meeting students' multidimensional needs (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Minke & Anderson, 2005), and several best practices may increase collaboration between families and schools. These practices include student-centered events that promote interaction; a welcoming environment conducive to conversation; teacher education about family partnerships; and incorporating family goals in their student's educational plans (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Muscott et al., 2008; Schultz et al., 2016). Community stakeholders may also play an essential role in family-school collaboration, serving as vital outside professional organizations that support children with mental health challenges (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004).

However, multiple barriers may affect parental involvement and family-school collaboration, including individual parent and family circumstances, unique child characteristics, societal considerations, and the strength of parent-teacher relationships (Epstein, 2010). According to Hornby & Lafaele (2011) (Figure 1), life contexts, including social class, ethnicity, language barriers, and gender, play pivotal roles in how parents view their school involvement. Personal beliefs about parental involvement and perceptions of a welcoming school environment influence involvement. Other factors, such as age, academic independence, and behavior in school, can dictate the degree to which parents feel the need to be actively involved with their child and school. Similarly, societal considerations (i.e., demographics, political affiliations, and socioeconomic status) may sway parents towards or away from school involvement.

Figure 1

Barriers to Parental Involvement: An Explanatory Model (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011)

Individual Parent & Family Factors	Child Factors
• Parents' beliefs about parental involvement (PI) • Perceptions of invitations for PI • Current life contexts • Class, ethnicity, & gender	• Age • Learning difficulties and disabilities • Gifts & talents • Behavioral problems
Parent-Teacher Factors	Societal Factors
• Differing goals & agenda • Differing attitudes • Differing language used	• Historical & demographic • Political • Economic

Reciprocal communication represents the cornerstone for developing family-school collaboration (Garbacz et al., 2022; Minke & Anderson, 2005), meaning that families must feel welcomed and valued to foster partnerships within the school environment (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Hsiao et al., 2018). From the school perspective, educators play a crucial role in strengthening parent-teacher partnerships, especially in circumstances of limited collaboration. However, many teachers, lacking sufficient parental collaboration training, facing power struggles, and limited resources, do not engage parents to foster meaningful partnerships (Minke & Anderson, 2005; Muscott et al., 2008).

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Conceptual Framework

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Primary Conceptual Framework: Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Our project's primary conceptual framework, overlapping spheres of influence, focuses on three contexts, family, school, and community, that contribute to student success (or lack thereof) related to academics, social-emotional interactions, and, in turn, behavior (Epstein, 1995). Epstein's (1995) theory describes the efforts that families, schools, and communities make separately and collectively. Overlapping spheres of influence focus on students and illustrate the complex and essential supporting social interactions among families, schools, and

communities (Figure 2). The framework also asserts that collaborative and supporting

partnerships create a foundation for students' academic success and social and emotional well-

being (Epstein, 1995).

However, most importantly for this project, partnership programs positively influence

student behavior (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002, as cited in Epstein et al., 2019). According to

Sheldon and Epstein, schools which improved their partnerships with families and the

community annually, "decreased the percentages of students sent to the principal, given

detention, and given in-school suspensions. Schools with more volunteering and parenting

activities reported fewer disciplinary action" (p. 55).

Figure 2

Epstein's (2010) Overlapping Spheres of Influence
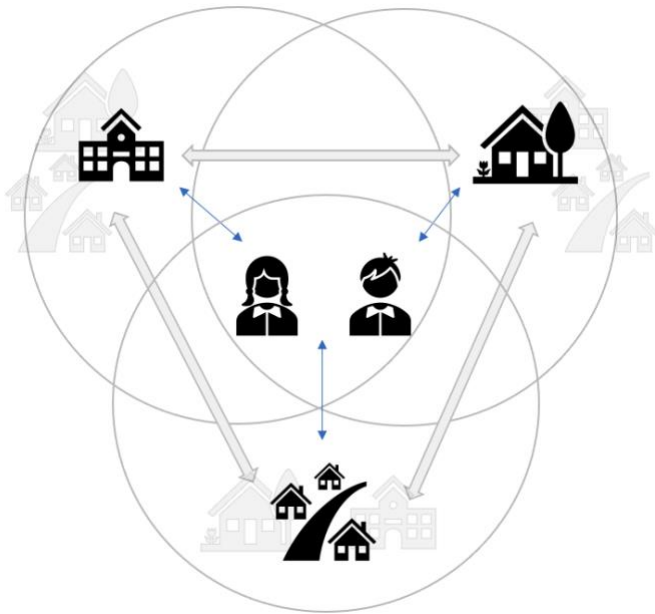
Note: The figure was created based on a narrative description of Epstein's (2010) concept of the

Overlapping Spheres of Influence. It depicts the interaction of school, family, and communities

in supporting students.

Focusing first on the intersection of families and schools, Epstein (1995) proposes the notion of family-like schools and school-like families. A family-like school accepts each child as an individual and works to make them feel included. This approach also embraces and welcomes all students' families, not just those who are easily accessible and regularly participate in school events. Similarly, Epstein (1995) asserts that in partnership with schools, families can create school-like families who embrace the importance of academics, homework, and school-related activities and recognize their child(ren) as a student.

Epstein's (1995) construct of community is of particular importance to the overlapping spheres of influence theoretical framework, explaining that communities, which include parents working in partnership with one another, can foster school-like opportunities through events and programs that celebrate students. In addition, family-like community events, settings, and services may enable families to support their children better (Epstein, 1995). These programs, focused on support for students, parents, caregivers, and others, are offered before, during, and beyond the school day (Epstein, 1995). While Epstein's (1995) concept insists on children as the main drivers of their learning, development, and success in school, the partnerships of schools, families, and communities can lay the foundation and provide motivation through engagement, guidance, and support, that results in better student behavior within and outside school (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

As Epstein (1995) explains, "When parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins its work" (p. 701). Thus, in her spheres of influence model, which we adapt to our conceptual framework for this project (Figure 3), communication leads to collaboration, eventually building a platform of mutual respect and trust. Externally, the school, home, and community triad form an external

layer of cooperative effort that influences children's learning and development. Internally, the triad's rich, complex interpersonal relationships give the model life and purpose. This institutional and social collaboration elicits an exchange of identities resulting in school-like families, family-like schools, community-created (and school-encouraged) family-like settings, and community-minded families. The relationships among the three entities, including students, enable a caring, supportive learning community for children.

However, participants must commit to working continuously to resolve conflicts, contend with setbacks, and address questions or disagreements with a spirit of respect and trust afforded through communicative and collaborative opportunities. The model operationalizes these opportunities through six types of involvement or caring: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Each area entails different partnership practices, presents unique challenges, sometimes leads to a redefinition of involvement, and potentially produces different results. However, they also allow flexibility and options for schools and families to achieve their desired common goals. According to Epstein (1995), "With frequent interactions between schools, families, and communities, more students receive common messages about the importance of school…working hard…thinking creatively…helping one another, and…staying in school" (p. 702).

Figure 3

Project Conceptual Framework (Epstein, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker et al., 2005)

Spheres of Influence: Creating a Learning Community Through Respect and Trust

School/Teacher -> Family...
Understanding family situations and context
Respect for challenges and opportunities within each family
Individual/collective skill and motivation for communication

Family -> School/Teacher...
What should I do? (Role Construct) and will my efforts be successful? (Self-efficacy)
Does the school or teacher want to collaborate? (Invitation)
What are my other priorities?

School/Teacher -> Community...
Partners with community to create learning opportunities.
Sees themselves as part of the community.
Communicates community opportunities.

Family -> Community...
Knows about community opportunities.
Able to access opportunities
Recognizes value of community participation.
Sees themselves as part of the community.

Community -> School/Teacher and Parents...
Recognizes role as community partner.
Engages with school to create learning opportunities.
Strives to make learning opportunities accessible to families.

Creating opportunities for parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community

Supporting Conceptual Frameworks

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) work on parents' motivational beliefs for involvement in decisions regarding their children's education and Walker et al.'s (2005) revision of their (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's) model supplements Epstein's (1995) spheres of influence. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler posit that parents participate in their children's education based on their role construct (what should we do?), belief in their self-efficacy for

beneficial participation (what am I capable of doing?), and an assessment of how much the school desires their involvement (am I wanted?), based on outreach they receive from the school or teacher. These factors compose their foundational decision-making criteria, eventually leading to positive student/child outcomes. Walker et al. modify Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's levels by combining role construct and self-efficacy into parents' motivational beliefs, retaining school invitations (opportunities and demands), and adding the parents' situational context (time, energy, and other competing priorities).

Thus, we combine key aspects of the three theories to create a conceptual framework for this project. The team constructed the project's methodology to explore Epstein's (1995) spheres of influence as it applied to CBA, consisting of the collaboration resulting from the interaction of schools, families, and communities, overlaid with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) parental decision-making criteria, and further modified by Walker et al. (2005). We suggest that this normative community of learning, built on respect and trust, serves as a basis for examining the CBA community's communication and collaboration practices and perceptions. We further posit that the CBA community can use this model to address student misbehavior issues with parents without alienating or isolating families or students from interventions or programs.

Study Design and Methodology

Data Collection

To answer the project questions, we designed methods that leveraged triangulation, using varied methods of data collection and analysis to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings (Patton, 1999; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). We achieved triangulation through our approach to methodology, data sources, and from the perspectives and positionality of the three members of this team (Denzin, 1970/2009, as cited in Ravitch & Carl, 2021). We employed a parallel

mixed-method approach to data collection to further strengthen our project's rigor and validity and develop a comprehensive understanding of the CBA environment (Babbie, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Our data collection sources included surveys of CBA teachers and volunteer parents, focus group interviews of teachers and parents, interviews with the school principal and the assistant principal, and artifacts collected from the school. We adapted the survey and focus group instruments from questionnaires developed by Epstein and Salinas (1993) for school and family partnerships in elementary and middle grades. We received the authors' permission to use, adapt, and modify the surveys. For the teacher survey (Appendix B), we chose questions related to the teachers' professional judgment regarding parental involvement, the strength of current school programs aimed at parental involvement, and activities that parents should conduct at home. We also selected questions about how teachers contact student families, how teachers use parents as volunteers in the school or classroom, teachers' estimate of the percentage of families that participated in school activities, and their perceptions of the support from other school officials for parental involvement. Finally, we included questions about teaching practices and basic demographic questions about the teachers and their students. To develop broader choice options in two questions (teachers' judgment of parental involvement and activities teachers thought parents should conduct at home), we modified the responses from a four-point to a five-point Likert Scale, adding a Neither Agree nor Disagree choice. We also regrouped the percentage categories in the questions about how teachers contact parents and teachers' estimates of parental involvement in certain activities to make the question less burdensome for respondents and easier for them to estimate a response.

For the parent survey (Appendix C), we chose questions that asked parents' current feelings about the school, how they parents were involved in their oldest child's education at home and school, how the school contacted them in a variety of circumstances, community information they would like to know, several questions related to their child's progress in the current academic year, and nine questions about the parents' child and home. We expanded the response scale from a four-point to a five-point Likert Scale and re-worded the responses for easier reference in a digital format for the questions about parents' feelings about the school, family involvement at school and home, and how the school contacted families at home. For questions about the child and home, we added one question asking about the grade level of the parent's child, re-worded some response choices to reflect an academic profile of schoolwork assessment, and added a response option for assessing their child's perception of the school, all to provide more specific focus on the project questions.

We developed an interview protocol for the CBA principal and assistant principal and a focus group protocol for teachers and parents from Epstein and Salinas (1993) and Lasater (2016). We received the authors' permission to use, adapt and translate their work for our project. Rather than using or modifying specific questions from either source, we adopted the intent of Epstein and Salinas' (1993) survey questions and several examples from Lasater (2016) to develop open-ended questions aligned with our project questions about communication and collaboration at CBA. Our data collection plan articulates the alignment between project questions, data sources, and collection methods (Appendix A).

Surveys

We used surveys to establish a baseline of teacher and parent perceptions of the school's communication and collaboration practices. We concluded that an electronic survey offered the

most cost-effective means of data collection for a population that we could not access or observe directly (Babbie, 2015). We developed our surveys through the Vanderbilt University – Peabody College Qualtrics account as a single source platform that enabled design, distribution, collection, analysis, and reporting capability. Respondents accessed the surveys through hyperlinks embedded in email announcements from the CBA principal, optimized for access on mobile phone devices. To ensure confidentiality, the survey did not collect internet protocol addresses or other personally identifiable information.

The survey for CBA teachers consisted of 15 separate closed-ended questions (Appendix B). Questions 1, 5, and 6 used a matrix format (across 17, 12, and 14 sub-questions, respectively) to gauge teacher respondents' professional judgment of parental involvement at CBA. We developed a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree) for questions 1 and 6 and a four-point Likert scale for question 5. We designed the remaining questions in either a matrix format (with fewer examples) or a multiple-choice format. We conducted the survey on March 3, 2023, during a presentation by the project team at CBA and recorded 25 responses that day and over the next several days.

The survey for CBA parents consisted of 13 closed-ended questions (Appendix C). Questions 1, 2, and 3 used a matrix format across 17, 16, and 15 sub-questions, respectively. We asked parents to express their feelings about CBA, how they may have interacted with the school, and their experiences with CBA's efforts to communicate with them about their child's educational progress. Each question offered a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree) to respond. We provided the remaining questions in a smaller matrix format and, in one case, a multiple-answer design. Respondents could choose to take the survey in either English or Spanish. The CBA

principal announced the survey via an email containing a hyperlink to the survey site during the week of March 12, 2023. After collecting only six responses, we discovered that the survey received limited distribution to the CBA Home-School Association (HSA), comprising less than 15 families. The principal re-launched the survey to the entire CBA community, this time with an incentive to participate in a raffle for a $100 Amazon gift card. By April 25, 2023, we recorded 23 parent responses. After re-calculating our potential population, we discovered that the 234 CBA students came from only 126 families, narrowing our sample size goal to 23 (18.25%).

Focus Groups and Interviews

We conducted focus group sessions with teachers and parents to further mine our respondents' perceptions systematically in a face-to-face setting (Babbie, 2015). Krueger (1988, as cited in Babbie, 2015) also suggests that focus groups offer an opportunity to obtain real-life data in a social environment, flexibility, high face validity, quick results, and low cost. We adapted focus group protocols (Appendices D and E) from Epstein and Salinas's (1993) questionnaires for elementary and middle grades. We approached the focus group sessions as formal open-ended semi-structured interviews with prompts available to the interviewer for follow-ups (Bhattacharya, 2017). A preamble statement introduced the interviewer, announced the focus group's intent, and assured respondents of the confidential nature of the process. The interviewer highlighted the option to pass on any question or opt out of the interview at any point. A post amble statement allowed respondents to expand or amend previous comments and offer unsolicited observations. Interviews were recorded and transcribed through Otter.ai and posted in Delve for qualitative analysis by each team member.

We conducted the teacher focus groups at CBA on March 3, 2023 (Appendix D). We organized teachers into three focus groups separated by grade levels: kindergarten through 2nd grade, 3rd grade through 5th grade, and 6th grade through 8th grade. Grouping similar grades enabled more immediate familiarity among interviewees and a commonality of experience that encouraged intergroup support and responsiveness. Each team member led a focus group (Roberson, K-2; Gray, 3-5; Gentry, 6-8). We issued each respondent a release statement. Focus groups lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and included 5-8 staff per group and one researcher facilitating.

We scheduled our first parent focus group for Wednesday, April 19 (Appendix E) to take place via Zoom. Because only one parent participated, this session became a single interview using the same protocol. We asked the participant for help encouraging other parents to speak with us, and through her efforts, we scheduled a second focus group opportunity for Monday, April 24 via Zoom. Four more parents participated in the discussion that evening, providing additional rich qualitative material for analysis. The original interviewee also assisted us with broadening our pool of survey participants and provided additional document artifacts in the form of a school newsletter that she publishes for CBA families.

We also interviewed the CBA principal and assistant principal on March 3 at CBA (Appendix F). We adapted the interview protocol developed by Lasater (2016) (with her permission) using a similar formal open-ended semi-structured format with prompts available to the interviewer for follow-up questions (Bhattacharya, 2017). Questions were a mix of specific grand tour, mini tour, and descriptive formats (Bhattacharya, 2017). We used the same protocol for both interviews and similar preamble and post amble statements. We recorded and

transcribed the interviews through Otter.ai and posted the transcripts in Delve for qualitative

analysis by each team member.

Documents

Finally, to substantiate communication practices and understand the underlying

behavioral concerns that might prompt direct communication (and, ideally, collaboration) with

families, we asked the CBA leadership for several naturally occurring or archival documents

(Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Examples include official documents such as redacted or generalized

behavioral and disciplinary records and student and teacher handbooks (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007,

as cited in Ravitch & Carl, 2021). We also requested documents related to periodic school

communications, such as volunteer or community engagement opportunities or other regular or

non-regular school events and school process communications (i.e., registration, parent-teacher

conference schedules, and new family orientation guides). Finally, we requested personal

documents that reflected direct communication between a teacher or administrator and a family,

redacted to protect student and family anonymity (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, as cited in Ravitch &

Carl, 2021). Initially, we sought and received demographic information about students and staff

before deciding that such data did not align with our research questions. An analysis table

developed by the team served to catalog collected data. (Appendix G).

Participants and Sampling

All CBA staff present on March 3, 2023, took the online teacher survey and participated

in the staff focus groups during an afternoon session coordinated by the CBA principal,

representing total population sampling, a form of non-probability purposive sampling (Total

Population Sampling, n.d.). Staff representation comprised nine grade K - 2 teachers, five grade

3 - 5 teachers, six grade 6 - 8 teachers, and three administrators. We provided lunch for the staff

and presented a brief overview of the project's purpose, intent, and timeline, followed by the

staff taking the survey on their laptop computers or smartphones. Allowing one hour for the

survey, each team member individually conducted a focus group session by grade level (K - 2, 3

- 5, and 6 - 8), abiding by the general structure of the protocol. The principal and assistant

principal were also interviewed individually that day.

Of the total population of CBA families (126), 25 responded to the parent survey,

representing a 19.84% response rate. As previously described, the survey went through two

launch iterations, initially to the CBA HSA and then to the broader CBA family community.

During the parent interview and focus group sessions, we encouraged the participants to

communicate the survey's availability through their personal or unofficial networks, which may

have generated several additional responses. Subsequently, we describe the sampling strategy as

non-probability snowball sampling (Babbie, 2015) based on the announcements made by the

principal and the likely encouragement it received from the interview and focus group subjects.

The identity of all survey respondents and interview and focus group participants have

been kept confidential.

**Figure 4**

Data Collection Timeline
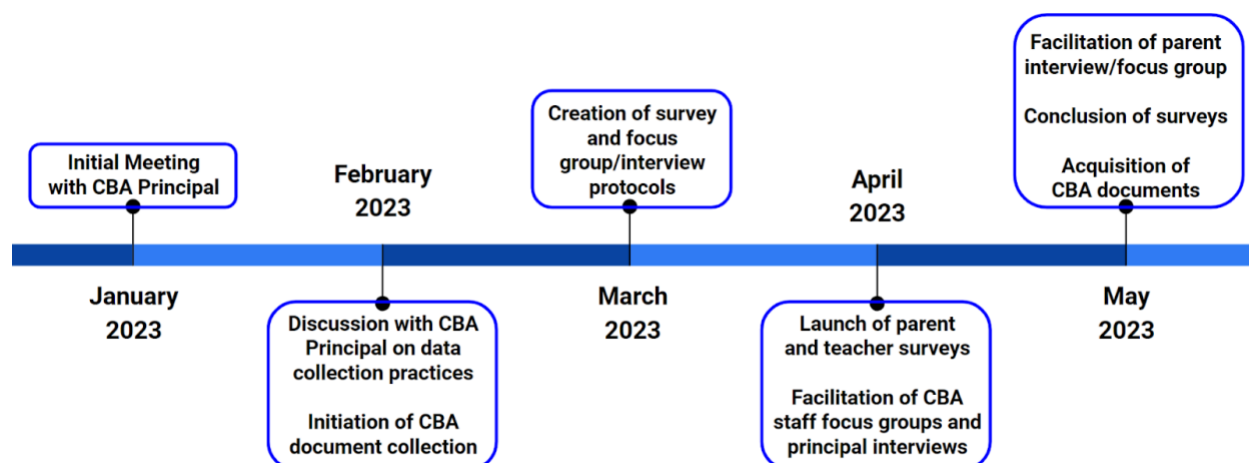
Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

We analyzed survey data using descriptive and summary statistics from the Qualtrics website and exported the data set to Excel. Descriptive statistics provide summaries of the basic features of survey responses through frequency distributions, while summary statistics (mean, mode, median, range, and standard deviation) offer insight into the distribution of survey responses (Sue & Ritter, 2015). We weighted survey questions during the design phase to determine summary statistics for attitudinal responses (i.e., a Likert scale), weighing agreement higher and disagreement lower along a five-point ordinal scale. In other words, we assigned numbers to our ordinal scale responses to be able to treat them as interval data. Norman (2010, as cited in Sullivan & Artino, 2013) contends that parametric tests are appropriate and valuable even when normal data distribution may be suspect.

Drawing from six weighted matrix-type questions, three each from the parent and teacher surveys, we assessed parent responses to questions regarding their feelings about CBA, the ways they were involved with their children at home and school, and how CBA contacted them, believing these results were most closely associated with our project questions of communication and collaboration. The results from each survey were downloaded to Excel for summary statistical analysis (minimum and maximum weighted responses, the mean per question, average mean per the matrix series of questions, standard deviation of responses, the average standard deviation per the matrix series of questions, variance, and the count of respondents per question). The average standard deviation was determined by taking the square root of the sums of the squared standard deviation per question divided by the total number of questions. The non-probability snowball sampling method raised concerns that the survey reflected a representative

sample of the entire CBA parent population and must be considered a limitation of its reliability. The survey's low response rate (19.84%) further limited reliability.

Parents' Feelings about CBA. For this series of responses, we interpreted the average mean (3.69) and average standard deviation (1.05) to indicate some agreement that parents feel positive about CBA (Figure 5). Parents expressed strong positive opinions that teachers care about their children, that they (the parents) feel welcome at the school, that their children talk about the school at home, and that they feel good about CBA. Parents also agreed that the school aligned with their goals for their children. This question (posed negatively) scored the most disagreement from respondents. Parents expressed some ambivalence on the question of sufficient homework (11 parents responded that they neither agreed nor disagreed with whether more was required), whether they needed more ideas from teachers to help their children at home (10 expressed neither agreement nor disagreement), and their perceptions about whether other parents they know help at school.

Figure 5

Parents' Feelings About CBA
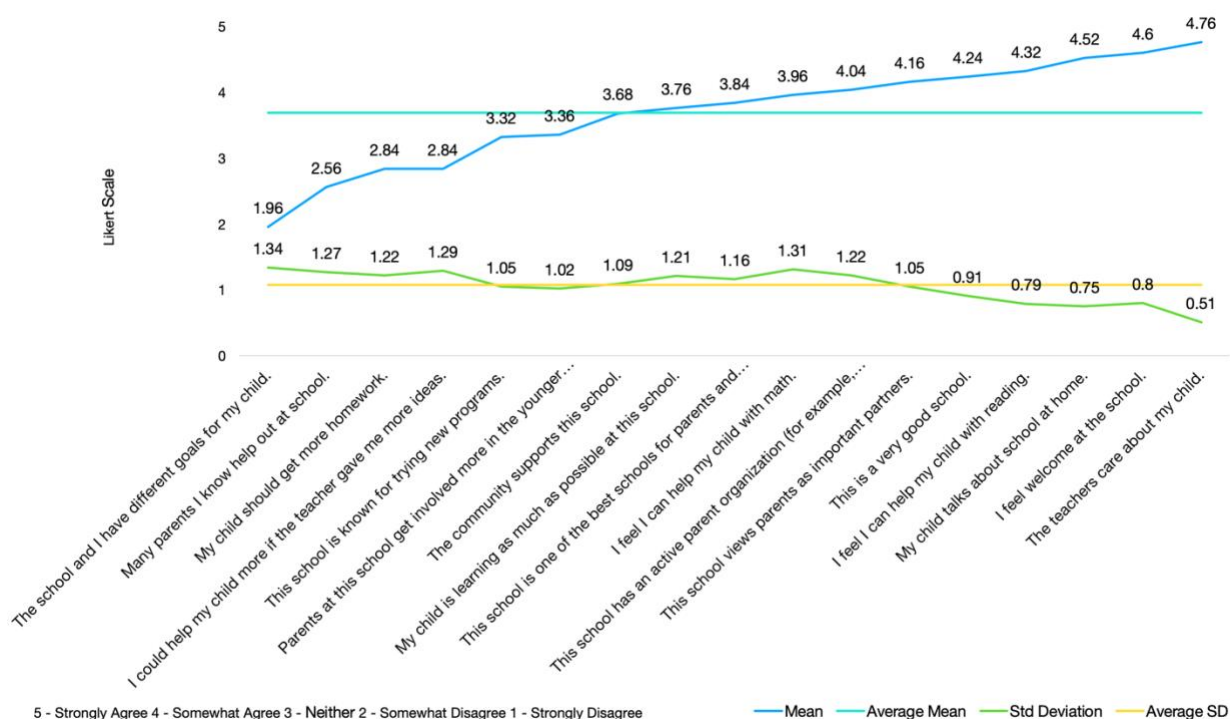
Parental Involvement at Home and School. The high average mean score (4.32) and average standard deviation (1.02) of this question series suggests strong agreement with parental involvement with some variation in the response range among certain questions (Figure 6). Parents expressed their involvement through discussions with their children about school and its importance, checking, even helping with homework, and attending special school events. Parents expressed less consistency regarding their interactions with the school, notably visiting the classroom, attending PTA or PTO meetings, and volunteering in the classroom. Despite showing slightly higher variances in responses, parents also indicated that they communicated with teachers either at school or through other means (voice, text, or email).
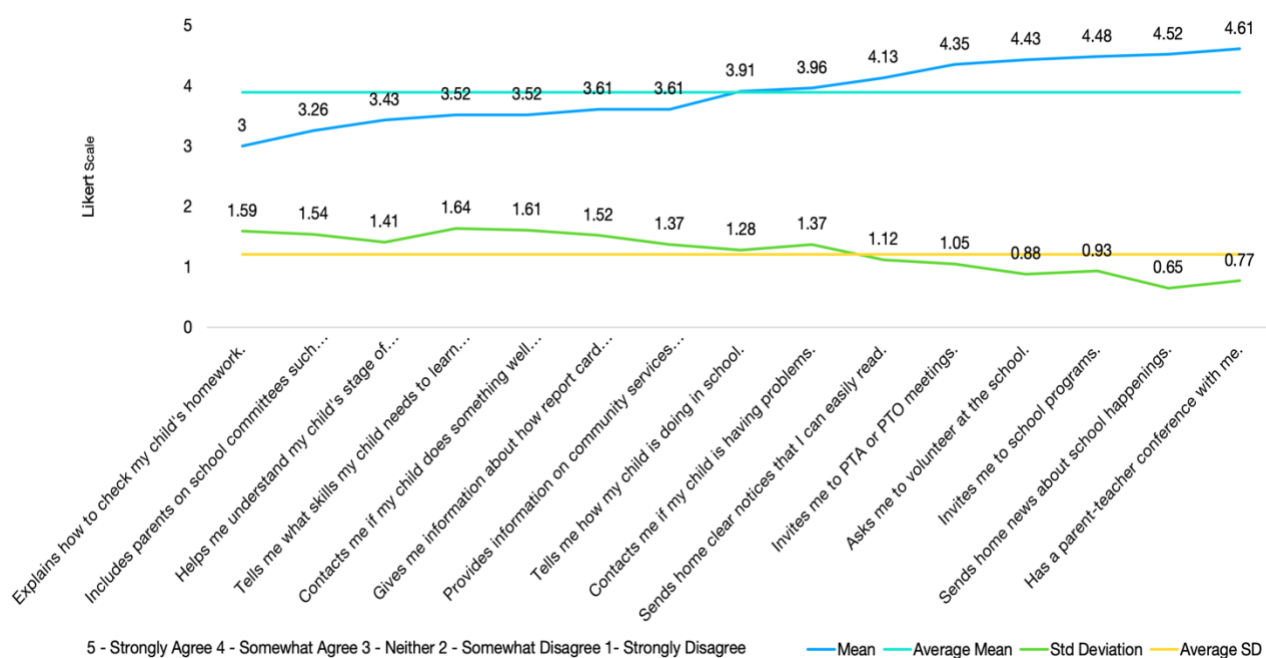
Figure 6

Parental Involvement at School and Home
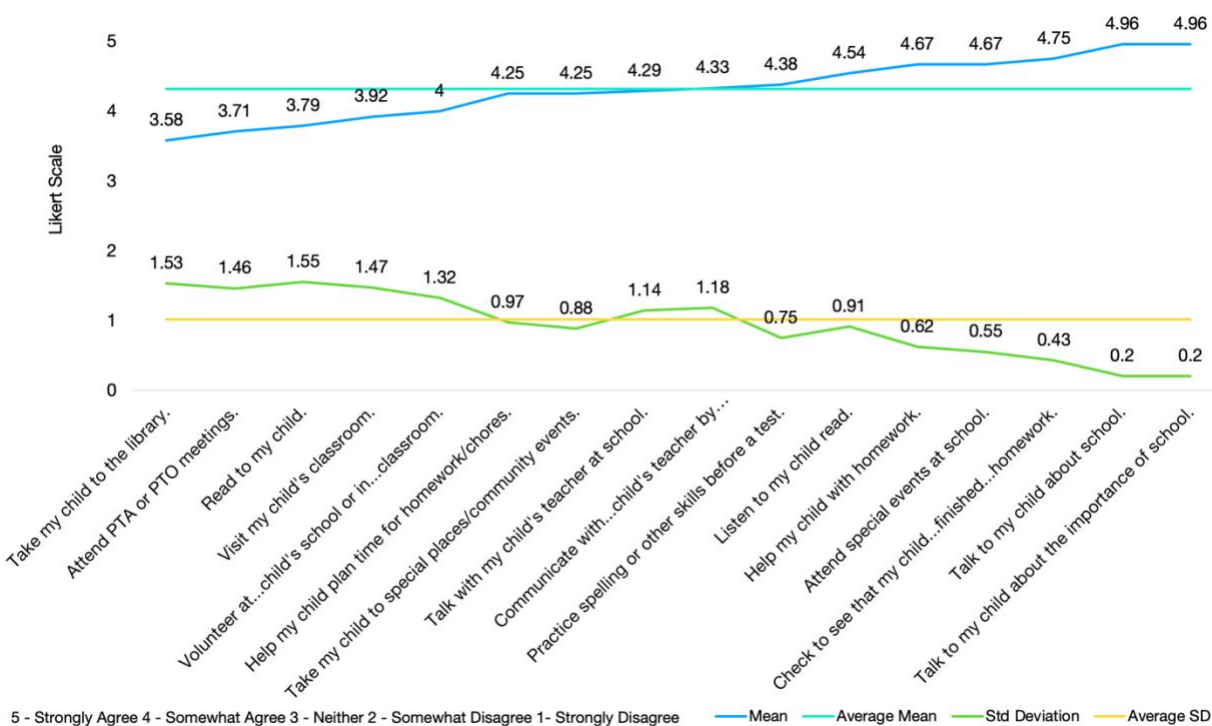
School Contact with Families. In this series of questions, the average mean (3.89) and standard deviation (1.21) of parental responses indicate varied opinions about how CBA contacts families (Figure 7). Parents strongly agreed with the school's outreach through parent-teacher conferences, news about school happenings, invitations to school programs, and asking to volunteer at CBA. Parents expressed less agreement that the school helps them learn how to check homework and understand their children's development stages. There were further indications of ambivalence about whether the school identified the skills children needed to learn each year and helped parents understand the report card grading system. The variation of responses about whether the school contacts parents about their child's positive achievements or informs parents about how their children are doing in school (generally) raised interest concerning the school's communication practices. The entire series of responses may indicate

that the school performs better with generalized communication or outreach but could improve

parental engagement at a more detailed (or practical) level.

Figure 7

*Examples of CBA Staff Communicating with Families*

Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Involvement. Teachers' high response average

mean (4.07) and low average standard deviation (.78) indicate consistent agreement regarding

their perceptions of parental involvement (Figure 8). Teachers expressed strong agreement with

conceptual examples of parental involvement. However, their responses regarding parental

involvement in practice at CBA indicated less agreement, on average, while retaining a

consistency (or clustering) of responses around the mean. Teachers showed strong consensus that

the CBA community values education for its students, acknowledged the necessity of parental

involvement for student success, and agreed with the perspective that parents are partners in the

education process with unique strengths to improve student success, even supporting parents'

ability to improve teacher effectiveness. However, teachers also expressed uncertainty about

parents' desire to participate in the school or that parents are skilled in helping with their children's homework. Additionally, respondents indicated less agreement concerning the positivity of the school climate and the school's reputation for innovation.

Figure 8

Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Involvement
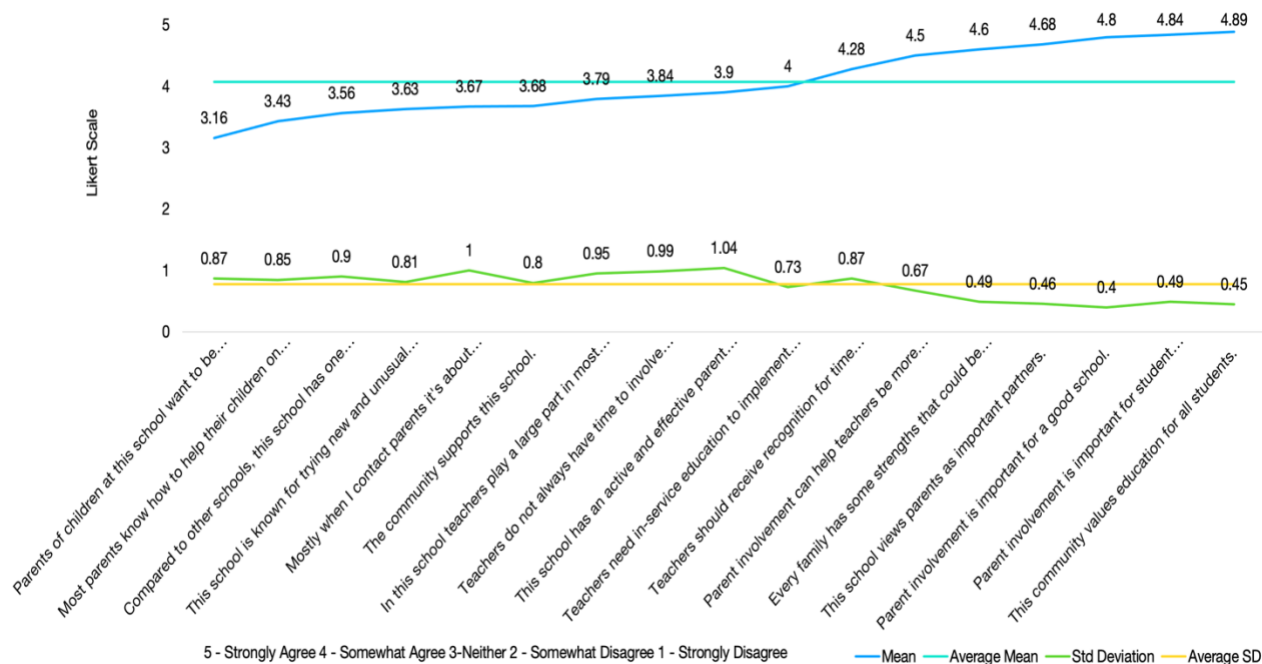
Teacher Thoughts on How to Involve Families. This question series measured responses on a weighted 4-point Likert Scale of (high to low) Strong Program, Needs to be Initiated, Needs Improvement, and Is Not or Should Not be Initiated. The average mean (3.01) and low average standard deviation (0.54) indicates a perception from teachers that school programs that involve parents could be or should be improved (Figure 9). The frequency distribution of responses supports this interpretation (97 responses for Needs Improvement contrasted with 83 responses for a Strong Program and 67 for Needs to be Initiated). Teachers felt that the school's most robust communication programs are report cards, clear, practical school communications, and parent-teacher conferences. Teachers expressed that workshops

should be initiated to help parents build home learning environments, develop parenting skills, and improve awareness of child development stages. They also indicated a strong opinion regarding parent classroom volunteers, evenly split between those who believe in the need for such a program and those who don't (with several more believing improvement is needed), contrasted with a perception that a non-classroom volunteer program needs improvement.

Figure 9

Teacher Thoughts on How to Involve Families
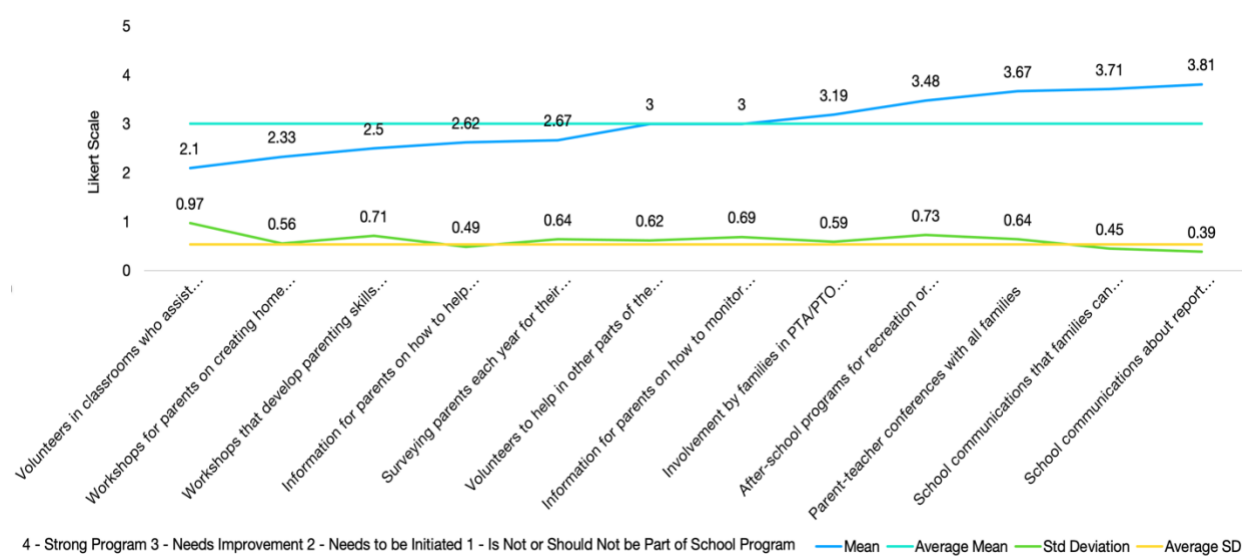
Teacher Perceptions of At-Home Activities. Teachers expressed strong advocacy for various ways parents can prepare their children for school, reflected by the high average mean (4.69) and low standard deviation (0.52) of this series of questions (Figure 10). Even the lower average mean scores represent consistent agreement for parents' active engagement with their children to support the school and schoolwork. Earning the highest means of teacher support included talking to children about the importance of school and their schoolwork, sending them to school ready to learn, teaching them to behave, and checking homework daily. Interestingly, even with an average mean of 4.19 and a standard deviation of 0.91, teachers ranked parents serving as school or classroom volunteers lowest among the 14 options in this question series.

Figure 10

Teacher Perceptions of At-Home Activities
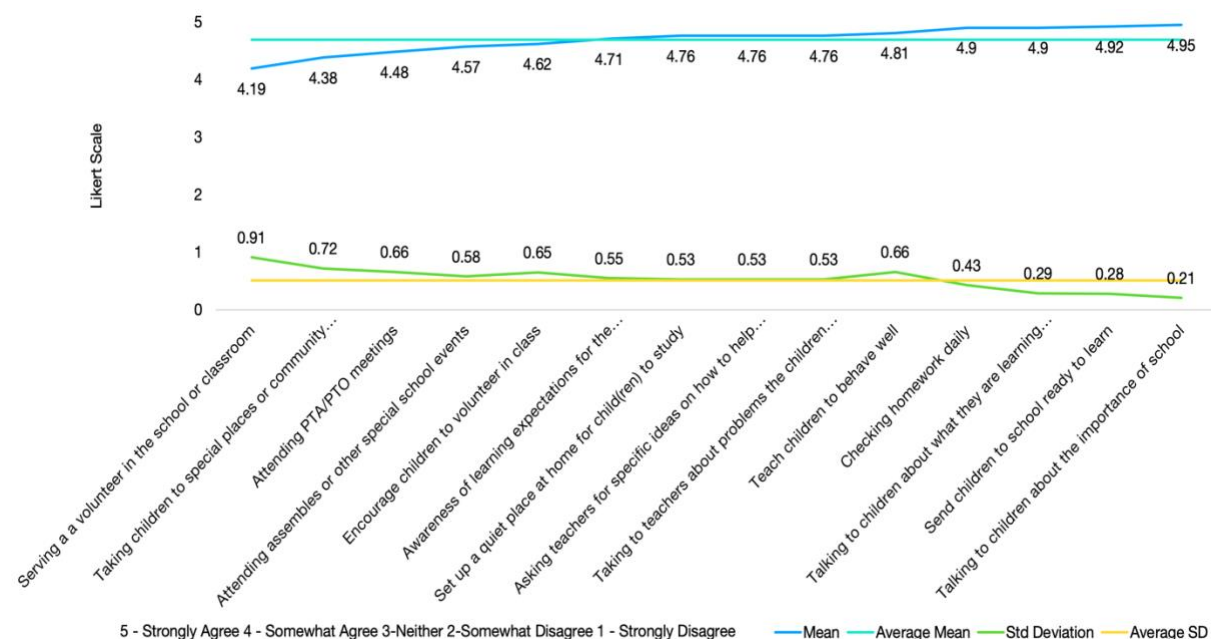
Qualitative Analysis

We analyzed focus group and interview transcripts inductively and deductively, understanding data analysis to be iterative and recursive (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Using our conceptual framework, we developed a codebook in Delve to initiate our qualitative analysis of teacher, administrator, and parent comments deductively. As team members progressed through the transcripts, we identified new codes that confirmed the conceptual framework or pointed to other considerations applicable to our project, employing an inductive approach (Table 1). We examined four focus group transcripts (three from CBA staff, one from CBA parents) and three interview transcripts. We uploaded three copies of each to Delve, one for each team member to code. From the codes, we developed themes and patterns from respondents' comments to interpret their feedback. We employed a thematic analysis to answer our research questions as

our approach became more focused and concentrated (Willig, 2014, as cited in Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Using Delve, the project team coded 971 snippets from three interviews and four focus group transcripts using deductive codes developed from project questions and inductive codes created as the transcripts were analyzed (see Table 1). For comparative analysis and interrater reliability, codes were broken down by transcript and examined for the common coding among team members (Appendix H). The highest three codes per transcript were highlighted. A further highlight (i.e., **C-19)** indicates when one or two raters accounted for more than half of a code's identification. We assessed a sufficient degree of coding commonality to assure interrater reliability and identified themes and patterns from the interviews and focus groups. Themes, patterns, and supporting quotations were then developed in a common table for all team members' input (Appendix I).

Table 1

Qualitative Analysis Codes

Deductive Codes	Collaboration	• Beyond School • Community-school • Family-community • Partnership • School-family • Engagement • Teacher-school engagement • Family engagement • Community engagement
	Communication	• Means • Lessons/Learning • Strategy • School/family • Family-community • Community-school • Communication effectiveness
	Student Behavioral Concerns	• Conflict/disagreement • Escalation • Partnering • Responsibility • Consequences • Trends • Intervention
Inductive Codes	Supporting Students	• Support from home • Influence • Emotional support • Developmental needs • Educational needs • Special education • Behavioral needs
	Supporting Schools/Teachers	• Expectations • Additional resources • Trust & Respect
	Supporting Parents	• Parental workshops

CBA Principal Interview. The CBA principal expressed her goal to establish and grow CBA students into responsible citizens. She voiced the need for close communication and collaboration (partnership) with parents to address concerns of student misbehavior early and proactively. The principal noted that the frequency and variance of student misbehavior increased during her three-year tenure at the school. She acknowledged the school's requirement to develop consistent protocols regarding school disciplinary procedures and parental

engagement. However, she remained aware of the sensitive nature of student misbehavior and the potential for alienating parents by attempting to address it. She understands the school's limited influence on student behavior compared to the influence families exert at home but believes that sponsoring parental workshops that openly engage parents about student behavioral development might offer an opportunity for parental engagement. She summed up her experience at CBA and the issue of addressing behavioral misconduct by saying,

> I've learned a lot in three years [as] the principal of this school [about] when I should be the one to communicate and when I should rely on the teacher…to communicate; when I need to make an impact [on an issue] brought to my level. And when I should not be the one to be the communicator because it makes parents very paranoid and freaked out…The minute you hear from the principal… the hairs on their necks tick up, and they're very defensive. So, I think that I need to create a better protocol of what comes from teachers and what comes from me.

CBA Assistant Principal Interview. The assistant principal expressed concern about how children cope with life, in and out of school, and how difficult it is for her or the staff to help them directly or through their parents. She believes Covid isolated children from the critical social interaction they need to develop a healthy life perspective. Still, she admitted seeing a marked difference in students' mental health status before the pandemic. Regardless, she believes the school cares for the children and promptly addresses misbehavior, including with parents. However, the assistant principal is aware that changes have occurred at CBA and that the issues they face are not the issues of times past, evidenced by her concise yet incisive statement, "Times have changed. Children have changed. Expectations have changed."

Grades K - 2 Teaching Staff Focus Group. The CBA K-2 teachers expressed frustration with parents, relating their experiences with parental indifference, disbelief, a lack of parenting skills, and a reluctance to accept them (the teachers) as education professionals. They also felt that parents sometimes failed to act in their children's long-term well-being. However, during this discussion, the teachers presented alternating views that they did not want parental involvement in the classroom yet lamented the lack of school-home connection demonstrated by most parents (according to the teachers). When addressing concerns about student misbehavior, the teachers reach out primarily through email or face-to-face discussion at pick-up time. If problems persist, they escalate the situation to the principal, whom they acknowledge as supportive of parental outreach efforts and involved in the children's school life. As described by one of the teachers,

> ...I tell the parents in our back-to-school night [it's] like, we're a team. And if one of us does not do our part, it's not going to work. So that means the student, the parent, and the teacher all have to do [their] part. And a lot of times the one part that's missing is the parent.

And from another teacher, frustration was evident,

> ...our parents don't really respect…us as teachers, right? They don't respect the years of experience or education and the knowledge that we have…we're not trying to…criticize the parent if there's a problem with their child…it[s] just…there's something not right here. Let's fix it. Let's see what we can do to help your child…

Grades 3 - 5 Teaching Staff Focus Group. Teachers supported communication and collaboration with parents and their children with behavioral needs. However, teachers discussed contending with parents who refuse to believe or acknowledge accounts of their children's

misbehavior, and consequently, teachers address the issue on their own. Moreover, they stated that teachers and principals are extremely busy and that while the school's leadership supports teachers, it might be helpful to bring in a guidance counselor or a third party to address behavioral or disciplinary matters. Ideally, teachers suggested that a true home-school partnership would help manage classroom behavior issues.

One teacher expressed her current mindset,

> ...I'm going to be honest. When you [mention] [a problem] to a parent, like this happened today and I'm not really happy, and this was the behavior, and they say, well, boys [are] boys. The second time that happens, and then I'm done. So, then I stop, and if I'm honest, I don't actually ever include them again. I just handle it on my own…

Another described her thinking by saying,

> You want to say to the parent I get nothing from making up stories about your child. So, if I'm telling you this is happening, it's because I'm watching it with my own eyes. I could look the other way and just let it escalate. And then later, you're asking why didn't I tell you this. Ultimately, this is why I didn't tell you because when I do say something to you, either you think I'm lying or, you know, and I mean, I'm good for saying I get nothing out of lying about your child.

And finally, this statement from a teacher, "I don't tell the parents because there's nothing that comes back. You know, they just kind of laugh it off."

Grades 6 - 8 Teaching Staff Focus Group. The grades 6-8 staff recognized the need for improved communication and collaboration with parents. However, rather than expressing a shared role in developing a partnership with families, they focused on parents and their perceived lack of engagement when teachers contacted them (by email). The primary (only) constructive

suggestion for improvement focused on parental workshops, expressed similarly by the CBA principal. In neither case did the respondents offer how they would encourage participation in said workshops, giving the interviewer the impression that the idea lacked full development. The teachers did relate some positive student turnarounds but did not elaborate on how the process developed or any partnerships between staff and families. One teacher expressed empathy for working families and their time constraints. Initially, the group appeared guarded but became more expressive as the interview progressed, despite an apparent lack of self-reflection in addressing parental engagement.

Parent Interview. The parent interviewee clearly explained her perceptions regarding the issues she has experienced communicating and collaborating with the school. She characterized communication from the school as inconsistent, sporadic, and vague. She expressed frustration that the school needs to follow through on initial contacts and seems to lose track of the problem and its resolution. She created an unofficial communication forum on Facebook and through a parents' newsletter as a consistent, comprehensive source of information. Though not stated, it seems evident that she also maintains a healthy exchange with other parents by phone or text. She conceded the difficulty of encouraging parents to volunteer for school events. However, she believes the school could improve communication with families by inviting them to participate in regular outcome-based in-person meetings rather than through Zoom.

> The parent's statement about follow-through exemplifies her experience. For example, Hey, we're excited about this, or we've identified this, or we need to do something about this. And it's like, this is what we're gonna do.' And then there's no follow-through [for]

maybe two weeks…and then nothing; it falls away. You know, it's less of a priority, and it gets pushed aside.

And regarding her communication forums for families,

One of the things that I did because I saw that there was a gap was put together a Facebook page for parents…as a space for all of the [CBA] parents to come and look for information… And then…this year, I created a parent newsletter that goes out every week…it goes out at the same time on the same day every week. And it has everything that's going on in the school that week, with links to the school website, the Facebook page, and the hot lunch vendor. So, I'm trying to help bridge the gap between parents in the school because [the] information was getting lost, or it wasn't getting communicated.

Parent Focus Group. This group of CBA parents strongly desired improved communication between the school and families. While one parent described current communication practices as a "stumbling block" to parent engagement, there was consensus that once communication became established, parents and teachers could, generally, work through the student issue. However, parents repeatedly discussed areas for improvement, including communication timeliness, the responsibility to initiate outreach, consistency in messaging, and follow-up discussions that result in problem resolution. Some parents thought that the school failed to grasp an opportunity to learn from past communication mistakes. Interviewees also expressed concern that miscommunication or ineffective communication could affect student well-being and parental partnership. Some parents commented further that communication inefficacy eroded the sense of community between the school and families. Parents suggested that a designated person might assume responsibility for public school communications and that

developing a consistent protocol for addressing concerns requiring parental engagement seemed

necessary.

The continuum of perspectives included positive statements, such as,

We've had conversations, everyone jumped in, they've been supportive…there was real

support there when [it was] needed...So it's really just that first step of identifying an

opportunity versus an issue. That, for me, is always a stumbling block. But once we have

that conversation and we come up with a plan, it's actually been good. I feel like I get this

support.

Then, a more tepid statement from another parent, "...it's gotten better for me on an individual

basis. It wasn't always as prompt or as quickly as I'd like to receive the communication, but it has

improved- on a general level, there could be some improvement." Followed by a more explicit

plea for improvement,

I wish there [were] a way for them to maybe adjust how they do certain things so that

parents can always feel their needs are met…there are times when I'm like, well, should I

even bother if I'm reaching out to someone and I'm not really getting anything back? No

feedback. You know what I mean? Or no collaboration across the board. At times I feel

like my [child] does not want to go to school because the principal doesn't listen, or this

doesn't happen, or the teachers aren't listening, and I understand that concern.

Document Analysis

The final piece of our methodological triangulation focused on analyzing collected CBA

artifacts, particularly appropriate for qualitative projects. As Merriam (1998, as cited in Bowen,

2009) states, "Documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop

understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (p.29). We examined

CBA documents to develop contextual understanding, gain insight that complements our survey and qualitative data, identify changes or developments in communication and collaboration practices, and verify or corroborate our findings from other sources (Bowen, 2009). We further leveraged Bowen's recommendation to use content and thematic analysis to identify relevant text passages, themes, and patterns applicable to our research questions. We used codes developed in our study of the interview and focus group transcripts, evaluating our material "in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding is developed" (Bowen, 2009, p. 34).

CBA Communication. There were multiple documents originating from the principal that contained important information related to CBA, including the calendar, new student registration, Summer Academy, Back to School night, and a weekly newsletter. Many artifacts centered around the school's philosophy, including academic excellence, Catholic values, and encouraging a strong home and school relationship. Interestingly, the principal shared her newsletter, *Knightly News,* while one of the parents shared her own newsletter, *Ambassador News*. Both newsletters are sent out weekly to inform parents of school community events. The Back-to-School night agenda addressed communication and student-parent responsibilities and introduced teachers and the home school association (HSA) members to the audience.

CBA Handbooks. The only handbook provided by the school was the *Parent-Guardian Handbook* (2021-2022). It highlights CBA's core mission, "dedicated to academic excellence and the development of Christ-centered values and principles" (CBA, 2021, p. 8) and discusses communication between home and school, volunteer opportunities, the function of the HSA, and the school discipline policy. The home-school communication section is very brief, highlighting how to set up appointments with school personnel and the mode of weekly communication. The section on HSA does not define the roles or structure, but states the reasoning behind its

existence, including "to function as a means of communication to promote spiritual, academic and social well-being of our school community" (CBA, 2021, p. 15). The discipline policy states that discipline remains at the principal's discretion, with no specific consequences outlined except for bullying and the use, possession, and distribution of controlled, dangerous substances. CBA teachers must sign a code of conduct related to immoral behavior and abuse of minors from the archdiocese. This is a generic document used for all Church personnel, including priests, seminarians, paid personnel, and volunteers, and highlights "Church personnel shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the discipline, norms, and teachings of the Catholic Church" (CBA, 2021, p.6). CBA students must sign a *Good Citizen Contract* (grades K-2 and 3-8), which addresses behavior, respect, and responsibility with the consequence of afterschool detention related to several infractions. The contract specifically speaks to respect for teachers, peers, classroom rules, and others' space. Each student agrees to "take responsibility for my actions and accept consequences when necessary" (p.1) and "to do my best to follow these rules everyday" (p.1). No specific CBA handbooks exist for teachers or students.

Behavioral Intervention. The CBA principal provided an email sent to the vice principal on April 11, 2023, discussing issues with intervention by teachers ("They are too lax and need specific guidelines to present to parents on day one next year and hold teachers accountable") and spelled out guidelines for consequences related to specific infractions, highlighting the need for a school discipline policy. The principal asked the staff to copy herself and the vice principal on all parent emails related to behavioral issues moving forward. The principal also shared concerns from a new student group (Principal Council) created in 2023 with students from grades 5-8 to address issues with teachers. Primary concerns included inconsistency on multiple levels and favoritism. Lastly, the principal shared two disciplinary emails to parents regarding

students suspended due to behavioral issues. She stated in one letter, "This is a severe violation of our expectations for student conduct per our school handbook" (Principal, personal communication, April 11, 2023). Although requested, no school handbook beyond the Parent-Guardian Handbook was available.

Project Findings

The project findings relate specifically to the project questions. The first three findings refer to the question, how do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs? The last three findings relate to the question, how do CBA and its families perceive the current state of school-home-community collaboration and communication?

Finding #1

CBA's communication practices lack clarity, consistency, and follow-through, resulting in parental frustration or reliance on informal channels (see Figure 11 for how CBA teachers contact parents). Parents appear concerned that CBA's communication practices fail to serve their needs. The project team coded 156 snippets related to communications effectiveness, representing the second-most referenced code from the entire array of interview and focus group transcripts. It was also among the most cited codes from the parent interview and focus group. Conversely, coding for collaboration effectiveness came up frequently in two of the three CBA staff focus groups, as did family engagement in a third staff focus group, often negatively.

For collaboration to occur, communication helps to establish relationships (and vice-versa, relationships encourage communication) through which schools and families build trust and exchange information, perspectives, ideas, and plans (Johnson et al., 2004). Ideally,

successive positive experiences of basic communication and collaboration would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of school-family dialogue and, we suggest, serve as a basis to address the more sensitive topic of student misbehavior as it occurs. However, we posit that if parents complain about the quality and timeliness of CBA communication practices and the staff laments the difficulty of engaging parents, a rupture has occurred that hinders collaboration.

Moreover, the survey responses related to parents' perceptions regarding the school contacting families indicated more favorable impressions of traditional forms of communication (i.e., parent-teacher conferences) and more varied opinions about the school's practices regarding communicating about student performance. Creating several informal communication channels (a Facebook page and a newsletter) that duplicate the school's current practices further indicates parental dissatisfaction with current CBA practices. Not surprisingly, our qualitative analysis resulted in only 27 snippets out of 971 (2.78%) related to trust and respect.

Parents' self-initiated outreach to discuss concerns about their children met with some success, providing hope that collaboration can still work effectively. However, such cases should be the norm, not the exception. Teachers' angst that parents are not listening to them should further indicate that a new communication methodology might yield better results.

Figure 11

How CBA Teachers Contact Families
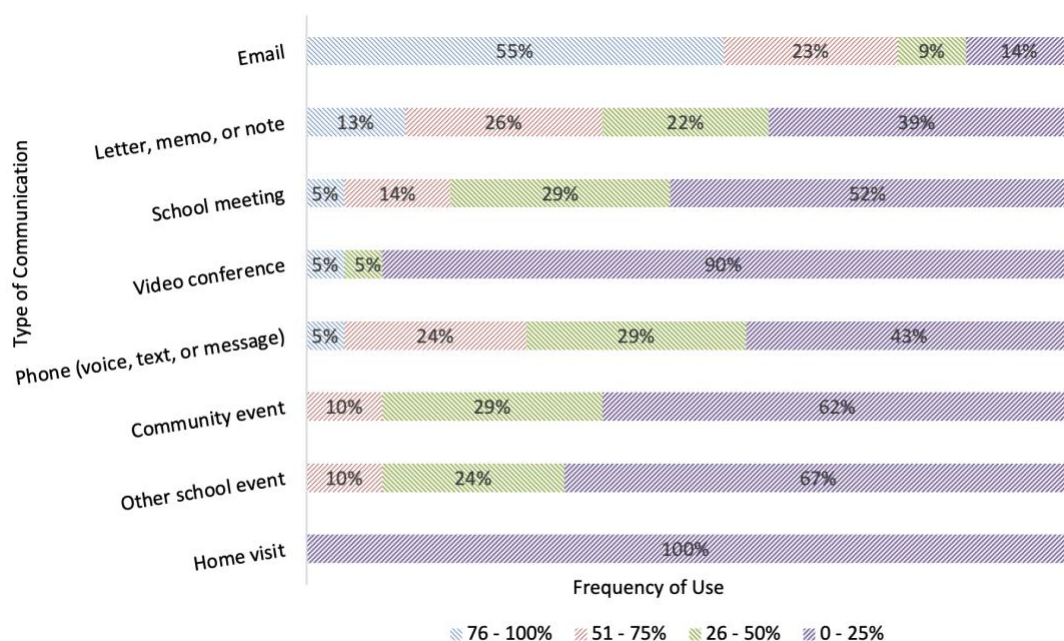
Note: Horizontal bar graphs are read as the frequency that a respondent uses a type of communication. For example, in the top bar 55% of respondents use email with 76-100% frequency, 23% of respondents use email with 51-75% frequency, 9% use it with 26-50% frequency, and 14% use email with 0-25% frequency.

Finding #2

  CBA's ill-defined practices for addressing student misbehavior have resulted in an overreliance on the principal's expertise or teachers managing situations inconsistently and/or independently. The principal's statement regarding the need for consistent guidelines for school disciplinary procedures and engaging families demonstrates an awareness of the need for a school procedural guide. However, perhaps most glaring in this finding is the lack of a teacher handbook that outlines handling cases of student misbehavior or offers a response continuum for who engages with families, how that engagement occurs, or when it becomes necessary to escalate the problem to a higher authority (namely the principal or assistant principal).

Consequently, the CBA staff recounted several instances where they acted independently of the principal when parents rebuffed or ignored their outreach attempts, even while they expressed appreciation for the principal's background with child behavioral issues.

Similarly, parents may lack clarity about when and how the school addresses student behavioral issues and the school's expectation of parental responsibility in a collaborative process. Snippets from the parent focus group included thirty-eight references to communication means and ninety references to communication effectiveness, identifying parents' desire for more personal interactions and frustration with the staff's outreach efforts. While some parents expressed appreciation for the school's promptness in contacting them on specific concerns about their children, others described a different experience. One parent described collaborative efforts as one-sided. Another stated, "I would love to see the communication in the beginning," to address concerns. Yet another parent commented, "The sense of community has been eroded-it has eroded so much. And things have changed so much in the wrong direction…" And lastly, this parent said, "I feel like there just isn't the reach-out that was needed…that's where I would like to see the improvement more in terms of being able to have those conversations with the school." These quotes indicate the consequences of a lack of school guidelines for addressing student misbehavior issues.

Finding #3

CBA does not have sufficient human resources to address the full range of communication and collaboration needs of staff and families. This finding stresses a need for increased organizational capacity to meet growing demand. CBA teachers and principals perceive a growing problem related to student behavior. However, CBA exercises a flat organizational hierarchy due to its small size. The school lacks an intermediate level of support

staff to manage administrative functions or exercise leadership or management.

Qualitative data and observations from the project team's interactions with CBA and its leadership support the finding that CBA's organizational structure influences its practices. The team coded 92 transcript snippets related to student behavioral trends, 92.39% from the CBA staff and leadership. That some teachers choose to manage the issues on their own indicates either a capacity shortage on the school's part, perceived indifference on the parent's part, or a combination of both. One teacher noted this about the CBA leadership,

> The [principal] and the vice principal take on a lot. They go above and beyond, and I feel like in just observing this year alone…there needs to be someone who literally just handles that for them. Because they're inundated with running the school itself and then trying to put out the fires with the behavior, but then you've got the kid [who] really, really needs help. And I think to throw that on them…is a lot. So, I feel like they need somebody like a supporting staff member- [a] disciplinarian of some sort. Disciplinary counseling. That's just that person's job.

> Regarding the increasing frequency of behavioral problems, one teacher said,

"...sometimes it's really hard [because] we have more behavioral issues probably than before. Or maybe we just didn't always become aware of the issues," which led to another's concern that, "Sometimes I think we spend so much time on behavior or trying to address those behaviors. Learning gets shortened [at] certain times because of it." However, the project team's qualitative data coding produced few references (26) that parents perceived the need for additional school resources. Only one parent believed the school should coordinate additional outside resources but for increased learning opportunities, not increased management capacity.

Finding #4

CBA parents and staff perceive shortcomings in each other's demonstrated ability to communicate and collaborate; parents have an appetite for more ongoing, robust home-school communication. Teachers were outspoken regarding their feelings toward parents' respect for them as professionals and as impartial observers of their children's behavior in the classroom. In some statements, teachers accused parents of blatantly shutting them out, poor parenting skills, and being indifferent to their child's education. The contrast with the strong agreement expressed by teachers for a variety of at-home activities that encourage student success (i.e., talking to children about the importance of school, sending children to school prepared to learn, and checking homework) implies that part of the CBA staff feels that parents are falling short in their roles and responsibilities as a partner in their children's education.

Conversely, parents expressed their frustration more as a process issue focused on communication and collaboration effectiveness. Seventy-eight percent (122 of 156) of coded snippets related to communication effectiveness came from parents, as did over 44% (49 of 110) of snippets coded for collaboration effectiveness. Still, survey results indicate that parents retain positive feelings about the school and their role construct and self-efficacy in their children's education.

As an example of their differing perspectives, teachers expressed a strong opinion (over 80%) of the school's report card program as an effective means of communication with families. From the parent's perspective, opinions varied. Almost 40% of parents indicated a neutral position or a degree of disagreement that they received information about how their children earned report card grades (mean 3.61, standard deviation 1.52) (Figures 12 and 13).

To conceptualize the differing perspectives, teachers expressed intense feelings about the parental social group, while parents expressed frustration with teachers' practice methodology

regarding collaboration. However, the survey relied more on expressions about the school than

teachers or leadership, which the project team acknowledges as a shortcoming in the survey

design. It may be possible for parents to maintain good faith with the school as a concept or, in

this case, a parochially-affiliated organization while acknowledging dissatisfaction with specific

practices.

Figure 12

School Communications About Report Cards (Teachers)
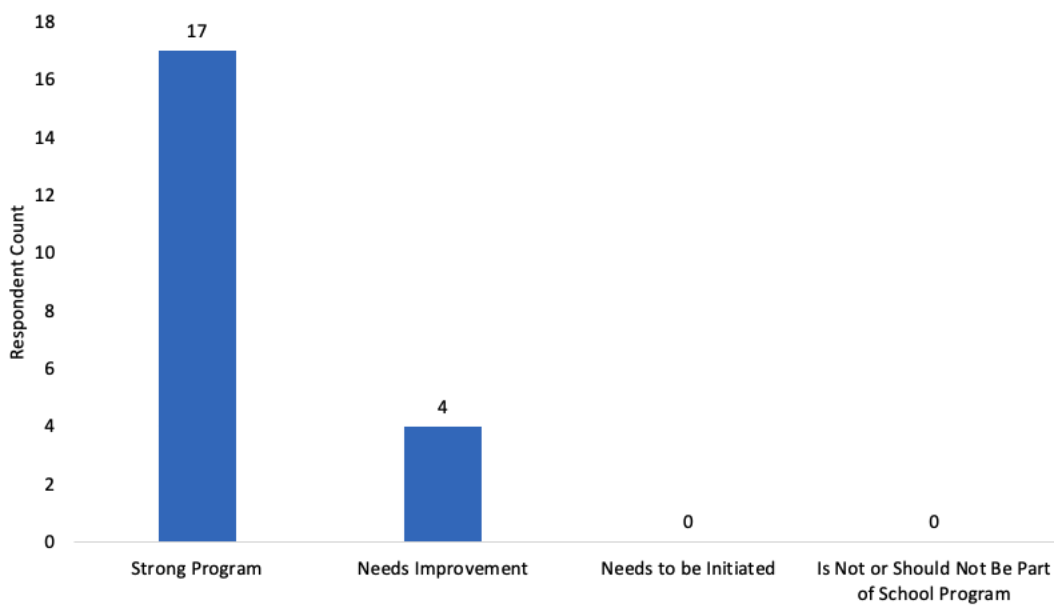
Figure 13

Information on How Report Card Grades are Earned (Parents)
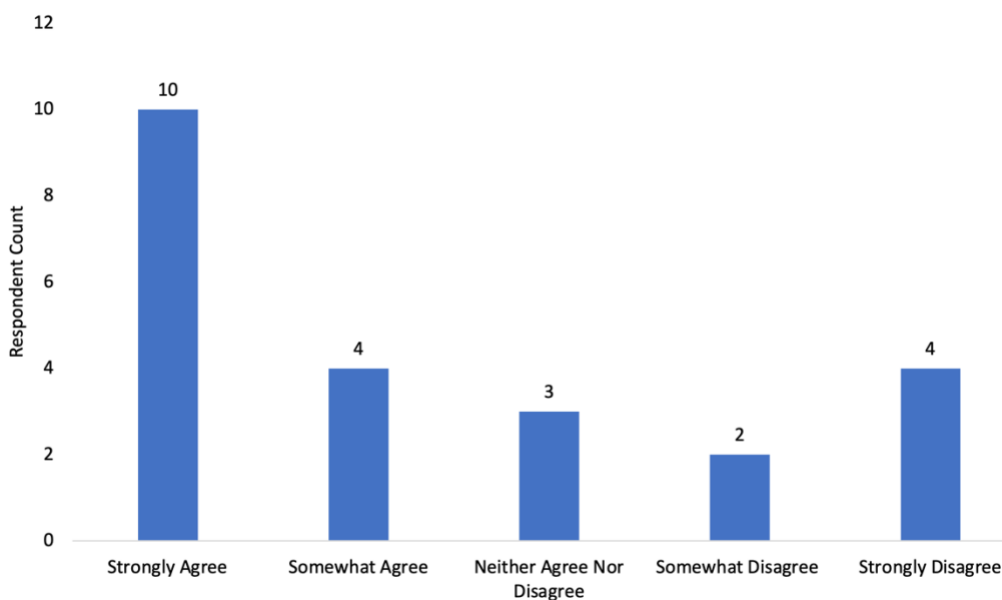
Finding #5

CBA parents and staff did not perceive a link to the external community, effectively negating a vital component of the partnership triad. The concept of community seems to differ among the CBA principal, teachers, and parents. While the team defined the intended idea of community as people, resources, or organizations aside from the school or parents, teachers did not demonstrate an extensive awareness of how CBA interacts with the local community. In the parent focus group, participants considered the term as it relates to the intra-school community. Only the CBA principal spoke at length about the school's efforts with community outreach, referencing programs with the local police department, charities, and civic organizations.

Interestingly, the parent survey asked respondents which community services they would like to know more about. Parents expressed interest in after-school tutoring opportunities, information about museums, shows, and community events, and available after-school clubs,

lessons, or sporting activities (among others), offering leads for the school to explore in the future (Figure 14). This interest indicated by parents illustrates their desire for extra-school activities, perhaps beyond the reach of CBA's resources to provide, and an opportunity to broaden the scope and partnership of the CBA educational experience.

However, in another aspect of the survey, 64% of parents responded strongly or somewhat agreed that the community supported the school (albeit with the community undefined for them). Regardless, the variance in responses (36% either neutral or in some degree of disagreement; standard deviation 1.18, above the mean of 1.08) casts some doubt that parents hold a universal opinion about the relationship between the school and the community.

Community, as a natural partner in Epstein's (1995) spheres of influence, represents a powerful force in shaping and harmonizing the efforts of families and the school to benefit CBA students. However, our data suggest that the community is an absent partner in the current construct.

Figure 14

Community Services of Interest to CBA Families
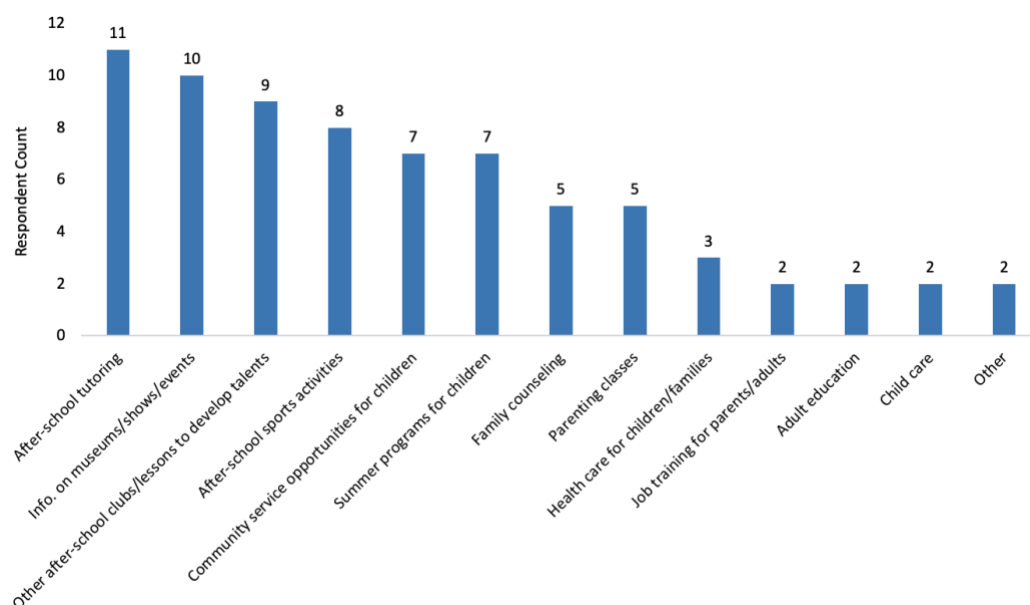
Finding #6

      Parents and staff have a divergent understanding of the expectations for the roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for volunteerism at CBA. One teacher stated bluntly, "...we really don't like parents coming into the classroom because we've experienced some parents videoing other students in the room". The survey question on classroom volunteers (part of the series of teacher thoughts on involving families) received the lowest mean average (2.91, standard deviation 0.97) of almost any of the teacher survey's responses (see Figure 15 for teacher perceptions of using classroom volunteers and Figure 16 for parents' perceptions).

      However, parents feel they should re-introduce themselves into the school, if not the classroom, especially following the virtual learning experience resulting from the pandemic. In the parent survey, respondents indicated some agreement (mean score, 4.0; standard deviation, 1.32) that they wanted to volunteer in the school or classroom. Parent comments from the interview and focus group offer further proof of that desire, stated as, "I think we need to do more to bring the parents into the school…"; "I think that if parents were to get the opportunity to sit down in the classroom and observe, like how they're teaching and just the interactions, I think it would settle a lot of the uneasiness that we're feeling"; and, "...as we began to overcome COVID and come back to normal, or what we're calling normal these days, I would say that those programs and those opportunities to have outreach into the [school] community have not necessarily come back."

Figure 15

Teacher Perceptions of a Program to Use Volunteers in the Classroom
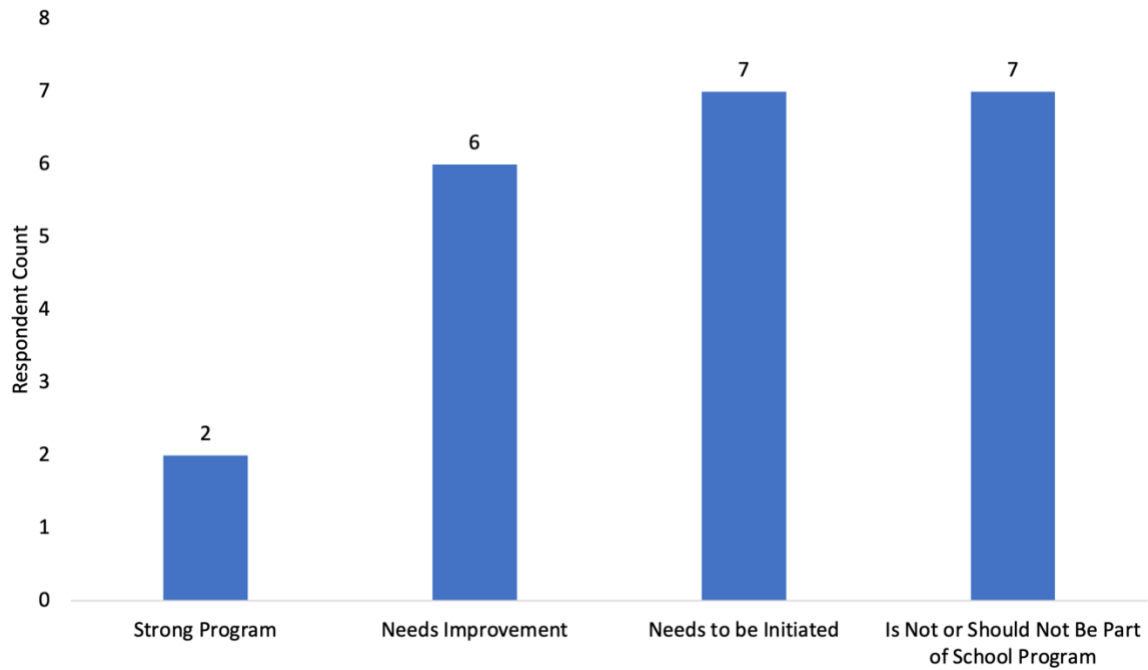
Figure 16

Parent Perception of a Program to Volunteer at Child's School or in Their Classroom
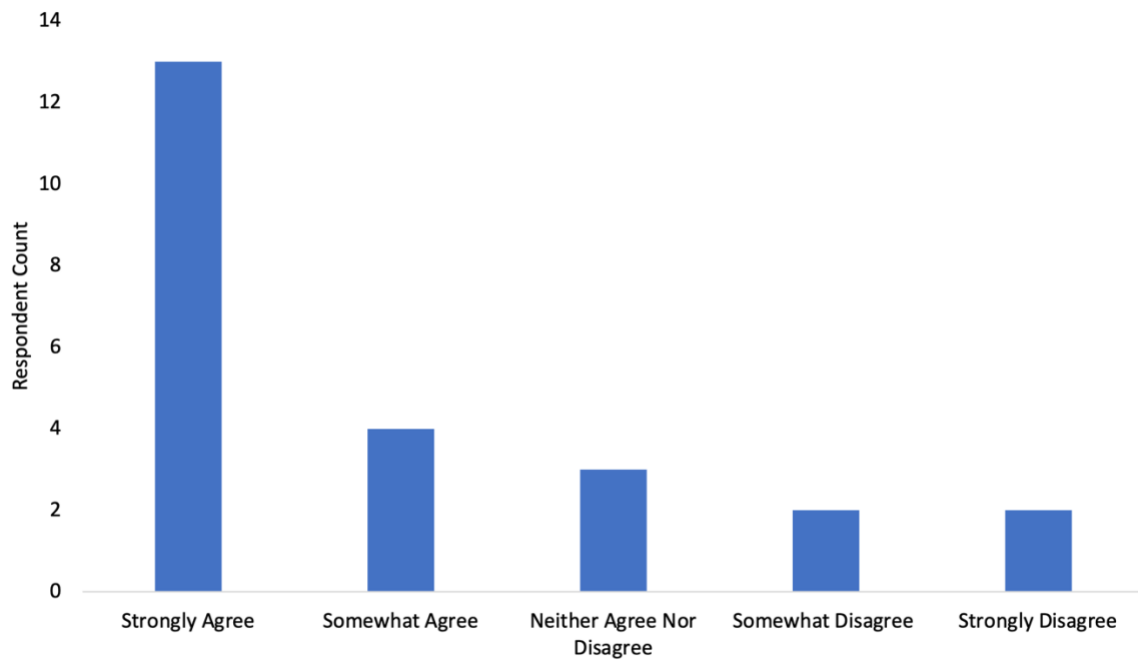
Recommendations

To assist CBA with addressing its concerns about student misbehavior, we recommend that the school take a holistic approach to improving school climate and student success through a collaborative school-family-community partnership. Partnerships are created through shared accountability to assist students in succeeding in school and life. The common core of this communal approach is caring; trust and respect must be present for this collaboration to occur. Epstein (2010) categorizes six types of caring or involvement to operationalize partnerships: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Figure 17). Each type of involvement seeks to create a more significant overlap between home, school, and community and contribute to student success. The team's recommendations integrate these indices to assist CBA in constructing these partnerships and hence, developing a caring environment for their students - including those with behavioral concerns - to flourish.

Figure 17

Epstein's Six Types of Involvement/Caring (Ihmeideh et al, 2020)
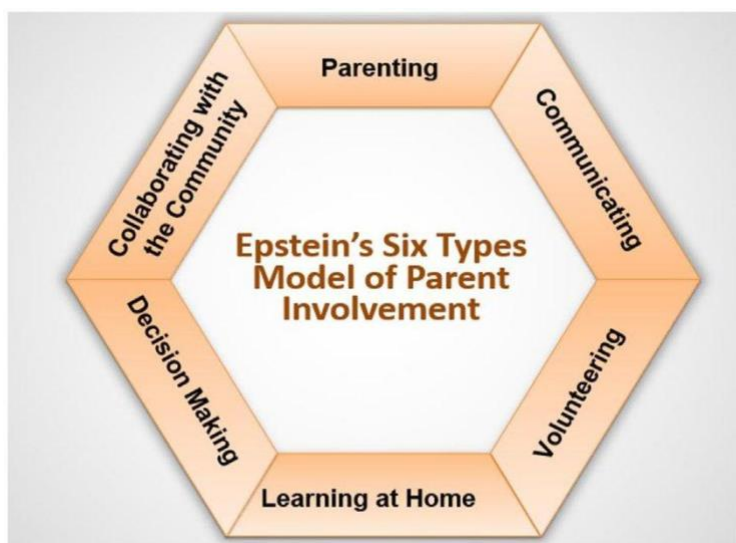
Recommendation #1

CBA should create a staff handbook incorporating policies and procedures for student misbehavior, related communication, and family collaboration. Qualitative data revealed a lack of standard operating procedures regarding how the school manages discipline, escalation, and parental communication. The lack of an official school protocol became apparent through our discussion with the staff as they described a lack of uniformity regarding student discipline and family collaboration. Consequently, we recommend that CBA develop an organizational protocol for communicating and collaborating, internally and externally, on student misbehavior concerns rather than relying on the principal's expertise with behavioral management or the staff managing situations independently. Creating standard operating procedures will set expectations and establish a consistent approach upon which families, faculty, and leadership can rely. Defining communication strategies between home and school will provide clarity and potentially lessen the frustration between parents and teachers.

Schools that create an intentional culture based on shared values, attitudes, and behaviors build a foundation for consistent communication and collaboration between students, families, and the community (Elbot & Fulton, 2007). The institution of a handbook for the CBA staff helps develop a purposeful culture at CBA, which has been found to have a meaningful impact on students' lives. While Elbot and Fulton (2007) found that adherence to policies at the staff level requires a mind shift from independent decision-making to a shared agreement, an organizational protocol realized through a staff handbook removes personal interpretation and creates an environment of trust and participation. Creating an ad hoc committee of teachers and administrators to develop the guide gives expression to the strong opinions within the staff and builds trust and community within the school environment.

Subsequently, CBA should share its policies and procedures surrounding disciplinary policy and expectations for communication and collaboration with families in its parent handbook. The school and families should reinforce one another by communicating to students the expectations for behavior (in positive terms) early and consistently.

Recommendation #2

CBA should re-establish roles and responsibilities through updated job descriptions and assign a school communication officer. Our interviews and focus group discussions with teachers and parents suggested that the principal may be overburdened with student misbehavior concerns from the staff and challenged to maintain accurate and timely communication with families, individually or through the teachers. This recommendation proposes that CBA reconsider its current organizational structure to enhance its human resources toward addressing staff and families' communication and collaboration needs. CBA might also consider adding a senior staff member overseeing school standards (i.e., a Dean of Students). Another possibility might be to assign the assistant principal responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school, including the disciplinary process.

The project team did not examine the school's job descriptions. However, CBA should review its current written job descriptions to ensure they accurately define the school's expectations, the staff's responsibility for managing student misbehavior, and the associated family communication and collaboration. If the school lacks written job descriptions, CBA might conduct a workforce analysis to develop them or reach out to neighboring schools for examples that can be adapted to their needs. Accurate job descriptions are essential for the organization to assist the employee in interacting with peers in a multidisciplinary environment (Jacobson et al.,

2012). Again, the vice principal might assume some of the principal's current duties, allowing the principal time to focus on crucial executive responsibilities.

The appointment of a school communications manager (or director) might also afford the school better clarity, consistency, and follow-through on its processes that alleviate parental frustration or reliance on unofficial communication channels. This role could manage social media updates, CBA's weekly newsletter, and timely school-wide messages, working with the Home School Association leaders to create and maintain a single source of information and insight. The school communications manager would create an email for family communication which will support timely responses and increase parent satisfaction. Given the appropriate expertise, the position might also handle web admin responsibilities and some degree of community relations. A current office staff member might assume this role with training, keeping within the current CBA budget.

Recommendation #3

CBA should hold interdisciplinary workshops to train families and teachers on communication and collaboration skills. The evident divide between the CBA staff and families about their expectations for communication and collaboration belies Epstein's (1995) spheres of influence framework which relies on trust and respect as the bedrock for each. That breach might also affect parental motivation for involvement in their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). To re-establish trust between CBA teachers and families, a series of interdisciplinary workshops or seminars might generate a shared dialogue and produce a common understanding of both groups' communication and collaboration expectations.

Stakeholders in the school community (including parents) build trust with one another when they believe "that members of the other groups are fulfilling their role obligations" (Elbot

& Fulton, 2007, p. 4). Moreover, a relational trust between schools and families can result in better academic performances by students (Elbot & Fulton, 2007). However, a lack of interest from either party acts as a frequent barrier to parent-school communication (Buchanan & Clark, 2017). Workshops or seminars focused on parenting, behavioral issues, home-school collaboration, and best practices would build respect, trust, and rapport between parents and teachers, reinforcing school policies and procedures and addressing negative perceptions.

Despite the apparent importance of this trust relationship, Ferrara and Ferrar (2005) found that most teachers lack training on parental involvement and strategies for incorporating the parent into student learning. The workshops would enable teachers and parents to establish reciprocal communication and empower parents to support their children, an effective strategy in parental workshops (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004), stressing the importance of family-like schools (recognizing the individuality of the child) and school-like families (reinforcing the importance of the child as a student) (Epstein et al., 2019).

Our quantitative data also suggested some parents' lack of understanding with report card grading, while teachers said some parents do not attend parent-teacher conferences. To remedy any misunderstandings, the CBA principal might consider holding monthly town hall meetings at various times, perhaps even in multiple venues (live-streamed and recorded), to explain the report card grading process to the widest possible audience. This concept could be adopted for any school-related issue continuously, offering families with unique circumstances and non-traditional schedules an opportunity to participate in their children's education and opening the lines of communication between the school and families. Another variation of this idea might have classroom or grade-level teachers host a monthly open forum for their parents to exchange information and create a community among the parents of similar-aged children, for example,

interactive homework programs that enable parents to support the school while building a home learning environment (Epstein et al., 2019).

Recommendation #4

CBA should leverage the Home School Association (HSA) to delegate a community outreach volunteer. CBA should explore ways to develop two-way collaboration with the external community and re-activate the meaningful community relationships that serve the interests of each member of the partnership triad. CBA can utilize the recommendations gathered from parents in the Parents Survey to re-engage the community and foster the development of skills and talents within the student body, leveraging mutually beneficial relationships through networking and outreach.

Epstein et al. (2019) includes the community within the spheres of influence framework as a partner to help families support their children by creating community-minded schools that embrace diversity within the environment and incorporate programs that augment the school curriculum. Involving HSA parents in that effort gives them a decision-making capacity and a voice as parent leaders. Moreover, a community outreach volunteer can assist with integrating external resources and services that strengthen school development through programs or activities related to health, culture, and sports or recreation. However, the relationship should be reciprocal through service to the community by the school and families (Epstein et al., 2019).

As a parochial school, CBA links directly to the Archdiocese and the local church, only a few feet from the school entrance. CBA can leverage the church as a significant community partner to identify parishioners, alumni, or businesses interested in supporting the school and its students. Funding, workshops, scholarships, tutors/mentors, and counseling are just a few examples of the prospective fruits of this partnership. Multiple healthcare organizations,

universities, and service organizations may also want to engage with CBA as valuable community partners. As Epstein et al. (2019) offers, the factors which facilitate successful school-community partnerships include a dedication to student learning, support from the school principal, a hospitable school climate, and reciprocal communication.

Recommendation #5

CBA should establish guidelines for volunteerism and embed them within the parent handbook. We recommend that CBA explore ways to develop a shared vision of volunteerism that enhances the school mission, leverages special parental skills, and works to meet parents' needs for internal collaboration. Our quantitative data collection revealed a significant divide between teachers and parents on the role of volunteerism at the school. Qualitative data analysis reinforced this observation, with trust being the mainstay for the disconnect. CBA should reintroduce the concept of volunteerism and establish an organizational policy for parents and teachers to support this level of in-school collaboration. Encouraging parental involvement through workshops, story time, or career fairs fosters their self-efficacy and increases their awareness of the school environment and climate. Encouraging parents to help with decision-making may also bring increased fulfillment and new ideas to CBA.

A strong link exists between parental involvement in schools and student achievement (Ferrara & Ferrar, 2005). Even though parent involvement may contribute to increased test scores, higher grades, and high school graduation, teachers and principals report an absence of such participation in many schools (Olmstead, 2013). Wanat (2010) suggests that the reluctance of parents to volunteer may relate to their feelings of low self-worth and a lack of confidence in their ability to contribute to schools. Schools also need to exercise a creative strategy that reaches out to all parents, surveying for unique talents and interest to participate in student curricular or

extracurricular activities. "When parents spend time in schools on a regular basis, their presence reinforces the idea in their children's minds that school and home are interconnected and symbiotic" (Ferrara & Ferrar, 2005, p. 79).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) highlight the need for parents to feel invited to participate in their children's school and that their involvement is valued and expected. CBA should re-establish a volunteer program with clear guidelines for parents and teachers. CBA should query parents at the beginning of the school year, setting volunteerism as an expectation for each family and potentially establishing a guideline of a minimum number of hours over the school year. This participation could be through HSA, fund-raising, chaperoning field trips, or assistance with extracurricular activities, such as after-school programs or the school play. The principal should articulate that violating the guidelines for behavior within the school environment may result in consequences which jeopardize future participation in the volunteer program. The school can announce volunteer opportunities through back-to-school events, social media, targeted messaging, and the weekly newsletter. Regardless of the form that volunteerism takes, CBA should establish guidelines for parents that embody the ethical norms of the classroom, namely respect for students' privacy and the teachers' inherent role as an education professional.

Recommendation #6

CBA should establish an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) to oversee school partnership programs that serve communication and collaboration. We believe, as Epstein (1995) suggests, that one of the crucial aspects for addressing CBA's concerns lies in its ability to form school, family, and community partnerships that strengthen the school's climate and lead to student success. To that end, we suggest that the school develop activities linked to specific

improvements or the six types of partnership involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and community collaboration). These partnerships and the emphasis on trilateral engagement build a healthy school climate, promote student success, and ultimately mitigate student misbehavior (Epstein et al., 2019) (Figure 18). Therefore, we posit that rather than addressing student misbehavior as a stand-alone issue, a comprehensive approach tied to overall school improvement will, in the long term, create an environment resistant to misbehavior but able to collaboratively address it when it occurs.

An ATP should include the principal, at least two teachers, parents, the community outreach volunteer, and the school communications officer. The team would collaborate on a written action plan, then monitor the progress through monthly meetings. Specific goals and guidelines for teamwork, communication, and decision-making should be established and disclosed to all stakeholders. Successes should be celebrated and communicated through the weekly newsletter, social media, and town hall meetings. The school mission is the cornerstone of the ATP, and realistic goals with defined measurements of success are established. We also recommend that CBA take advantage of membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) for strategies, resources, and networking that will assist with developing their school, family, and community partnerships.

Figure 18

Collaborative Pathway to Address and Mitigate Student Misbehavior (Epstein et al., 2019)

Collaborative Pathway to Address and Mitigate Student Misbehavior

| Epstein's Six Types of Involvement | Goal-Linked Activities | Intermediate Goal | Distal Goals |
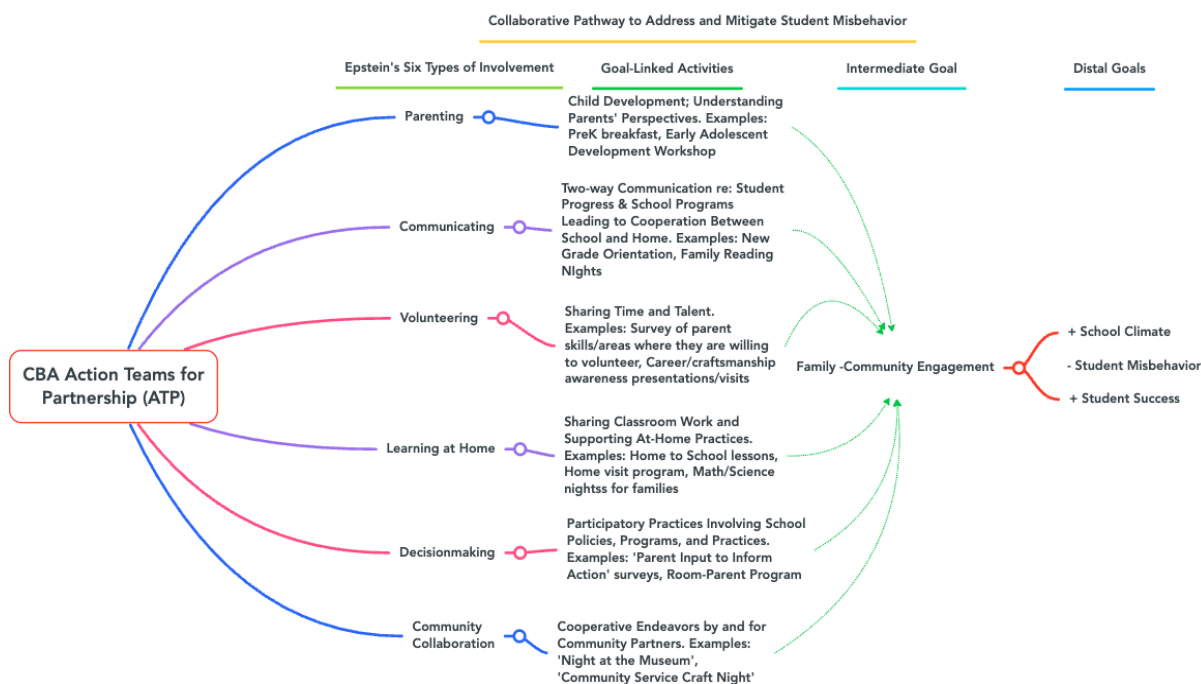
Limitations & Future Research

From a research design perspective, the focus of this study centered on the communication and collaboration efforts of CBA in supporting students with behavioral needs. However, once the research process began, focusing data collection efforts on this subset of the parent population proved challenging. The CBA principal felt that only identifying families of students with behavioral concerns for participation was too sensitive and could potentially put school-family relationships at risk (Principal, personal communication, January 27, 2023). Thus, our data collection efforts expanded to include communication and collaboration efforts between CBA, the community, and all families. While we believe that the results can support CBA and all its families, including students with unique behavioral challenges, this limitation diverged from the original focus of the study and broadened the scope of the work. Future research could focus

on this subgroup of the parent population, effectively targeting parents' experiences with CBA in supporting students with behavioral challenges.

While we garnered almost 100% participation from CBA staff, we were less successful in engaging CBA parents in the electronic survey and focus groups. Even though we garnered 18.25% participation in the parent survey, a methodological limitation came from our parent focus groups, where we could only gain perceptions from five parents due mainly to the project's time constraints. Limited participation from the parent community adds essential context to the qualitative feedback from parents. A consideration for future research would be to boost outreach efforts to include more time for survey responses, expand focus group availability options, and incorporate motivating incentives contingent upon participation.

Another methodological limitation of the study was the limited access to behavioral and disciplinary data at CBA. The principal could only provide quantitative and qualitative data for discipline efforts from the 2022-2023 school year, effectively omitting the ability to analyze trends - a tenant of the identified problem of practice - of behavioral and disciplinary trends for past school years. Encompassing more longitudinal data collection efforts to solicit the actual scope of how much students with behavioral needs have increased at CBA would be an important consideration for future research.

Due to the scope of the work, the study design lacked perceptions from the external community, a key prong of our conceptual framework. Future research could benefit from gaining the perspectives of community members about their communication and collaboration with CBA and its families and how those partnerships might be strengthened to support the school, its families, and its students.

Conclusion

Looking from the outside in at CBA, what became apparent to us was the school's and its families' sincere interest in their students' education and well-being. Although we could not confirm the historical trends, we considered the staff's belief in an increasing variety and frequency of student misbehavior as valid. We also took as valid the principal's concern regarding the difficulty with engaging parental partnership in behavioral interventions. And we understood the principal's reluctance to identify and engage with parents of children exhibiting behavioral misconduct for this project, which resulted in the team's exploration of an indirect approach to the problem of practice.

Epstein's (2010) spheres of influence model offered a conceptual framework with proven results that, applied to CBA, offers a comprehensive way to improve the school climate and student success without singling out or embarrassing any subset of parents or students. Our qualitative and quantitative data confirmed the need to improve several CBA practices or processes. However, Epstein's (2010) work also suggested that the solutions to these problems do not exist in any single domain. Instead, through a partnership with the key stakeholders of this community, authentic and meaningful change can occur, even beyond the immediate concern with student misbehavior.

Our point is this: CBA can successfully address its concerns with student misbehavior, improve its engagement with parents, and fill its tomorrows with opportunity and hope for its children. However, as poet Robert Frost's (1979) traveler faced two roads diverging in a wood, CBA also stands at a crucial juncture in its journey. Moreover, its decision lies not so much in what path to take but with whom to make its choice and embark on its walk. As we suggest that choice and that walk should be made in partnership with the families and community it serves.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Plan

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCE	COLLECTION METHODS	ANALYSIS PROCEDURES
1. How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs?	1.1 Non-responsive parents, lack of communication from school, continuing behavioral challenges from students in classroom, language barriers, lack of time, energy, skills, knowledge on behalf of parents, lack of available school programs on behalf of school	1.1.a. Survey of 234 CBA families through link to Qualtrics; Matrix table questions with 3 or 4-point Likert scale	1.1.a Generated survey	1.1.a Descriptive statistics of survey instruments (Excel or R Studio)
		1.1.b Survey of 35 CBA teaching staff through link to Qualtrics; Matrix table questions with 3 or 4-point Likert scale and multiple-choice questions	1.1.b. Generated survey	1.1.b. Descriptive statistics of survey instruments (Excel or R Studio)
		1.1.c. Interviews with principal and assistant principal	1.1.c. Generated open-ended interview	1.1.c. Coding and content analysis of qualitative data collection
		1.1.d. Interviews with 1 x third-party provider and 1 x community supporter	1.1.d. Generated open-ended interview	1.1.d. Coding and content analysis of qualitative data collection
		1.1.e. Focus group with teachers (2 x K-1 grades; 2 x 2-4 grades; 2 x 5-6 grades; 2 x 7-8 grades)	1.1.e. Generated focus group	1.1.e. Coding and content analysis of qualitative data collection
		1.1.f. Focus group with parents (2 x K-1 grades; 2 x 2-4 grades; 2 x 5-6 grades; 2 x 7-8 grades)	1.1.f. Generated focus group	1.1.f. Coding and content analysis of qualitative data collection
		1.1.g. Geographic dispersal of families in Excel spreadsheet	1.1.g. Acquired data	1.1.g. Geospatial analysis (Excel)
		1.1.h. Demographic analysis of families in Excel spreadsheet	1.1.h. Acquired data	1.1.g. Descriptive statistics of survey instruments (Excel or R Studio)
		1.1.i. Artifacts from school, family, and community reflecting current communication practices; record of disciplinary actions and school/family responses	1.1.i. Acquired data	1.1.i. Document analysis
2. How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?	2.1 Statements or suggestions from survey, focus group participants; implementation that results in parent engagement/collaboration; collaborative strategies developed for children experiencing behavioral issues	2.2.a. Survey of 234 CBA families through link to Qualtrics; Matrix table questions with 3 or 4-point Likert scale	2.2.a Generated survey	2.2.a Descriptive statistics of survey instruments (Excel or R Studio)
		2.2.b Survey of 35 CBA teaching staff through link to Qualtrics; Matrix table questions with 3 or 4-point Likert scale and multiple-choice questions	2.2.b. Generated survey	2.2.b. Descriptive statistics of survey instruments (Excel or R Studio)
		2.2.c. Interviews with principal and assistant principal	2.2.c. Generated open-ended interview	2.2.c. Coding and content analysis of qualitative data collection
		2.2.d. Interviews with 1 x third-party provider and 1 x community supporter	2.2.d. Generated open-ended interview	2.2.d. Coding and content analysis of qualitative data collection
		2.2.e. Focus group with teachers (2 x K-1 grades; 2 x 2-4 grades; 2 x 5-6 grades; 2 x 7-8 grades)	2.2.e. Generated focus group	2.2.e. Coding and content analysis of qualitative data collection
		2.2.f. Focus group with parents (2 x K-1 grades; 2 x 2-4 grades; 2 x 5-6 grades; 2 x 7-8 grades)	2.2.f. Generated focus group	2.2.f. Coding and content analysis of qualitative data collection
		2.2.g. Geographic dispersal of families in Excel spreadsheet	2.2.g. Acquired data	2.2.g. Geospatial analysis (Excel)
		2.2.h. Demographic analysis of families in Excel spreadsheet	2.2.h. Acquired data	2.2.h. Descriptive statistics of survey instruments (Excel or R Studio)
		2.2.i. Artifacts from school, family, and community reflecting current communication practices; record of disciplinary actions and school/family responses	2.2.i. Acquired data	2.2.i. Document analysis

Appendix B

Teacher Survey Instrument

Introduction: This survey asks for your perceptions and thoughts regarding your school's communication and collaboration with families and the local community. We ask that you please answer each question carefully and thoughtfully. Your participation is voluntary and your answers are confidential. You may skip any question for any reason. You will find that most questions offer you a three or four point scale to rate your response. Thanks in advance for your time and cooperation.

Q1 The following questions ask for your professional judgment about parental involvement. Please choose one response for each statement that best represents your opinion and experience.				
Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)

Parent involvement is important for a good school. (1)
Most parents know how to help their children on schoolwork at home. (2)
This school has an active and effective parent organization, such as a PTA or PTO. (3)
Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school. (4)
Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students. (5)
Teachers should receive recognition for time spent on parent involvement activities. (6)
Teachers do not always have time to involve parents in very useful ways. (7)
Parents of children at this school want to be involved more than they are now at most grade levels. (8)
Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices. (9)
Parent involvement is important for student success in school. (10)
This school views parents as important partners. (11)
This community values education for all students. (12)
This school is known for trying new and unusual approaches to improve the school. (13)
Mostly when I contact parents it's about problems or trouble (14)

| In this school teachers play a large part in most decisions. (15) |
| The community supports this school. (16) |
| Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best school climates for teachers, students, and parents. (17) |

Q2 Teachers contact their students' families in different ways. Please estimate the ways you've contacted students' families this year.

0 - 25% (1)	26 - 50% (2)	51 - 75% (3)	76 - 100% (4)

| Letter, memo, or note (1) |
| Email (2) |
| Phone (voice, text, or message) (3) |
| Video conference (4) |
| School meeting (5) |
| Home visit (6) |
| Other school event (7) |
| Community event (8) |

Q3 Some teachers involve parents (or others) as volunteers in the school or classroom. Please check all the ways you are using volunteers in your school or classroom.

| Listening to children reading aloud (1) |
| Reading to children (2) |
| Grading papers (3) |
| Tutoring children in specific skills (4) |
| Helping with trips or parties (5) |

| Giving talks on careers, hobbies, etc... (6) |
| Don't use classroom volunteers (7) |

Q4 Please estimate the percentage of families who participated in the following activities...			
0 - 25% (1)	26 - 50% (2)	51 - 75% (3)	76 - 100% (4)

| School workshops (1) |
| Homework checks (2) |
| Summer school work practice (3) |
| PTA/PTO meetings (4) |
| Parent-teacher conferences (5) |
| Assist their child(ren) with reading, writing, or math skills (6) |

Q5 Schools serve diverse populations of families who have different needs and skills. The next questions ask for your judgment about ways of involving families at your school. Please choose one response to describe your school's level of engagement with...			
Strong program (4)	Needs improvement (3)	Needs to be initiated (2)	Is not or should not be part of school program (1)

| Workshops that develop parenting skills and awareness of child development through school (1) |
| Workshops for parents on creating home conditions for learning (2) |
| School communications that families can understand and use (3) |
| School communications about report cards help parents understand student's progress and needs (4) |
| Parent-teacher conferences with all families (5) |
| Surveying parents each year for their ideas about school (6) |
| Volunteers in classrooms who assist teachers and students (7) |

Volunteers to help in other parts of the school (non-classroom) (8)

Information for parents on how to monitor homework (9)

Information for parents on how to help their children with specific skills and subjects (10)

Involvement by families in PTA/PTO leadership and other decision-making bodies (11)

After-school programs for recreation or homework help (12)

Q6 The next questions ask for your opinion about the activities parents should conduct for their children. Please choose the response that best describes the importance of these activities for your children at the grade level you teach.

Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)

Send children to school ready to learn (1)

Teach children to behave well (2)

Set up a quiet place at home for child(ren) to study (3)

Encourage children to volunteer in class (4)

Awareness of learning expectations for the school year (5)

Checking homework daily (6)

Talking to children about what they are learning in school (7)

Asking teachers for specific ideas on how to help their children with school work at home (8)

Taking to teachers about problems the children are dealing with at home (9)

Attending PTA/PTO meetings (10)

Serving as a volunteer in the school or classroom (11)

Attending assembles or other special school events (12)

Taking children to special places or community events (13)

Talking to children about the importance of school (14)

Q7 Please respond with how you perceive the support for parental involvement from others in your school.			
Strong support (4)	Some support (3)	Weak support (2)	No support (1)

Other teachers (1)
Principal (2)
Other administrators (3)
Parents (4)
Other community members (5)

Q8 Regarding your students and teaching...		
0 -10 (1)	10 - 20 (2)	More than 20 (3)

How many different students do you teach each day, on average? (1)

Q9 Do you work with other teachers on a formal interdisciplinary team?

No (1)
Yes (2)

Q10 On average, how many minutes of homework do you assign on most school days?

5 - 15 (1)
16 - 30 (2)

| 31 - 45 (3) |
| 45 - 60 (4) |
| More than 60 (5) |

| Q11 Do you typically assign homework for over the weekend? |

| No (1) |
| Yes (2) |

| Q12 How much time do you typically spend contacting parents, on a weekly basis? |

| Less than 1 hour (1) |
| 1 - 2 hours (2) |
| 2 - 3 hours (3) |
| More than 3 hours (4) |

Q13 Approximately how many of your students are...			
0 -10% (1)	11 - 25% (2)	26 - 50% (3)	More than 50% (4)

| African American/Black (1) |
| Latinx (2) |
| Far or Near East Asian American (3) |
| South Asian American (Indian sub-continent) (4) |
| West Asian American (Middle East) (5) |
| Anglo American/White (6) |

Q14 What is your level of teaching experience?	
Overall (1)	Current school (2)

0 -5 years (1)
6 - 10 years (2)
11 - 15 years (3)
More than 15 years (4)

Q15 What is your level of education?

Bachelor's degree (1)
Master's degree (2)
Doctoral degree (3)

Appendix C

Parent Survey Instrument

Introduction: This survey asks for your perceptions and thoughts regarding your communication and collaboration with your school and the local community. We ask that you please answer each question carefully and thoughtfully. Your participation is voluntary and your answers are confidential. You may skip any question for any reason. You will find that most questions offer you a three or four point scale to rate your response.

The survey is available in either English or Spanish. If you wish to have the survey questions and responses displayed in Spanish, click in the small drop-down box in the upper right portion of the screen (after accessing the link) and choose Spanish as your preferred language.

Thanks in advance for your time and cooperation.

Q1 We would like to know how you feel about your school right now. This will help us plan for the future. Please choose one response for each statement.				
Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)

This is a very good school. (1)

The teachers care about my child. (2)

I feel welcome at the school. (3)

This school has an active parent organization (for example, PTA or PTO) (4)

My child talks about school at home. (5)

My child should get more homework. (6)

Many parents I know help out at school. (7)

The school and I have different goals for my child. (8)

I feel I can help my child with reading. (9)

I feel I can help my child with math. (10)

I could help my child more if the teacher gave me more ideas. (11)

| My child is learning as much as possible at this school. (12) |
| Parents at this school get involved more in the younger grades. (13) |
| This school is known for trying new programs. (14) |
| This school views parents as important partners. (15) |
| The community supports this school. (16) |
| This school is one of the best schools for parents and children. (17) |

Q2 Families get involved in different ways at school and home. Which of the following have you done this year with the OLDEST CHILD you have at this school? Please choose one response for each statement.

Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)

| Talk to my child about school. (1) |
| Visit my child's classroom. (2) |
| Read to my child. (3) |
| Listen to my child read. (4) |
| Help my child with homework. (5) |
| Practice spelling or other skills before a test. (6) |
| Help my child plan time for homework and chores. (7) |
| Talk with my child's teacher at school. (8) |
| Communicate with my child's teacher by voice, text, or email. (9) |
| Attend PTA or PTO meetings. (10) |
| Check to see that my child has finished their homework. (11) |
| Volunteer at my child's school or in their classroom. (12) |

Attend special events at school. (13)
Take my child to the library. (14)
Take my child to special places or community events. (15)
Talk to my child about the importance of school. (16)

Q3 Schools contact families in different ways. Respond with one choice to describe the school's behavior for each statement.				
Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)

Helps me understand my child's stage of development. (1)
Tells me how my child is doing in school. (2)
Tells me what skills my child needs to learn each year. (3)
Has a parent-teacher conference with me. (4)
Explains how to check my child's homework. (5)
Sends home news about school happenings. (6)
Gives me information about how report card grades are earned. (7)
Sends home clear notices that I can easily read. (8)
Contacts me if my child is having problems. (9)
Invites me to school programs. (10)
Contacts me if my child does something well or improves. (11)
Asks me to volunteer at the school. (12)
Invites me to PTA or PTO meetings. (13)
Includes parents on school committees such as curriculum, budgets, and school improvement. (14)
Provides information on community services that I may want to use. (15)

Q4 All communities have information that would help families. Which services in your community would you like to know more about? Check all that apply.

Health care for children/families (1)

Family counseling (2)

Job training for parents/adults (3)

Adult education (4)

Parenting classes (5)
Child care (6)

After-school tutoring (7)

After-school sports activities (8)

Other after-school clubs or lessons to develop talents (9)

Community service opportunities for children (10)

Summer programs for children (11)

Information on museums, shows, and events in the community (12)

Other (13)

Q5 About your child and family (Please answer according to your OLDEST CHILD)...

K - 2 (1)	3 - 5 (2)	6 - 8 (3)

Current grade level (1)

Q6 About your child and family (Please answer according to your OLDEST CHILD)...

Excellent (5)	Above average (4)	Average (3)	Below Average (2)	Failing (1)

How is your child doing in schoolwork? (1)

Q7 About your child and family (Please answer according to your OLDEST CHILD)...				
Likes a great deal (5)	Likes somewhat (4)	Neither likes nor dislikes (3)	Dislikes somewhat (2)	Dislikes a great deal (1)

How does your child like school this year? (1)

Q8 About your child and family (Please answer according to your OLDEST CHILD)...			
Always (4)	Usually (3)	Inconsistently (2)	Never (1)

How often does your child promptly deliver notices home? (1)

Q9 About your child and family (Please answer according to your OLDEST CHILD)...			
Always (4)	Usually (3)	Inconsistently (2)	Never (1)

How often does your child complete all homework on time? (1)

Q10 About your child and family (Please answer according to your OLDEST CHILD)...			
Mornings (1)	Afternoons (2)	Evenings (3)	Never really a good time (4)

When is the best time for you to attend school meetings or events? (1)

Q11 About your child and family (Please answer according to your OLDEST CHILD)...			
1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 or more (4)

How many adults live at home? (1)
How many children live at home? (2)

Q12 About your child and family...			
Some high school (1)	Completed high school (2)	Some college (3)	Completed college (4)

Your level of education? (1)

Q13 About your child and family...		
Employed (1)	Part-time employment (2)	Looking for employment (3)

Your employment status? (1)

Appendix D

Focus Group Protocols for Staff

Introduction

Good afternoon and welcome to our focus group session. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk about family, school, and community partnerships. As I shared before, I am [First Name] [Last Name] and I am a doctoral candidate at Vanderbilt University. If you have not done so already, please write your first name on the table tent in front of you. We will be on a first name basis tonight, and we won't use any names for the project. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

As we explained earlier this afternoon, our project is focused on supporting students' behavioral needs with school, family, and community partnerships. The results from this focus group will be used in conjunction with other data to provide recommendations to your school community. We invited you to participate in this focus group because as a staff member, you play an integral role in supporting students and families.

A few housekeeping items to get out of the way:
- My role as the moderator will be to prompt the group with questions and guide the discussion as needed.
- There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.
- You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views.
- I encourage you to talk to and respond to one another throughout this session.
- You've probably noticed my phone over here. We're audio recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down.
- Again as a reminder, please only use first names throughout our time together.
- We ask that if at all possible, you turn off your cell phones. If you cannot and if you must respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and rejoin us as quickly as you can.

Discussion

Well, let's begin. Before starting with questions, can you please complete the data collection tool in front of you? This information will be kept confidential.

[Don't ask this question - just here for categorization purposes] How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs?
- When there are students with behavioral issues or concerns, who at CBA deals with the situation?

- In the past when you have had students with behavioral needs in your classrooms, what did communication look like with the parents?
- In the past when you have had students with behavioral needs in your classrooms, what did collaboration look like with the parents?
- In general, what approaches does CBA use in communicating and collaborating with parents?

[Don't ask this question - just here for categorization purposes] How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?

- In general, how effectively does CBA communicate and collaborate with parents of students with behavioral challenges?
- What actions do you believe that your school can do to strengthen the partnership between home and school?
- What actions do you believe that you can do to strengthen the partnership between home and school?
- Can you reflect upon a time when you had a positive collaboration with a parent of a student with behavioral challenges? How would you describe the interaction?
- How would you characterize collaboration between the local community and school for students with behavioral needs? When I say community, I am referring to any people, resources, or organizations outside of the school staff and parents.
  - o *Possible follow-up:* [If respondents struggle to answer, ask:] What might be ideal community supports that could support staff or parents with students with behavioral needs?
  - o *Possible follow-up:* Have you had any thoughts or ideas about community supports you would like to see, but maybe you have never verbalized it previously?
  - o *Possible follow-up:* Reflect upon a time when you witnessed effective collaboration between CBA and the local community, in service of students with behavioral issues. Can you describe the interaction?

Conclusion

- Is there anything else that you believe would help me better understand how CBA approaches working with students with behavioral needs through communication and collaboration?
- Of all the things we discussed today, what to you is the most important?
- [Moderator: Provide a two to three sentence summary of the discussion, then ask:] Is this an adequate summary?

Thank you for being so generous with your time today, and know that your input is extremely valuable to this project.

Notes/Reminders for Moderators

- Avoid overly expressive reactions to commentary; simple head nods and short neutral verbal responses are best

- Be aware of participant "types" to skillfully manage subtle control of the group discourse
  - "Experts", Dominant talkers, Shy participants, Ramblers
- Allow for pauses (5 seconds recommended)
- Have set probes at the ready to enrich data
  - "Can you tell me more? Can you explain further?"
  - "Can you provide an example?"
  - Check for agreement/disagreement around key assertions/comments

Appendix E

Focus Group Protocols for Parents

<u>Introduction</u>
Good afternoon and welcome to our focus group session. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk about family, school, and community partnerships. As I shared before, I am [First Name] [Last Name], and I am a doctoral candidate at Vanderbilt University. We will be on a first-name basis tonight, and we won't use any names for the project. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

As we explained earlier this afternoon, our project is focused on supporting students' educational and developmental needs with school, family, and community partnerships. The results from this focus group will be used in conjunction with other data to provide recommendations to your school community. We invited you to participate in this focus group because, as a parent, you play an integral role in supporting your child(ren)'s educational experience.

A few housekeeping items to get out of the way:
- My role as the moderator will be to prompt the group with questions and guide the discussion as needed.
- There are no wrong answers but rather different points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.
- You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views.
- I encourage you to talk to and respond to one another throughout this session.
- You've probably noticed my phone over here. We're audio recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down.
- Again as a reminder, please only use first names throughout our time together.
- We ask that if at all possible, you turn off your cell phones. If you cannot and if you must respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and rejoin us as quickly as you can.

<u>Discussion</u>
Well, let's begin. Before starting with questions, can you please complete the data collection tool in front of you? This information will be kept confidential.

[Don't ask this question - just here for categorization purposes] How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs?

- Generally, how effectively does the school communicate and/or collaborate with you on issues or concerns with your child?

- Generally, what are the means that CBA uses to contact and/or collaborate with you?

- Who at CBA normally contacts you regarding your child's educational or developmental performance? Does it depend on the reason for contacting you?

- When there has been a need to **communicate** with a teacher or the school on an issue with your child, can you describe how that communication took place?

- When there has been a need to **collaborate** with a teacher or the school on an issue with your child, can you describe that process?

[Don't ask this question - just here for categorization purposes] How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?

- What actions do you believe the school can do to strengthen the partnership between home and school? (No change)

- What actions do you believe that you can do to strengthen the partnership between home and school? (No change)

- Can you reflect upon a time when you collaborated positively with a teacher or the school regarding an issue or concern with your child? How would you describe the interaction? (Slight wording edit)

- How would you characterize collaboration between the local community and school for students' needs? When I say community, I am referring to any people, resources, or organizations outside of the school staff and parents. (Slight wording edit)
  - *Possible follow-up:* [If respondents struggle to answer, ask:] What might be ideal community supports that could support staff or parents with students with behavioral needs?
    - Proposed: How might the community ideally support the school or parents?

  - *Possible follow-up:* Have you had any thoughts or ideas about community supports you would like to see, but maybe you have never verbalized it previously? (No change)

  - *Possible follow-up:* Reflect upon a time when you witnessed effective collaboration between the school and the local community in service of students' needs. Can you describe the interaction? (Slight wording edit)

Conclusion

- Is there anything else you believe would help us better understand how CBA approaches working with parents to address students' educational or developmental needs through communication and collaboration?
- Of all the things we discussed today, what to you is the most important?
- [Moderator: Provide a two-three sentence summary of the discussion, then ask: Is this an adequate summary?

Thank you for being so generous with your time today, and know that your input is extremely valuable to this project.

<u>Notes/Reminders for Moderators</u>
- Avoid overly expressive reactions to commentary; simple head nods and short neutral verbal responses are best
- Be aware of participant "types" to skillfully manage subtle control of the group discourse
  - "Experts", Dominant talkers, Shy participants, Ramblers
- Allow for pauses (5 seconds recommended)
- Have set probes at the ready to enrich data
  - "Can you tell me more? Can you explain further?"
  - "Can you provide an example?"
  - Check for agreement/disagreement around key assertions/comments

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____. I'm a student in Vanderbilt-Peabody's doctoral program of leadership and learning in organizations. As part of our Capstone project, we're working with your school on its communication and collaboration with families whose children are experiencing patterns of misbehavior in school. So, today, as one of your school's leaders, the questions that I'd like to ask you deal with your thoughts and perceptions regarding your school's current strategies for communication and collaboration, your own thoughts on the role of teachers and families in a child's education, and how you currently handle patterns of misbehavior in the classroom. There are no right or wrong answers here, but you're free to choose not to answer any question I ask.

To facilitate our note-taking, we would like to audio record our discussion. Your answers are confidential. Our intent is to keep the school's and your identity anonymous, although we can't make absolute guarantees. Only I and my project teammates will have access to the recordings that we're making of our interviews and focus groups. The waiver that I'll ask you to sign states that…
1) all information will be held confidential
2) that you are participating voluntarily and may choose not to answer any question or you may stop the interview at any time, and…
3) we do not intend to inflict any harm on any party to this project.

We've planned for this interview to last one hour but may go over that slightly depending on your answers to the questions. To respect your time, we might need to push forward with some questions, but our concern is that you feel that you've given as full an answer to each question as you'd like.

Please state your name, current position, and your highest level of study. Also, please briefly summarize your experience in education, generally, and with this school.

1. Tell me about how you perceive the role of parents in their child's education.

2. Tell me about how you perceive the role of teachers in a child's education.

3. How do you define effective school-family collaboration? School-community collaboration?

4. Tell me about your communications strategy with families. What are you trying to message?

5. Tell me about your collaboration with the local community.

6. Tell me about CBA's strategy for children exhibiting patterns of misbehavior in the classroom.

7. Tell me about a situation when you (CBA) successfully collaborated with parents on a student's pattern of misbehavior.

8. Tell me about a situation when you (CBA) were unable to collaborate successfully with parents on a student's pattern of misbehavior.

9. To what do you attribute success or non-success?

(SUCCESS = partnered with a parent/family and worked on misbehavior collaboratively)

10. What do you believe would help CBA communicate and collaborate more effectively with parents?

11. Do you use a particular intervention strategy for students with a pattern of misbehavior?

12. Over the past two years, do you perceive that students' patterns of misbehavior have worsened, improved, or stayed about the same? What makes you think so?

13. What long-term issues do you see regarding CBA's current state of collaboration with parents?

14. What have you learned from your experience communicating and collaborating with families?

Thanks for your honest and frank answers. We very much appreciate your time and cooperation. Is there anything else you'd like to add that I didn't ask?

I'm going to leave my contact information with you if you think of anything else you feel is important to add. The recording of this interview will be transcribed and coded for content analysis. Thanks again for your help with our project.

Appendix G

Document Analysis Table

Document/Media Selected	Data/Content Presented	Concept Illuminated	Evidence
Registration Information- Admissions Process	webpage	new parent communication	School-family communication and collaboration; teacher-student interaction; religious aspect of school
Registration cover letter	PDF	new parent communication	school-family communication; Catholic values
Parent-Guardian handbook	webpage	parent contract	expectations; School-family communication and collaboration; teacher-student interaction; religious aspect of school; respect
Yearly calendar	webpage	parent communication/CBA outreach	school-family communication; parental engagement
Knight News	webpage	parent communication/CBA outreach	school-family communication; parental engagement
CBA Summer Academy	webpage	parent communication/CBA outreach	student engagement; school-family communication; student extracurricular
Student Contract K-2	Word doc	student contract	student-student interaction; respect; student-teacher interaction; responsibility; expectations
Student Contract 3-8	Word doc	student contract	student-student interaction; respect; student-teacher interaction; responsibility; expectations
Virtual Info Session	PPT slides	new parent communication	expectations; school-family communication; religious aspect of school

Document/Media Selected	Data/Content Presented	Concept Illuminated	Evidence
Principal Council	Word doc	CBA overview	student concerns; inconsistency; student-teacher interaction; teacher-teacher engagement; behavioral issues and effect on learning; responsibility; follow through;
Back to School Night	Word doc	parent communication/CBA outreach	expectations; responsibility, school-family communication; effective collaboration
Principal Email on Parent communication	Word doc	behavioral concerns	school-family communication; teacher-administration interaction; student-teacher interaction; intervention; escalation;
Teacher code of conduct	PDF	teacher contract	Archdiocese code of ethics; teacher-student interaction
Ambassador News	PDF	parent communication	school-family communication; parental engagement
Discipline letter	word	behavioral concerns	behavioral issues; school-family communication; expectations; school-family collaboration; intervention; escalation
Behavioral data	word	behavioral issues	behavioral issues; school-family communication; expectations; school-family collaboration; intervention; escalation
Suspension letter	word	behavioral concerns	behavioral issues; school-family communication; expectations; school-family collaboration; intervention; escalation

Appendix H

Coding Comparison Table

Codes	Principal Transcript (154)	A/Principal Transcript (60)	Staff Focus Group K-2 (240)	Staff Focus Group 3-5 (207)	Staff Focus Group 6-8 (41)	Parent Interview (94)	Parent Focus Group (175)
Student behavioral concerns (20)	2/3 (15)	1/3 (1)	0/3	1/3 (3)	0/3	0/3	1/3 (1)
Conflict/disagreement (46)	2/3 (4)	0/3	3/3 (27)	2/3 (14) M-8	1/3 (1)	0/3	0/3
Escalation (51)	2/3 (4)	2/3 (5)	3/3 (11)	3/3 (24)	3/3 (6) C-4	0/3	1/3 (1)
Partnering (49)	2/3 (7)	0/3	3/3 (16)	3/3 (22)	1/3 (2)	1/3 (2)	0/3
Responsibility (63)	2/3 (3)	0/3	3/3 (18)	3/3 (34) C-19	3/3 (7)	1/3 (1)	0/3
Consequences (36)	3/3 (11)	1/3 (2)	3/3 (9)	3/3 (13) C-7	1/3 (1)	0/3	0/3
Trends (92)	3/3 (15)	3/3 (13)	3/3 (35)	3/3 (22)	0/3	1/3 (6) M	1/3 (3)
Intervention (78)	3/3 (18) M-9	1/3 (7) M-7	3/3 (18) A-13	3/3 (29) A&C-25	1/3 (2)	1/3 (1)	2/3 (3)
Communication (4)	0/3	0/3	0/3	1/3 (1)	0/3	0/3	1/3 (3)
Means (85)	2/3 (3)	1/3 (3)	2/3 (10)	2/3 (10) C-8	3/3 (5)	2/3 (16) A-10	3/3 (38) M-19
Lessons/learning (13)	2/3 (5)	0/3	1/3 (1)	0/3	0/3	0/3	2/3 (7)
Strategy (58)	3/3 (13)	2/3 (2)	3/3 (8)	3/3 (27) C-19	0/3	3/3 (4)	1/3 (4)
School-family*** (274)	3/3/ (26) C-13	3/3 (17)	3/3 (25)	3/3 (48) A&M-41	3/3 (7)	3/3 (45)	3/3 (106)
Family-community (1)	0/3	0/3	0/3	0/3	1/3 (1)	0/3	0/3
Community-school (3)	0/3	1/3 (2)	0/3	0/3	1/3 (1)	0/3	0/3
Communication effectiveness** (156)	2/3 (4)	0/3	2/3 (13)	1/3 (9) C-9	3/3 (8) A&C-7	3/3 (32)	3/3 (90) A&C-78
Collaboration (1)	0/3	0/3	0/3	0/3	0/3	0/3	1/3 (1)
Beyond school (20)	1/3 (5)	0/3	2/3 (11) A-9	2/3 (2)	0/3	0/3	1/3 (2)
Community-school (80)	3/3 (21)	1/3 (1)	3/3 (19)	3/3 (5)	2/3 (3)	3/3 (17)	3/3 (14)
Family-community (7)	0/3	0/3	1/3 (3)	0/3	1/3 (1)	2/3 (2)	1/3 (1)
Partnership (58)	3/3 (11)	0/3	3/3 (15) A-10	2/3 (14) A-9	1/3 (1)	2/3 (5)	2/3 (12)
School-family	3/3 (28)	3/3 (3)	3/3 (16) M-9	3/3 (27)	3/3 (10) M-5	3/3 (20) A-10	3/3 (28)
Parental workshops	3/3 (11)	0/3	3/3 (11)	0/3	3/3 (4)	0/3	2/3 (3)
Engagement (4)	0/3	0/3	0/3	0/3	0/3	2/3 (4) C-3	0/3
Teacher-school eng. (19)	1/3 (2)	0/3	1/3 (2)	1/3 (8) A-8	2/3 (2)	1/3 (1)	2/3 (4)
Family engagement (91)	2/3 (11)	2/3 (2)	3/3 (35) M-25	3/3 (17)	0/3	3/3 (20) M-10	2/3 (6) A-5
Community engagement (9)	1/3	1/3 (1)	1/3 (3)	0/3	0/3	0/3	2/3 (4)
Collaboration effectiveness** (110)	2/3 (6)	2/3 (3)	2/3 (13)	3/3 (28) C-15	3/3 (11) A&C-10	3/3 (24) A-13	3/3 (25)
Supporting students (17)	2/3 (2)	1/3 (6)	1/3 (2)	1/3 (2)	1/3 (1)	0/3	1/3 (5)
Support from home (76)	2/3 (3)	1/3 (1)	3/3 (42)	2/3 (17) C-11	3/3 (5)	1/3 (1)	3/3 (7)
Influence (26)	3/3 (10)	1/3 (1)	3/3 (13)	1/3 (1)	0/3	0/3	1/3 (1)
Emotional support (42)	3/3 (7)	1/3 (5)	3/3 (16)	2/3 (10) A-9	0/3	0/3	1/3 (4)
Developmental needs (22)	3/3 (13) C-8	2/3 (3)	2/3 (4)	1/3 (2)	0/3	0/3	0/3
Educational needs (12)	1/3 (1)	1/3 (3)	1/3 (2)	1/3 (3)	0/3	0/3	2/3 (3)
Special education (12)	0/3	1/3 (2)	2/3 (7)	1/3 (1)	0/3	0/3	2/3 (2)
Behavioral needs (23)	3/3 (12) M-8	0/3	1/3 (8)	1/3 (3)	0/3	0/3	0/3
Supporting schools/teachers (25)	0/3	0/3	3/3 (14)	2/3 (7) A-7	2/3 (2)	1/3 (2)	0/3
Expectations (29)	3/3 (12)	1/3 (2)	2/3 (3)	2/3 (8)	1/3 (1)	0/3	3/3 (3)
Add. Resources (26)	1/3 (5)	0/3	1/3 (2)	2/3 (10)	0/3	3/3 (3)	3/3 (6) C-3
Trust & Respect (27)	3/3 (8)	1/3 (1)	3/3 (15)	2/3 (3)	0/3	0/3	0/3

Note: Inductive and deductive codes are listed in the first column. Transcripts are indicated along the first row. Cells indicate the level of concurrence among the three raters (i.e., 1/3, 2/3, or 3/3) and the frequency with which a code was referenced (i.e., (10)). Boldened characters represent whether a rater coded a reference more than half of its total. Highlighted cells reflect high frequency rates of codes per transcript.

Appendix I

Thematic Analysis Table

Project Questions	Pre-Coding	Themes by role: Principal (Themes may repeat)	Patterns by role: Principal	Quotations
How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs? How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?	Student behavioral concerns ● Conflict/disagreement ● Escalation ● Partnering ● Responsibility ● Consequences ● Trends ● Intervention Trust ● Respect Partnership Supporting schools/teachers ● Expectations Engagement ● Teacher-school eng. ● Family engagement Supporting students ● Support from home ● Influence ● Emotional support ● Developmental needs ● Educational needs ● Behavioral needs Collaboration ● Beyond school ● **Community-school** ● Add. Resources ● Family-community ● **School-family** ● Parental workshops Collaboration effectiveness Communication ● Means ● Lessons/learning ● Strategy ● **School-family** Communication effectiveness	Parent-school partnership Communication. School protocols and consistent application of disciplinary policy Building responsible citizens. Parent volunteers. Promoting a feeling of community Trust and collaboration Collaboration and partnership with parents Emphasis on discipline, responsibility, and building good citizens Communication and trust as crucial foundation for parent-school partnership School reliance on parent participation and involvement Importance of teacher-parent communication and accessibility Solution-based discussions and collaboration After-school support and financial, emotional, and mental health support School as a close-knit community where information-sharing occurs Importance of keeping parents informed, open-door policy, email responsiveness, meeting availability Importance of building strong relationships between students, parents, and teachers through open, supportive assistance Open acknowledgement and sharing of student achievements Open communication and information sharing that encourages discussion at home	The criticality of parental partnership for the school to succeed; the necessity of a foundation of communication and trust; otherwise, school is limited in how it can affect student behavior; negative impact of unsupportive parents Requirement for a consistent school protocol for disciplinary procedures in strategy, language, and 'toolbox' Student objective: building good citizens through discipline and responsibility Address problems early through solution-based discussion Open communication and information-sharing Parental involvement/cooperation in a variety of intervention responses (disciplinary through professional counseling), but stress positive encouragement and recognition of successes; collaboration between parents, teachers/school, and mental health professionals Perceived trend and variation of student misbehavior emphasizes the need for effective parental communication and collaboration to address issues early and in the right ways to forestall further incidents. ***Need for a better way to communicate with parents about student behavior***	"...I use all my messages, I have parents calling me, emailing me all the time. 'Hey, just so you know, this is going on.' So I feel like we've got a really good bond in terms of them, keeping me in the know of what's going on with the children and in their family lives, that we've got a really nice connection of that communication, where they want us to know what's going on." (Principal) "I would say that some behaviors…we've experienced [have been] shocking, or unexpected…just say in the past two weeks [and] have warranted more outside assistance," (Principal) *Note: the following three quotes offer an interesting contrast of perspectives between the principal, a parent, and a teacher* "...we're not just complaining to parents, we're coming at them with…solution-based conversations of [what] we see…as a problem. And what can we do to work together to come up with a solution." (Principal) 1/3 "...there doesn't seem to be follow through. There's an initial… Hey, we're excited about this, or we've identified this, or we need to do something about this. And it's like, this is what we're gonna

		Stresses importance of community partnerships that benefit the school (police, Kiwanis, VFW, Unico, other non-public schools Groups formed to offer emotional support for coping students Communication and accessibility Collaboration Support Community Relationship building Celebrating achievements Encouraging family conversations Community collaboration and partnerships Collaboration and communication between parents, teaches, and mental health providers Language, strategy, and toolbox consistency Successfully addressing student behavior concerns is a collaborative endeavor. The ways are there, the means require cooperation, partnership, and effective communication Parental involvement and cooperation Early intervention Building a caring environment Limitations and potential of school influence Influence of parental feedback that reinforces child behavior, for good or bad Value of parental workshops Trends in frequency and severity of student misbehavior The perceived upswing in the number and varying types of student	*concerns that won't make them defensive* ***Timing, approach, and responsibility are the key aspects of school protocol that need to be addressed*** *Thought: the issue seems to be establishing an effective plan for communication, generally, so that when student misbehavior issues come up, you already have a foundation or relationship of trust and respect from which to address them.*	do. And then there's no follow through, you know, maybe two weeks of whatever and then nothing; it falls away. You know, it's less of a priority and it gets pushed aside etc." (Parent) 2/3 "I like to keep it contained in the classroom for the most part and I tell the parents the same thing. No news is good news. It doesn't mean that I can't handle it. It doesn't mean that nothing is going on. It just means that I can handle it in the classroom." (Teacher) 3/3 "I've learned a lot in three years [as] the principal of this school [about] when I should be the one to communicate and when I should rely on the teacher…to communicate; when I need to make an impact [on an issue] brought to my level. And when I should not be the one to be the communicator because it makes parents very paranoid and freaked out…The minute you hear from the principal… the hairs on their necks tick up and they're very defensive. So I think that I need to create a better protocol of what comes from teachers and what comes from me." (Principal) "...really working together with the parents and communication, not waiting until it's a huge problem to communicate…making sure they know. I'm very, very big with teachers'...early intervention." (Principal)

		misbehavior create concern for larger issues that may develop, emphasizing the previous themes of early and proactive intervention Parent workshops or classes Navigating the paths of childhood development require parental awareness to avoid or address behavioral challenges Timing, approach, and responsibility are the key aspects of school protocol that need to be addressed		

Project Questions	Pre-Coding	Themes by role: Parent Focus Group	Patterns by role: Parent Focus Group	Quotations
How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs? How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?	Student behavioral concerns ● Conflict/disagreement ● Escalation ● Partnering ● Responsibility ● Consequences ● Trends ● Intervention Trust ● Respect Partnership Supporting schools/teachers ● Expectations Engagement ● Teacher-school eng. ● Family engagement Supporting students ● Support from home ● Influence ● Emotional support ● Developmental needs ● Educational needs ● Behavioral needs Collaboration ● Beyond school ● Community-school ● Add. Resources ● Family-community ● School-family ● Parental workshops Collaboration effectiveness Communication ● **Means** ● Lessons/learning	School-parent communication Communication improvement Generally, communication could improve on specific issues (timeliness, consistency, promptness) Communication related to specific issues is good, generally Length of time at the school may affect parents' impressions of communication efficacy Means of communication Communication improvement (open communication, clear, concise communication, consistency) Knight Newsletter (sporadic) Classroom/communication ambassador (consistency across grades) Honeywell system Direct conversations with teachers, in-person, by phone Errors in Knight News Automation or designated person to handle communication	Emphasis on better communication for specific incidents; thought communication on general issues is good. More timely communication/discussion about child's progress; overreliance on report cards School newsletter thought to be inconsistent in timeliness and accuracy; preference for direct discussion with teachers. Hard to initiate communication. However, collaboration is effective once the connection is made. Seems as if parents are the ones to reach out first. Improve follow-through by teachers. Otherwise, the issue gets escalated to the principal. Missed opportunities to learn from past mistakes; miscommunication erodes the sense of community within the school. School is still communicating like in the Covid-19 period. Communication and collaboration relate to student	*The following two quotes are from the same parent…* "...there needs to be improvement with communication. It's not consistent. And this feedback has been provided to the administration numerous times because, as parents, it's nice to keep them in the loop of when things are working out well and when things are of concern, and they need to be brought into the loop." "With regard to my child, whenever there has been something that has impacted my child, I have been immediately contacted. So I would say that from that perspective, where there is good communication." " It's very prompt, very prompt communication [communication related to a specific child]. Very, you know, clear, but [when] it comes to just in general communication, it definitely could use some improvement."

	● Strategy ● **School-family Communication effectiveness**	Follow-up emails with phone calls Communication improvement (proactive, timely) Parental involvement Report card dependent More engagement and timeliness to discuss about child's progress Parents making initial outreach to discuss child's academic performance Over-reliance on report cards, in some cases the only means of communication Communication responses (escalation to principal, initiation, follow-through/resolution) Collaboration/intervention Communication as a "stumbling block" to collaboration Once communication has been made, collaboration has been positive experience 24-48 hour response window Inconsistency from teachers prompts escalation to principal; effects on collaboration Frustration about parental initiation although it did seem to provoke improvement Frustration building regarding teachers' lack of follow-through Communication inconsistency Communication initiation Collaboration effectiveness Math example: engagement on both sides to resolve issues through extra support at-home and from teacher's tutoring	well-being, a sense of community, and problem-solving. Class ambassadors are filling the communication gap in some grades.	"...I've only been there for a short period of time, but there's been very, very little communication. No communication from the teachers. You know, I've had communication with the administration, but there's been little to no communication with the teachers. And, you know, he's a new student, [and] I'm a new parent. So just trying to guide those waters. It's a little confusing." "...it's gotten better for me on an individual basis. It wasn't always as prompt or as quickly as I'd like to receive the communication, but it has improved- on a general level, there could be some improvement." "...there are weeks where we don't get communication. So, it becomes sporadic. That comes from the principal, not from the teachers. We don't really have any communication unless, again, there's a concern…" "I do wish there was more open communication with teachers." "I feel like there just isn't the reach-out that was needed…that's where I would like to see the improvement more in terms of being able to have those conversations with the school." "...there are times when a phone call is needed, or a conversation and that is the area where I think we can see some improvement."

		Collaboration effectiveness Concerns expressed about clarity, timeliness, and follow-up More direct engagement on issues/concerns Missed an opportunity to learn from miscommunication and engage parents Miscommunication erodes sense of community within school Communication concerns School-family partnership Missed opportunities Lessons learned Sense of community Importance of partnership; challenges Lack of timely responses from principal is eroding the sense of community and parent's belief in efficacy of communication Staying involved through participation Effects of communication inefficacy on student well-being Desire for problem-solving and collaboration to address issues Lack of feedback from staff affecting partnership Home-school partnership Communication and community Parental involvement Student well-being Problem-solving Follow-though and collaboration Belief that school should bring in more outside resources for supplemental learning School hasn't recovered or regained pre-Covid communication practices Clear, consistent, timely communication Classroom observations/open forums		"I think email can be very informative when it's concise and written well; what I find is that sometimes the information is not clear, or clearly written in a manner that you can follow." "I would say that there's no contact unless the child is doing very poorly in a subject or there's a concern with his curriculum, and that's when the teachers would contact us. Otherwise, we hear progress when the report cards are sent home." "...in terms of a performance issue, you will get a phone call, but it's just not as quick as I would like to know about it…so, the sooner the better….to help resolve any issues or provide additional support at home or with the services that can be brought in. Again, I feel like it's not soon enough." "There should be a little bit more engagement, both ways, and we shouldn't just rely on that check of the report cards because if something can be mitigated a lot sooner, it would be better for the student." "I do believe that [an] expectation [should be] set within the school…that they [teachers] have to respond within 24 to 48 hours. However, I can speak to examples where I have sent out numerous emails to the same teacher and I get no response, and I've had to escalate the concern…to the principal. And then, that sometimes gets lost because I don't get a response from her. And

		Connection between outreach/parental engagement with collaboration efficacy and developing a sense of community Emphasis on initial communication outreach, parental involvement, and face-to-face communication to strengthen school-family partnership Renew pre-Covid communication practices School-community collaboration Outside resources Community outreach/involvement Effects of Covid-19 Communication Sense of community Communication improvement as a pathway to better partnership efforts		sometimes you never get a response depending upon the topic." "...we've had conversations, everyone jumped in, they've been supportive…there was real support there when [it was] needed it. So it's really just that first step of identifying an opportunity versus an issue. That, for me, is always a stumbling block. But once we have that conversation and we come up with a plan, it's actually been good. I feel like I get this support." "Once we've made that initial contact with the teacher and we have established time whether it be face- to-face or on a call to talk through the issue, it has been a collaborative effort, where we are instructed or given advice on what things to do at home that can help assist with the issue. And then what [the teacher] may be doing in the classroom to help deal with the issue or help assist with the problem. The problem is what I'm trying to say. I would love to see the communication in the beginning," "There is an opportunity that has been missed. A really, really big opportunity that has been missed…lessons learned and how to address these types of situations." "The sense of community has been eroded- it has eroded so much. And things have changed so much in the wrong direction…" "I wish there was a way for them to maybe adjust how they do certain

				things so that parents can always feel their needs are met…there are times when I'm like, Well, should I even bother if I'm reaching out to someone and I'm not really getting anything back? No feedback. You know what I mean? Or no collaboration across the board. At times I feel like my [child] does not want to go to school because the principal doesn't listen, or this doesn't happen, or the teachers aren't listening, and I understand that concern." "I have tried to reach out to the teachers in the past. That's what I've done to try and maintain our partnership. And when I talk to them, I really try to reinforce that it's a partnership because they need me at home, and I need them there. So we can work together and try and just make sure that everything is going the way that we need it to, but there are still some things [that] I wish would happen, but I will just continue to reach out to them." "...as we began to overcome COVID and come back to normal, or what we're calling normal these days, I would say that those programs and those opportunities to have outreach into the community have not necessarily come back." "I think there's a lot that's good there and I just wish we could build upon it, especially bringing the parents into the fold more and being able to have that communication that's clear and concise and just really timely."

				"I think that if parents were to get the opportunity to sit down in the classroom and observe, like how they're teaching and just the interactions, I think it would settle a lot of the uneasiness that we're feeling. I know for sure parents used to take advantage of that opportunity in the past. And, there seemed to be more of a partnership there because you were invited into the classroom and you were able to talk to the teacher. Probably a little bit more frequently. That would be my one suggestion that I think worked great…it was a great opportunity. And I think a lot of parents would probably be happy to have that opportunity again." "...that sense of community. I mean, that's an overarching theme for everything…The community feel is what's the most important for me…community within the school is important-feeling like you're a part of that…a lot of these practices were born out of the pandemic and we may need to dial it down a little bit and bring back that human element. Communicate a bit more face-to-face."

Project Questions	Pre-Coding	Themes by role: Staff, Grades 6-8, Focus Group	Patterns by role: Staff, Grades 6-8, Focus Group	Quotations
How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs?	Student behavioral concerns ● Conflict/disagreement ● Escalation ● Partnering ● Responsibility ● Consequences ● Trends ● Intervention ● Trust	Responsibility for communication Communication means Collaboration	Reliance on principal Email Inconsistent parental response Attempts to talk during drop-off/pick-up times Inconsistent parental response Disbelief of parents; taking the child's side	

Project Questions	Pre-Coding	Themes by role	Patterns by role	Quotations
How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?	● Respect Partnership Supporting schools/teachers ● Expectations Engagement ● Teacher-school eng. ● Family engagement Supporting students ● Support from home ● Influence ● Emotional support ● Developmental needs ● Educational needs ● Behavioral needs Collaboration ● Beyond school ● Community-school ● Add. Resources ● Family-community ● **School-family** ● Parental workshops Collaboration effectiveness Communication ● Means ● Lessons/learning ● Strategy ● School-family **Communication effectiveness**	Trust between parents and teachers Responsibility; escalation Parent, teacher roles Collaboration effectiveness Communication effectiveness Parental workshops Teacher role and self-efficacy Collaboration effectiveness Teacher self-reflection Community	Appreciation for principal's support; recognize efforts and hard work Limited awareness outside their own classroom, group (?) Lack of understanding perspectives as a potential hindrance to engagement/partnership 'We're not the problem, they're the problem' Improving role construct and parental self-efficacy Limited insight into their own role in improvement There are success stories, but teachers did not attribute success to anyone Lack of awareness; no acknowledgment of any relationships with the outside community or extended educational community	

Project Questions	Pre-Coding	Themes by role: Staff Focus Group, K-2	Patterns by role: Staff Focus Group, K-2	Quotations
How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs? How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?	Student behavioral concerns ● Conflict/disagreement ● Escalation ● Partnering ● Responsibility ● Consequences ● **Trends** ● Intervention Trust ● Respect Partnership Supporting schools/teachers ● Expectations Engagement ● Teacher-school eng. ● **Family engagement** Supporting students ● **Support from home** ● Influence	Teachers as the first to address behavioral problems Contacts parents through email or F2F at pick-up time; if problems continue, then conference with parents; eventually discuss intervention with pediatrician or therapist (child-study team: observation by educational therapy specialist, social worker; discuss results with parents and principal to decide on further action) Necessity for parental collaboration to achieve successful outcomes with children Concern about parental indifference or detachment; diagreements with teacher	Recognition that parental collaboration and engagement is necessary for student well-being and success, but concern that parents don't respect teachers' experience or trust their in-classroom accounts of student (mis)behavior. There is a lack of teamwork or partnership between teachers and parents. The perception is that parents are absent partners in their child's educational experience. The perception is that over the past few years, children are experiencing more learning disabilities and demonstrating more behavior problems.	"In my experience, the more…support you get from the parents, the better it is for the child and their behaviors; you see an improvement with when you're on the same page with the parents. If the parents aren't following up at home, it's really like you're spinning your wheels here because, you know, they really need to." (K-2 Teacher) "...the child needs to know that the parent and the teacher are on the same course…when they know they're not right, or when they know that the teacher is always the bad guy and the parent is very defensive. Then then the

	● Emotional support ● Developmental needs ● Educational needs ● Behavioral needs Collaboration ● Beyond school ● Community-school ● Add. Resources ● Family-community ● School-family ● Parental workshops Collaboration effectiveness Communication ● Means ● Lessons/learning ● Strategy ● School-family Communication effectiveness	perceptions and experiences in the classroom' less than 50% participation with projects to connect schoo and home Perceived trend toward more learning disabilities Conflicting attitudes about parental involvement at school (concerns v. can't encourage them to come in) Younger students value teacher attention; don;t feel love at home Principal supportive with parents; good background to address behavioral problems; very involved with children *(Note: principal's background as a behavioralist makes her specially sensitive to trends in the school)* Parenting classes; parents not realizing how they might contribute to children's well-being in the long run Teachers don't perceive connections with community groups.		behavior is worse." (K-2 Teacher) "The last five years it seems that we have more behavior problems…" (K-2 Teacher) "...I tell the parents in our back to school night is like, we're a team. And if one of us does not do our part, it's not going to work. So that means the student, the parent, and the teacher all have to do our part. And a lot of times the one part that's missing is the parent." (K-2 Teacher) "I do think there's a lot of a lot more learning disabilities [than I]…ever remember." (K-2 Teacher) "But we really don't like parents coming into the classroom, because we've experienced some parents videoing other students in the room." (K-2 Teacher) "Help them as parents to enjoy the process [of raising a child] and enjoy their children and their childhood." (K-2 Teacher) "...we have the little ones and only imagine what's going on. It's only going to get worse." (K-2Teacher) "We had a mom turn off her cell phone because she doesn't want to hear that there might be something wrong with their kid." (K-2 Teacher) "...our parents don't really respect…us as teachers, right? They don't respect the years of experience or education and the knowledge that we have…we're not trying to…criticize the parent if there's a problem with their child…it[s]

				just…there's something not right here. Let's fix it. Let's see what we can do to help your child…" (K-2 Teacher)

Project Questions	Pre-Coding	Themes by role: Staff Focus Group, 3-5	Patterns by role: Staff Focus Group, 3-5	Quotations
How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs? How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?	Student behavioral concerns ● Conflict/disagreement ● Escalation ● Partnering ● Responsibility ● Consequences ● Trends ● **Intervention** Trust ● Respect Partnership Supporting schools/teachers ● Expectations Engagement ● Teacher-school eng. ● Family engagement Supporting students ● Support from home ● Influence ● Emotional support ● Developmental needs ● Educational needs ● Behavioral needs Collaboration ● Beyond school ● Community-school ● Add. Resources ● Family-community ● School-family ● Parental workshops ● **Collaboration effectiveness** Communication ● Means ● Lessons/learning ● Strategy ● **School-family** Communication effectiveness	Preference for keeping student misbehavior concerns contained in the classroom. Some indications that teachers partner on misbehavior issues. Escalates to parents or principal if severe. Frustration with a perceived trend that parents more frequently express disbelief about accounts of student misbehavior or seem to discount teacher reports. Perception that student behavior issues are increasing. Expressed frustration that parents don't respond to attempts to communicate; not sure what parents' expectations are for these grade levels. Some accounts of positive, productive collaboration with parents (despite previous). Lack of awareness of any community connections. Expressed the perception that more consistency and collaboration are needed among teachers in handling student misbehavior.	Some teachers have opted to keep classroom misbehavior issues to themselves rather than struggle with trying to convince parents that there is an issue. Behavior issues are taking time away from learning and causing an increased workload on an already over-burdened school leadership.	"...I'm going to be honest. When you [mention] [a problem] to a parent, like this happened today and I'm not really happy, and this was the behavior, and they say, Well, boys [are] boys. The second time that happens and then I'm done. So then I stop, and if I'm honest, I don't actually ever include them again. I just handle it on my own…" (3-5 Teacher) "...I don't tell the parents because there's nothing that comes back. You know, they just kind of laugh it off." (3-5 Teacher) "...there [have] been good conversations and I [have seen a] change in behavior, but then there have been instances where I get the Oh, it's not that big of a deal. Or it's sometimes…I'm offending you by telling you about this. So now it's, do I want to deal with having to fight with you when I send this email? I am kind of not in the mood to fight at this point. No, I don't want it to be a back-and-forth through email about why I'm wrong, and then I just throw my hands up. I deal with the child in my classroom." (3-5 Teacher) "...when I communicate with parents, I just try to give them the blatant facts. I keep my opinion out of it as much as possible. And I just say this is the situation. This is why it's wrong. It is against our rules and regulations. This

				is the consequence [of] it. Sometimes they're like, thank you so much. I'll talk to them, and let's hope this never happens again. But other parents make excuses for their kids. Slide it under the rug." (3-5 Teacher) "You want to say to the parent, I get nothing from making up stories about your child. So if I'm telling you this is happening, it's because I'm watching it with my own eyes. I could look the other way and just let it escalate. And then later, you're asking why didn't I tell you this. Ultimately, this is why I didn't tell you because when I do say something to you, either you think I'm lying or, you know, and I mean, I'm good for saying I get nothing out of lying about your child." (3-5 Teacher) "...I have 16 in here [the classroom], maybe I could count…on one hand, how many of them are actually…okay…" (3-5 Teacher) "...sometimes it's really hard [beacuse] we have more behavioral issues probably than before. Or maybe we just didn't always become aware of the issues." (3-5 Teacher) "Sometimes I think we spend so much time on behavior or trying to address those behaviors. Learning gets shortened [at] certain times because of it." (3-5 Teacher) "The [principal] and the vice principal take on a lot. They go above and beyond and I feel like in just observing this year alone, I feel like there needs to be someone who literally just handles that for them.

				Because they're inundated with running the school itself and then trying to put out the fires with the behavior, but then you've got the kid [who] really, really needs help. And I think to throw that on them…is a lot. So I feel like they need somebody like a supporting staff member- [a] disciplinarian of some sort. Disciplinary counseling. That's just that person's job." (3-5 Teacher]

Project Questions	Pre-Coding	Themes by role: Assistant Principal	Patterns by role: Assistant Principal	Quotations
How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs? How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?	Student behavioral concerns ● Conflict/disagreement ● Escalation ● Partnering ● Responsibility ● Consequences ● **Trends** ● Intervention Trust ● Respect Partnership Supporting schools/teachers ● Expectations Engagement ● Teacher-school eng. ● Family engagement Supporting students ● Support from home ● Influence ● Emotional support ● Developmental needs ● Educational needs ● Behavioral needs Collaboration ● Beyond school ● Community-school ● Add. Resources ● Family-community ● School-family ● Parental workshops Collaboration effectiveness Communication ● Means	Regardless of the means of communication (email, phone, F2F), the school reaches out to parents promptly, as needed. Concern regarding children's mental health pre-dated Covid. But the pandemic exacerbated the problems and contributed to the children's sense of isolation. Concern for the problems that children are facing in today's world and the inability to reach them or make them aware of what's really important in life.	While the school is proactively addressing student behavior concerns, the assistant principal expressed her personal concern that today's students may be ill-equipped to deal with life's difficulties.	"I have always found it beneficial to speak to parents before the children get home from school, depending, again, what the issue might be. And that seems to work best. We all see things from our own perspective. But children sometimes…see it much differently." (A/Principal) "Times have changed. Children have changed. Expectations have changed." (A/Principal) "I always think of the phrase…that you are their parents when they[the parents are] not there, and I would want someone to give to my children or my grandchildren the same compassion that you try to give to others." (A/Principal)

	● Lessons/learning ● Strategy ● **School-family** Communication effectiveness			

Project Questions	Pre-Coding	Themes by role: Parent Interview	Patterns by role: Parent Interview	Quotations
How do CBA and its families practice communication and collaboration to support students with behavioral needs? How can CBA provide effective school-home-community collaboration that contributes to supporting students with behavioral needs?	Student behavioral concerns ● Conflict/disagreement ● Escalation ● Partnering ● Responsibility ● Consequences ● Trends ● Intervention Trust ● Respect Partnership Supporting schools/teachers ● Expectations Engagement ● Teacher-school eng. ● Family engagement Supporting students ● Support from home ● Influence ● Emotional support ● Developmental needs ● Educational needs ● Behavioral needs Collaboration ● Beyond school ● Community-school ● Add. Resources ● Family-community ● School-family ● Parental workshops **Collaboration effectiveness** Communication ● Means ● Lessons/learning ● Strategy ● **School-family** **Communication effectiveness**	School communication was described as inconsistent, sporadic, and vague, sometimes leaving parents uncertain about what prompted the message. Email as primary means of communication (used by the school to avoid F2F discussions?). More frequently hears from the administration rather than a teacher. Follow-through by the school seems to be a concern. Frustration with the perceived indifference of the school and its inability to make progress toward more meaningful communication and collaboration. Preference for in-person HSA meetings rather than Zoom meetings. Expressed a desire to bring parents into the school more. Initiated an unofficial Facebook page and a newsletter for parents to fill a gap in school communication efforts. Difficulty getting parents to volunteer for school events.	The perception is that general communication with the school is lacking and could be improved, although there were positive accounts of individualized support and collaboration with the teaching staff. Parents have set up an informal shadow communications network (fB, Knight News, intra-parent communication) to provide consistent, accurate information about school events and programs. The feeling is that parents have to initiate outreach to the teachers to address concerns they have with their child's education. (*parallels teacher accounts of keeping classroom behavior issues to themselves*) Lack of follow-through on parental concerns. The (perceived) reluctance of teachers to engage face-to-face.	"There's an initial… 'Hey, we're excited about this, or we've identified this, or we need to do something about this. And it's like, this is what we're gonna do.' And then there's no follow-through [for] maybe two weeks…and then nothing; it falls away. You know, it's less of a priority and it gets pushed aside…" (Parent Interview) "Most of the resolution is really on our part, the parents' part, you know, and we now know what needs to be done. So we'll make sure it's done. And I feel like at that point, they kind of wash their hands of it." (Parent Interview) "...on an individual level, the collaboration is only during the call or meeting. And then after that, as I said, there really isn't any other involvement. On a broader spectrum, if there are issues, I feel like there isn't much collaboration between the administration and the families. One of the things that we have tried to do over the years - and have asked for - would be to have…regular meetings; some schools call them PTOs. We call them an HSA, where, you know, teachers, administrators, board members, and parents from the general community could come together and ask questions, [and] raise concerns. You know, have some vehicle…to express other than just sending an email. That has not happened and that has been

frustrating as well." (Parent Interview)

"I think we need to do more to bring the parents into the school. And I say that understanding that that's easier said than done. But we need to have those meetings on the calendar. We need to make sure that they happen, even if it means setting an agenda and having a different topic every month so that they feel like it's a purposeful meeting. It's not just showing up. But there's someone there to address a specific issue. Even if it's a speaker, or you know, I don't know but I think there needs to be [a] more in-person connection with the parents to get them involved and engaged and to want to support the school other than just paying tuition." (Parent Interview)

"One of the things that I did because I saw that there was a gap was put together a Facebook page for parents…as a space for all of the [CBA] parents to come and look for information… And then…this year, I created a parent newsletter that goes out every week…it goes out at the same time on the same day every week. And it has everything that's going on in the school that week. With links to the school website, the Facebook page, and the hot lunch vendor. So I'm trying to help bridge the gap between parents in the school because [the] information was getting lost or it wasn't getting communicated." (Parent Interview)

"...I do try to make an effort. If my son comes home and says, oh, this happened. You know, this

| | | | | was really great or I had so much fun or I really loved class, or whatever…I will reach out to the teacher and send them an email and say, hey, I just want you to know I really appreciated it, it was great, or you did a great job." (Parent Interview) (Note: example of 'reverse' outreach, parent to teacher)

"...I will tell you, it's not a problem unique to [CBA]; it's very hard to get parent volunteers. Harder so since COVID, and there's definitely, I feel like, a disconnect. We are constantly sending home invitations to sign up for different events and it's usually the same 10 families…that help. That has been a stumbling block for us and we haven't quite figured out how do we…get past that." (Parent Interview)

"I know every situation is different. Every child's need is different, but there seems to be a perception that there's a reluctance to really engage in-person… it's just that follow through. It's just checking in and making sure you know, hey, we spoke about this two months ago. How are we doing? What's the progress, you know?" (Parent Interview) |
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