

BUILDING TEACHERS' CAPACITY TO ENGAGE WITH FAMILIES EXPERIENCING
RACE-BASED TRAUMATIC STRESS

A disquisition presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of
Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

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March 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The completion of this disquisition would not have been possible without the support and patience of my chair, Dr. Darrius Stanley. Your constant pushing, support, and patience are what got me through. You told me from the beginning you had my back and you were true to your word. And for that, I will be forever grateful.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Robert Crow, Dr. Charmion Rush, and Dr. Diane Villwock for letting my defense be an enjoyable moment, and for your excellent comments and suggestions.

Thank you Dr. Brandi Hinnant-Crawford who has been an unofficial mentor. Your willingness to take time from your busy schedule to provide support and make me sound “as smart as you” is greatly appreciated. You made the numbers less scary.

Thank you to the WCU Education Leadership staff. It is because of each of you that I have grown as an individual and a scholar.

I am forever thankful to my tribe – Dr. Marlow M. Artis and Dr. Shanice R. Harrington. Thanks for the laughs, the love, and the prayers! By God’s grace – WE DID IT!!!

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DEDICATION

Mama (Mary M. Marlin) you prayed and Daddy (Carl Marlin, Jr.) you watched over me – this work is for ancestors and my grandchildren!

TWENTY YEARS...TWENTY YEARS... and you three always believed.

This is dedicated to my why, my sons, and my superhero, Johnny.

The most important role I have in life is being the mother to two of the most amazingly brilliant young men in the world, Jonathan Carl Marlin Smith and Cameron Jamal Woodrow Smith. They are my purpose in life and the reason I have dedicated my life to education and equity.

Jonathan, you are “My Baby.” You taught me what it is to love outside of myself. Because of you, I know how important it is to fight and ensure the world sees the brilliance of Black children.

Cameron, you are my “Big Boy.” You have taught me to be “adventuresome” and brave. Because of you, I know there isn’t an obstacle in the world I can’t overcome. You keep me honest and always focused on being of service to others.

To the air I breathe – Johnny! There are no words to describe the depth of my love for you. You have and continue to, sacrifice so much to make all of my dreams come true. You believe in me more than I believe in myself. Under God’s direction, you love, support, and protect our family. It is because of you that all things are possible. I am beyond blessed to have you in my life. I LOVE ME SOME YOU!!

“She is strong and is respected by the people. She looks forward to the future with joy.” – Proverbs 31:25 (ICB) Thank you, God!

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ABSTRACT

BUILDING TEACHERS' CAPACITY TO ENGAGE WITH FAMILIES EXPERIENCING RACE-BASED TRAUMATIC STRESS

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Research shows when families and communities are engaged in their schools, students have improved basic skills, higher rates of homework completion, improved attendance, and fewer discipline problems. (Deslandes et al., 2015; Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). In response, the educational system expects and often implements policies that require schools to partner with families in an effort to improve the academic and social-emotional development of students. While given the mandate, educators are not given the tools to develop relationships with families, especially families of color. This improvement initiative focused on providing formalized, research-informed, professional development to teachers which challenged their beliefs in their ability to effectively partner with Black families experiencing race-based traumatic stress, thus improving the academic and social-emotional development of students living under these conditions. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected utilizing exit tickets, reflective journal entries, and pre-and post-survey results. The qualitative data were coded for themes, and the quantitative data were analyzed using a paired sample t-test. The overall results indicated significant growth in the educators' belief in their capacity to engage with Black families after participating in the professional development.

Key words: family engagement, race-based traumatic stress

Introduction/Problem of Practice

Research indicates that “engaged families and communities have a positive impact on students’ academic achievement, attitudes, and aspirations” (National Education Association [NEA], 2011). Students have improved basic skills, higher rates of homework completion, improved attendance, fewer discipline problems, and there are even more opportunities for skill retention through the summer when families are engaged in their students’ education (Deslandes et al., 2015; Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). When families are engaged in school it doesn’t just impact students, it has a positive impact on the families and schools (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

*Benefits of Family Engagement**

Benefits of Family Engagement		
FOR STUDENTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Higher Grades• Better Attendance• Better quality homework• Higher test scores• Better self-esteem• More positive attitudes• Improved behavior• Fewer Suspensions• Less likely to drop out of school• Fewer special education placements• Bridge gap between home culture and school culture	FOR PARENTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn how and are more willing to assist their children at home• More aware of school procedure / policies• More supportive of children’s overall needs• Develop a better perception and commitment to the school• More positive view of teachers• More confidence in their parenting skills• More willing to be a part of decision-making teams	FOR SCHOOLS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve Staff Morale• Higher Student Achievement• Better reputation in the community• Improve relationships with families• Better understanding of the culture/diversity of students• Better community support• Staff report increase in job satisfaction

Note. Benefits of Family Engagement adapted from Sapungan and Sapungan (2014)

As a result, schools expect, and policies often mandate, that educators partner with families in an effort to improve the academic and social-emotional development of students. Understanding the positive impact of parental engagement on students the simple answer would appear to be to

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have teachers engage and develop partnerships with families. Yet, educators (72% of principals, 75% of teachers) rank engaging families, and the community to improve student education as a challenging or very challenging task (MetLife, 2013).

In 2014, researcher and family engagement expert Dr. Karen Mapp, along with the U.S. Department of Education and Southwest Education Development, designed a dual-capacity family partnership framework to assist schools in building the capacity of their educators and families to develop a partnership around student success. While the framework was effective, Dr. Mapp wanted to know how it could be improved. Her findings resulted in a second version of the framework with added essential conditions. With the new framework, Dr. Mapp emphasized the importance of relational-trust, stating that “the *relationship*, the development of relational trust between home and school, is key for any other partnership work to actually take place” (Boudreau, 2020). Relational-trust is engaging in cultivating culturally responsive and respectful practices with families. It is based on four elements - respect, competence, integrity, and personal regard (Mapp, 2021).

According to Amatea et al. (2012) and the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement [NAFSCE], n.d.) the major reasons teachers have difficulty connecting with families is because they lack the skills and training on how to develop relationships with families. Studies show that teachers' attitudes and perceptions of families are based on their participation at the school site (Blitz et al., 2013; Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Hauser-Cram et al., 2003). Eighty-four percent of teachers stated they would prefer to work in a school with engaged families than a school with higher pay (NAFSCE, n.d.). Teachers become exasperated with

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families when they believe the families are not connected to schools or involved in their student's education the way the school deems appropriate.

Many school districts respond to the issue of family disengagement by trying to “fix” the parents. This is evident by the type of parent workshops offered to families; as well as the type of staff development opportunities regarding family engagement offered for staff. The policies and practices they implement view perceived disengaged parents, not as partners but often characterized these families “as a needy or problematic target population” (Bertrand et al., 2018, p. 8). Although schools try, efforts to “train” and/or “change” families to fit into a system that is not designed to address their real-life issues and concerns, continue to be ineffective. For example, a one-time, two-hour training focused on family engagement strategies rarely alters the mindset of teachers who are disconnected from the lives of their students outside of the school; nor does it engage families who have a negative view of school (Amatea et al., 2012).

When schools lack a deep understanding of the communities' culture and values it impacts the school's abilities to provide the best educational services to their students and is especially detrimental to some of their most vulnerable populations. Educators need to become knowledgeable and develop an understanding of the historical and lived experiences of their families in order to maximize their ability to connect with them and better serve students. While schools may not have the power to control circumstances outside of their buildings that impede traditional engagement they must then focus on those things that are within the scope of their control.

In addition, frustration often increases as teachers become overwhelmed working in isolation to connect with families. It's important for teachers and schools to understand that family engagement is not the responsibility of an individual teacher. Family engagement is the

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responsibility of the entire school. To be truly effective and sustainable it must be organic and interwoven into the school's culture, and include every adult and organization within the school community. Just as every child should have an adult in the school to connect with, every family should have an individual in the school with whom to connect, and it does not have to be the classroom teacher.

Renowned family engagement researcher, Dr. Steve Constantino, states "People are not born disengaged but become disengaged because of the circumstances in their lives" (Constantino, 2016, p. 31). For Black families living in America, these circumstances may largely be a result of the race-based traumatic stress (RBTS) they are experiencing. This improvement initiative will focus on the school's ability to engage with Black families/parents. In this case, Blacks will refer to descendants of individuals held in American chattel slavery; and family/parents refer to any adult serving in a custodial role in a student's life. Race-based traumatic stress is mental and emotional stress/injury caused by real or perceived incidents of racial bias, discrimination, racism, and/or hate crimes.

Definitions

The following terms will be utilized in this report. The definition of these words and phrases may vary depending upon the books, studies, reports, etc. in which they appear. The definitions below are to provide clarity to this specific report.

- **Blacks:** Racial term utilized to refer to those individuals who have, depending on the specific time in history, previously been referred to as Negroes, Colored, Afro Americans, etc. and whose ethnicity is more closely connected to their sociocultural heritage than to their racial group; individuals who are descendants of American born slaves, as opposed to individuals who are first-, second-, or third-generation immigrants

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to America. (The term designated by the original writer - Negro, African American, or Black - will be used when giving direct quotes).

- **Family Engagement:** A full, equal, and equitable partnership among families, educators, and community partners to promote children's learning and development from birth through college and career (Mapp, 2021).
- **Invisible engagement:** Learning that occurs in the home, away from school and it has as much impact on student learning as what happens inside of school (Constantino, 2016).
- **Marginalize:** to relegate a group or person to an unimportant or powerless position within a society
- **Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (P.T.S.S.):** DeGruy's theory that due to slavery, continuous experience of oppression, and institutionalized racism Blacks suffer from multigenerational trauma that often expresses itself in behaviors and beliefs that are misunderstood by the majority society (DeGruy, 2017).
- **Race-Based Traumatic Stress (RBTS):** Mental and emotional stress/injury caused by real or perceived incidents of racial bias, discrimination, racism, and/or hate crimes, such as but not limited to threats, humiliation, violence, and witnessing harm to People of Color and Indigenous individuals. (The term designated by the original writer - Racism-Related Stress, Racial Stress, Racial Trauma- will be used when giving direct quotes) (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019).
- **Relational-trust** - Engaging in cultivating culturally responsive and respectful practices with families. It is based on four elements - respect, competence, integrity, and personal regard (Mapp, 2021).

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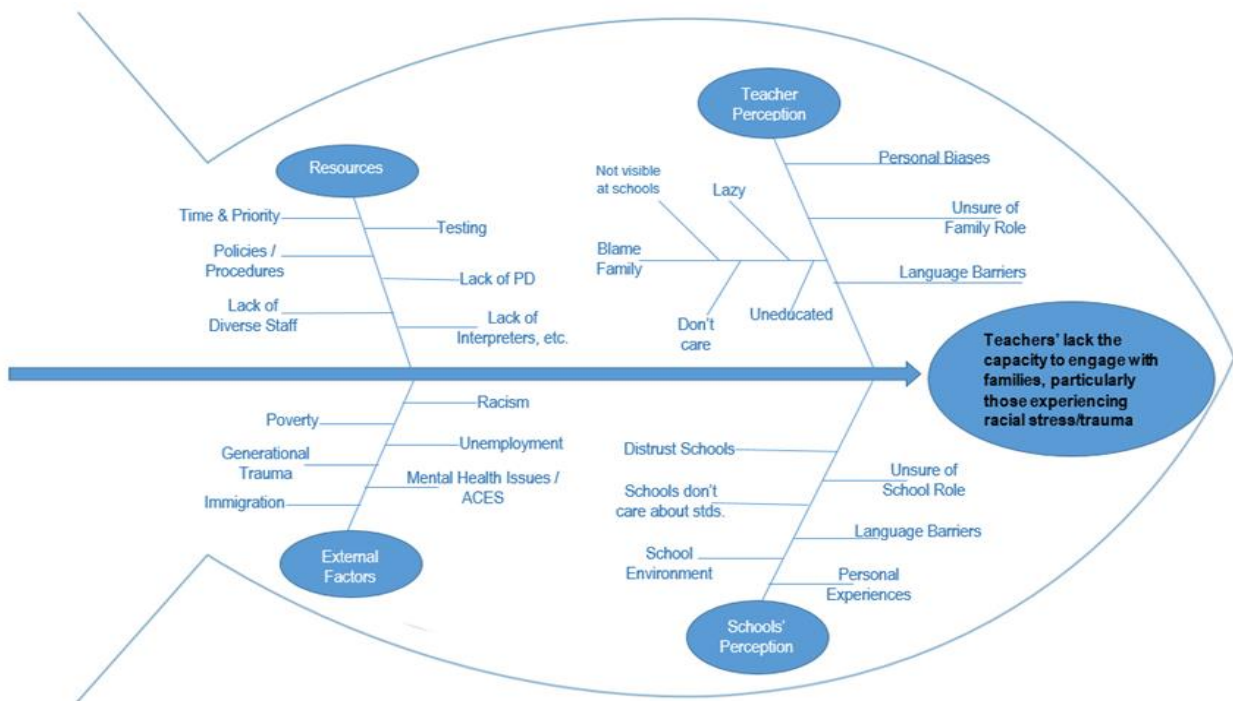
- **Trauma:** An experience, real or perceived, that results in an individual feeling hopeless, helpless, and at times fearing for their safety or survival.

Statement of Problem

Research states that educators have a difficult time developing relationships with families of color, negatively impacting the academic achievement and socio-emotional development of their students (Amatea, et al, 2012; Anderson et al, 2019). Schools often identify why families are not engaged. Some of these reasons are represented in the Ishikawa's Fishbone diagram (see figure below).

Figure 2

Ishikawa's Fishbone Diagram of Reasons for Parental Disengagement



Based on my research and findings from the fishbone analysis with stakeholders the reasons typically fall within four areas:

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1. Teachers' Perceptions: Teachers have negative beliefs about and/or blame the families for not connecting to the school.
2. Resources: Schools and/or districts do not provide the professional development and/or support to address issues of equity and/or family engagement. They may lack resources, such as interpreters or translation equipment to assist in facilitating communication to ESL families; and continue to implement policies/procedures that oppress Black students and other students of color.
3. Families' Perceptions: Families do not feel welcomed in the school, families have developed a strong mistrust of schools, and/or may not understand their role in the home-school partnership.
4. External Factors: Larger societal factors such as racism, poverty, mental illness, etc. that directly impact the daily lives of the families being served by the schools.

What we know is all of these factors impact parental engagement in some way. Depending on the district and school one factor may have a greater impact than others.

As previously stated, for this research I looked at improving teachers' perception of their ability to effectively partner with Black families. Amatea, et al. (2012) states that new and veteran educators who participate in professional development that requires them to examine their biases and beliefs will help shift their perception of families. I examined the relationship between teachers' perceptions of how their understanding of the experiences of Black families impacts their ability to effectively engage them in their children's education.

Positionality Statement

I grew up a Black girl in the South. As an adult, I came to realize that I was one of the

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chosen ones (or what would now be referred to as a token) to represent my community. My elders intentionally provided me with opportunities and skills to navigate the dominant culture. Because I was being raised in small-town North Carolina, and being trained to function in the “White” culture, it was essential that I understood the rules of that culture and that included the overt and covert rules of racism for me to be successful.

I have been a teacher, school administrator, and parent advocate. With over twenty years of experience in public school education and family education and coaching, I have worked in rural, urban, and suburban school districts. In each district, I’ve observed the difficulty of schools to connect with families, particularly racially marginalized families. I’ve also observed the benefits of being a knowledgeable parent or one who is perceived to be actively engaged in school.

As an educator and a Black parent, I have been able to simultaneously participate in professional development focused on family involvement and workshops designed “to teach parents how to work with schools”. Many of these activities have been specifically created for racially marginalized families. Providing such activities is becoming increasingly important in North Carolina where the teaching staff is consistently predominantly White, and our student population more diverse, and the academic performance of racially marginalized students continues to decline.

Like many Black first-generation college graduates, my husband and I left our small towns for greater opportunities. We raised two Black males in an upper-class, predominantly, White community very different from our upbringing. It was in this environment that we attempted to get them ready for future success while preparing them for the racial trauma they

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would experience. Despite my upbringing, being a bystander to my Black sons' experiences with racism completely shifted my viewpoint.

Over the years, as I delved deeper into my work and studies, I came to understand the systemic causes of why Black (and Brown) children were continuing to be unsuccessful in our educational system. At first, I struggled and became frustrated when my peers', particularly my White majority peers', misconceptions of the home life of their minority students impacted their academic achievement. It was then that I realized how much my life experiences also contributed to my passion and understanding of the subject. It is through this lens that I come to this study.

In each position, my goal has been to ensure all children, but especially Black children, have the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education. This study will specifically focus on Black families and students experiencing racial stress/trauma. The purpose of this study is to determine if formalized, research-informed, professional development provided to teachers will improve teachers' beliefs in their ability to effectively partner with families experiencing race-based traumatic stress (RBTS), thus improving the academic and social-emotional development of students living under these conditions.

Background of the Problem

Family Engagement

If schools are to effectively engage families, they must understand the difference between family involvement and family engagement. Ferlazzo (2011) states that schools who are attempting to involve parents are “doing to” parents by “identifying projects, needs, and goals then telling parents how they can contribute” (p.12), or what Barnyak and McNelly (2009) would refer to as traditional involvement activities. In contrast, a school that is engaging families is “doing with parents...leading with its ears – listening to what parents think, dream and worry

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about” (Ferlazzo, 2011, p. 12). Engagement activities typically have a direct impact on student achievement and development.

The U.S. Department of Education (2010) acknowledged

Under current law, family engagement is too often focused on a checklist of activities rather than on driving results, funding isn't always targeted to the most effective practices, and family engagement is treated as a discrete activity rather than an integrated strategy that should have a place across multiple programs (p.1).

Constantino (2016) states that family engagement is “more a process and less a string of events which families can attend...if it were as simple as implanting a list of strategies, it seems that every family would already be engaged” (p. xix).

Districts/schools often believe they are engaging families by creating a “shared vision” for family engagement. Yet, the goals for the plan are set to ensure they connect with teaching and students learning outcomes and then given to families to fulfill (Ishimaru, 2017). Rarely do the goals begin to build up the capacity of the family as a legitimate partner in the family-school partnership. Instead, the current structure of the schools establishing goals and providing activities places the school as the expert and in power and families as being deficient.

Deficit thinking is one of the most common forms of racism seen in schools (Yosso, 2005). It appears in the daily norms of schools' curriculum, instruction, partnerships, and customs which are typically rooted in White, middle-class culture and are often detrimental and oppressive to people of color (Wilson, 2019). Ford & Grantham (2003) state when educators engage in deficit thinking and hold negative, stereotypic, and counterproductive views for culturally diverse families they lower their expectations, just as they do for culturally diverse students. Principals and staff easily describe the negative attributes they associate with

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disengaged parents - lazy, stressed, too many kids, poor, unemployed, too many jobs, hard-to-reach, non-English speaking, single, rushed, overwhelmed, uncaring, etc. Surveys such as the one conducted by Deslandes et al., (2015) indicate that teachers believe they do not share the same value systems as disengaged families.

One way this negatively impacts students is when teachers believe families' values and beliefs regarding education differ from their own, they "create plans for student support based on experiences with parents who have cultural capital; they may devalue parents they perceive as lacking skills and strengths" (Blitz et al., 2013, p. 158). Bertrand et al.'s (2018) study found that California principals "often constructed working class and/or parents of color as deficient and requiring remediation, and less capable of enacting the school's agenda" (p, 27).

In Amatea et al. (2012), it was stated that parental involvement by design is connected to class and race. Because lower-income and minority families often do not meet schools' expectations of involvement, teachers view them as deficient. As a result, they believe these families lack the skills to contribute to their students' education. The school assumes it is their role to provide "such parents training either in literacy and academic skills or in parenting and school participation skills, with the goal of helping their children avoid school failure" (Amatea et al, 2012, pg. 807) and families need to change to fit into the school's "effective and equitable system" (Yosso, 2005).

Also, many preservice teacher education programs reinforce the belief that the teacher is the "expert" and that parents should come to them for assistance (Amatea et al., 2012). The lack of knowledge of students' home lives results in teachers viewing families through a deficit lens and often blaming them for the students' difficulties when entering the classroom (Amatea et al.,

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2012). Simply put, the school tended to have very little knowledge of students' home lives which led to little regard for the ability and skill sets of the family.

Educators acknowledge that families live and/or work in an environment where they may have or currently being exposed to toxic stress which is prolonged exposure to strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversities (Starr Commonwealth, 2019). Yet, they fail to realize how these environments and their circumstances are possibly impacting how parents engage in their children's educational process.

“Family engagement is a full, equal, and equitable partnership among families, educators, and community partners to promote children's learning and development from birth through college and career” (Mapp, 2021). Effective family engagement will require a shift in school culture and practices. It's important to remember that many disengaged families (and those living in poverty) are experiencing physiological and psychological stressors that may be the result of intergenerational trauma (Barnyak & McNelly 2009). These stressors accompanied by current life situations, class, gender, race, language barriers, etc. all impact families' abilities and desire to engage in their children's education. Yet, “While there are many challenges to successful family engagement practice, family apathy toward their child's education is rarely one of them” (Constantino, 2016, p. xvii). The more educators understand the impact these stressors have on Black families the better they will be at serving Black students.

Trauma

Trauma is an experience, real or perceived, that results in an individual feeling hopeless, helpless, and at times fearing for their safety or survival (Starr Commonwealth, 2019). While the experience can have an impact on a person and manifest as other psychological problems, the

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traumatic event itself, regardless of how shocking – is not a diagnosis. According to Starr Commonwealth (2019), people can be exposed to trauma in four different ways:

1. **Victim** – this individual is a direct target/casualty of the trauma (ex. victim of abuse of rape, attack),
2. **Witness** – this individual observes the trauma occurring (ex. witness domestic violence, policeman, fireman),
3. **Relationships** – this individual is related to someone who experienced the trauma (ex. sibling of someone who committed suicide),
4. **Listener/Observer** – this individual listens to/observes the details of trauma (ex. through the media, video games, therapists, social workers).

Trauma is typically experienced in three ways (Starr Commonwealth, 2019):

- **Type I** - Exposure to a single traumatic event (i.e. house fire),
- **Type II** - Repeated exposure to one type of trauma (ex. domestic violence in the home), OR exposure to one or two types of trauma (ex. domestic violence that results in divorce)
- **Type III** - Toxic Stress and Developmental Trauma Disorder (ex. the individual is exposed to multiple experiences to the point they are unable to separate which single factor is the cause of the trauma; it is often ongoing and continuous; ex. racism, poverty).

While individuals can have the same traumatic experience, how they respond to the experience varies. This can be seen by how individuals respond to the stress/trauma they have and are experiencing as Blacks in North America.

Race-Based Traumatic Stress (RBTS)

This study will focus on race-based traumatic stress (RBTS) as experienced by Black people in North America. RBTS is mental and emotional stress/injury caused by real or

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perceived incidents of racial bias, discrimination, racism, and/or hate crimes, such as but not limited to, threats, humiliation, violence, and witnessing harm to People of Color and Indigenous individuals. It is ongoing, making it a Type 3 trauma and its level of impact varies for each individual. This trauma occurs when an individual or group experiences a race-related event in their environment. Experiences such as viewing the unarmed killing of Blacks by police, witnessing the use of racial epithets, racial profiling, and microaggressions are often overlooked but can also lead to RBTS. Covert incidents such as these “cause trauma symptoms and affect psychological adjustments...[and] may be equally or even more distressing than overt discrimination” (Saleem et al., 2019, p. 3). These events are often compiled upon historical and cultural trauma that has been passed down “through both social and epigenetic mechanisms....” These vulnerabilities [have] result(ed) in a baseline of stress that is exacerbated by experiences of racial maltreatment (i.e. covert and/or overt racism)” (Saleem et al., 2019, p. 4).

According to Anderson et al. (2018), this trauma begins in utero, at birth, and throughout the development of a Black child. Studies show that as a result of the “multigenerational expression of stress reactions and the development of traumatic responses to environmental influences.... Black women and their children...have two to three times the rate of infant deaths, maternal deaths, preterm births, and low birth weight” when compared to their White and Latinx peers” (Anderson, et al, 2018, p. 55). However, Dr. Joy DeGruy theorized that the RBTS experienced by Blacks extends beyond birth, and is directly connected to their history of enslavement in America.

Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (P.T.S.S.)

Dr. Joyce DeGruy's Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (P.T.S.S.) is a syndrome that is rooted in the depravity and inhumanity imposed upon slaves and the coping mechanisms they

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created to survive physically and psychologically. According to DeGruy's theory due to slavery, continuous experience of oppression, and institutionalized racism have resulted in multigenerational trauma for Blacks that often expresses itself in behaviors and beliefs that are misunderstood by the majority society (DeGruy, 2017). Unlike Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome is not a mental disorder recognized by the American Psychological Association. Instead, P.T.S.S. can lead to PTSD (DeGruy, 2017).

“Slavery was one of the most important factors that shaped the social, psychological, economic, educational, and political development of Black people” (Sue, 1981, as cited in Davis, 2005, p. 47). The implementation of a system that legally allowed individuals to be held in bondage as the personal property was a traumatic experience for generations of Black people in America. Due to the melanin in their skin, a Black person in America did not own their body. They could be brought, sold, raped, murdered, kidnapped, separated, dehumanized, etc. without repercussion for the perpetrator.

Joy DeGruy says, “There is a myth that after slavery ended the field was even. You're free but you can't own anything” (Carney, 2016). Slaves had been granted “legal freedom” but they did not have any legal rights. Simply stating slaves were free did not change the mindset of individuals. “Mellon (1988) argued that the goal of slavery was to create within the slave a feeling of complete dependence upon and perpetual, unquestioned inferiority to the White race” (Davis, 2005, p. 49). Slavery ensured that Blacks were not equipped educationally or economically to survive in America. Many Blacks became sharecroppers on the same land in which they had been enslaved to survive. Where slave codes and laws had governed their behavior while enslaved; after slavery, their behavior was governed by unjust Jim Crow laws.

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Even as Blacks began to gain more legal rights, systemic racism has allowed White people to function from a place of privilege and Blacks to continue to be oppressed.

The 246 years (1619-1865) of chattel slavery have been described as the “root cause of the present sociocultural difference in American society” (Davis, 2005). While slavery was a system of economics and free labor for the country; it came at the loss of the physical and psychological safety of an entire race of people. This was the beginning of a system that has left Black and White people with their current positions in a racialized, caste society in America. Sadly, it is a hierarchical society that has negatively impacted both White and Black people. For generations, each racial group has socialized their children to physically and psychologically deal with the traumatizing past on which our nation was built. These perspectives continue to dictate how individuals interact within their racial groups and toward other racial and ethnic groups, in our personal lives, in the larger society, and of course in our schools.

Although there are many subcultures in America, the “African American culture is the only minority culture in the United States that was founded and created in slavery” (Davis, (2005), p.47). To survive physically and psychologically, Blacks began to socialize each generation to cope with the brutality and inhumanity of slavery. Having to endure five to ten generations of untreated trauma because of racism, oppression, and degradation has resulted in trauma echoes becoming toxic stress from slavery resounding across generations to impact children today.

Just as the oppression did not end with slavery, the need for Blacks to develop coping skills to deal with the degradation remained a necessity. Dr. Joy DeGruy (DeGruy, 2017) proposes that Blacks developed (and continue to utilize) adaptive behaviors and beliefs to survive the atrocities of institutionalized racism resulting in M.A.P.:

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- **M:** Multigenerational trauma together with continued oppression;
- **A:** Absence of opportunity to heal or access the benefits available in the society; leads to
- **P:** Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (P.T.S.S.).

According to DeGruy's theory of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome predictable patterns of behaviors may be (DeGruy, 2017):

- Vacant Esteem
 - Lack of self-esteem;
 - Feelings of hopelessness and/or depression;
 - Self-destructive outlook;
- Ever Present Anger
 - Tendency to feel angry
 - Violence against self, property, and others;
- Racist Socialization
 - Learned helplessness
 - Internalized racism
 - Academic difficulties

DeGruy further states that Whites have also been impacted by slavery and racism, and like Blacks have developed coping mechanisms. According to DeGruy, in order for Whites to psychologically deal with and continue the “pathology of pretending or keeping the secret that slavery and the brutality of it were okay” (Carney, 2016), they utilize cognitive dissonance – separating their beliefs, attitudes from their behaviors and/or actions. Yet, they have the political power to implement laws to give themselves perceived physical safety, and further oppress and victimize Black people.

The historical and daily circumstances continue to frame the perspective in which Black and White individuals come together. Having an understanding of the root cause of the behavior

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and beliefs of Black families will give educators the background knowledge necessary to develop trust and build partnerships

Continuous Impact of RBTS

The stressors from racial discrimination not only impact the individual who experiences the event but individuals who witness it and the communities in which they interact (Anderson, et al., 2019; Saleem, et al, 2019). It is especially impactful upon the family unit that attempts to support individuals experiencing discrimination. According to Anderson, et al., (2019) and Saleem, et al. (2019) ninety percent of Black people experience some form of racial discrimination as early as 8 years of age. As a result, Black parents are attempting to help their children cope with race-based stressors while dealing with their own racial trauma which can impact parents' ability to properly care for and protect their children; thus, making necessary the racial socialization process that occurs in Black communities (Anderson et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2019; Saleem et al., 2019).

The socialization of Black children transmits (verbally and nonverbally) the cultural norms and expected behavior of society from one generation to another (Anderson et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2019; Saleem et al., 2019). Like other racially marginalized children, Black children are being raised in a society whose national beliefs and ideals actually contradict their daily life experiences. For example, Black children must learn that in a country whose national creed states that “all men are created equal”, in many situations they will face, they will not be perceived as equal and may not receive equal treatment or have equal access. Therefore, Black parents understand a necessary part of their children’s upbringing must include racial socialization in which they prepare them to understand their heritage, culture, and membership in a devalued racial group in America (Lesane-Brown, 2006). This process includes the teaching of

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strategies across generations in hopes of healing and protecting their children from the pending trauma (Anderson et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2019; Comas-Dias, et al., 2019).

The socialization messages conveyed by Black parents to their children typically fall in the following categories (Anderson et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2019):

1. **Cultural Socialization** – teaching their children about race, culture, and heritage pride.
2. **Preparation for Bias** – teaching their children about the racism and discrimination they are likely to encounter.
3. **Promotion of Mistrust** – providing their children with cautionary warnings regarding interracial interaction.
4. **Promotion of Egalitarianism** – choosing to avoid explicit discussion about race or de-emphasizing racial group membership.

Most Black parents engage in cultural socialization and preparation for biases. Including the promotion of mistrust and promotion of egalitarianism, it is often dictated by the contextual factors (i.e. neighborhood, intragroup interactions, external exposure, etc.) in which they are raising their children. They are hoping that “although the effects of traumatic stress may cross generations, so may resilience” (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019, p. 2). Anderson, et al. (2018; 2019) and Comas-Dias, et. al. (2019) explain how racial trauma impacts adults and children (see Figure 3 on pg. 20).

Historically, social injustice and institutionalized racism have been utilized to prevent Black people from obtaining an education and from access to employment in America. This has hindered Black people in their quest for the American Dream. Additionally, the political and social practices of the American culture have been extremely detrimental to the achievement, economic, and social-emotional development of Black people.

“Other than the family, the primary institution that serves to perpetuate the culture of a nation was/is that nation’s education institutions – the schools” (Davis, 2005, pg. 45) In America

Figure 3

*Impact of Racial Trauma on Black Adults and Children**

Impact of Racial Trauma on Black Adults and Children	
Impact on Adults:	Impact on Children:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological distress • Depression and Anxiety Disorders • Decreases their ability to protect their children from racism/discrimination • Increase aggression • Increase vigilance and Suspicion • Increase alcohol and drug use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor sleeping habits • Poor self-esteem • Hyper-vigilance about race • Impaired academic self-concepts • Decreased school engagement • Lower academic performance • Depression and Anxiety Disorders • Narrowing Sense of Time • Irritability and Distrust

Note. Impact of Racial Trauma adapted from Anderson et, al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2019; Comas-Dias, et al., 2019

this has meant the reproduction of a culture that has constitutionally denied an entire race of people access to the skills and knowledge necessary for a decent quality of life, and in many cases, survival. Wilson (2019) states that schools are often “sites of Black suffering” where African Americans’ history, culture, and strengths are overlooked, diminished, and denied as a part of the American past and currently lived experiences. Despite this, there continues to be a strongly held belief within the Black community that education is the best route to overcome poverty and despair to obtain the American dream (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Haskins, 2001). In fact, Black parents actually want their children to reach higher levels of academic achievement and to get better jobs than they have obtained (McAdoo, 2002).

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The inequalities of American society are clearly reflected in the American education system. The Office of Civil Rights (Shores et al., 2020) found that

in districts where Black students are worse off academically or socio-economically, the districts tend to increase the educational disadvantages that Black students face. As evidence, we show that districts with inequality, segregation, and lower overall socio-economic status also have larger achievement and disciplinary gaps (para 8).

They also found when they controlled for the socioeconomic status and neighborhood context of the students, the racial disparities continued to exist; leading them to surmise that schools must be replicating the racial and structural inequalities present in larger society thus mirroring the racial discrepancies (Shores, et al., 2020).

In Davis (2005), “Barrera found that due to educators' limited understanding of African American cultural mores, their ability to effectively educate African American students was severely limited” (pg. 43). Educators continue to measure students based solely on Eurocentric standards and those who are not able to successfully assimilate become disengaged from the educational process. Realizing the current school culture limits Black students' opportunities for meaningful academic achievement and leaves them ill-prepared for the future, schools must seek means to successfully meet the needs of their students. Understanding the school is the second most important learning agency for children, it would reason that engaging families in their children's education would be an effective step towards meeting the needs of Black children and determining their level of trauma.

Wilson (2019) states that due to their hectic schedules and the pressures of work, educators “lose sight of the emotional weight and concerns involved in parents entrusting their children to educational spaces, customs, oversight (and hopefully care) that are initially foreign

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to them” (p. 54). If schools are to educate Black children, they must understand the cultural wealth Black families bring to the school environment. This begins by understanding the dispositions that are often described as angry, defensive, and aggressive are often protective mechanisms. Given their history and daily reality, Black families “may be prone to engage more as a protector in schools than a partner” (Wilson, 2019, p. 55). Black families, like other families of color, have aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capitals which are interdependent and constantly changing (Yosso, 2005). Therefore, to develop authentic relationships schools must acknowledge, and effectively utilize “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

Problem of Practice Within the Local Context

First University School district (FUS) is a suburban public school district in North Carolina comprised of 20 schools, serving approximately twelve thousand students. According to USA Today, the News and Observer, and national websites (such as Niche), it is often listed as the number one school district in North Carolina, and its high schools are typically ranked in the top 20, if not top ten, in the nation. The 2019-20 per-pupil allocation was \$12,956 - 49% local, 48% state, and nearly 3% federal funds (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2021). The largest portion of the district funds (local money) comes as a result of its high property tax and city supplement. The average household income in the city is \$65,373, with the largest percentage of the households making at least \$200,000. While this data may look impressive, 20.1% of the population lives below the poverty line. This is higher than the national average of 14%. It should also be noted that this is a sanctuary city and as such it does not cooperate with governmental agencies in regard to enforcing immigration laws and policies. As a result, there

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are a significant number of undocumented Latinx families living below the poverty level in the district who are not reporting their income.

I often refer to FUS as a district composed of “the haves and the have nots”. Teachers often report having challenges interacting with privileged, as well as, underserved families. Just like the teachers in the Deslandes et al. (2015) article many FUS teachers state that working with parents from privileged backgrounds is stressful due to the time spent responding to their excessive demands, and the constant worry of being judged; and as a result, they “try to keep well-educated parents at a distance in order to protect autonomy” (p.133). The privileged families are highly, if not overly, engaged. Yet, teachers feel they have an understanding of the culture and needs of these families.

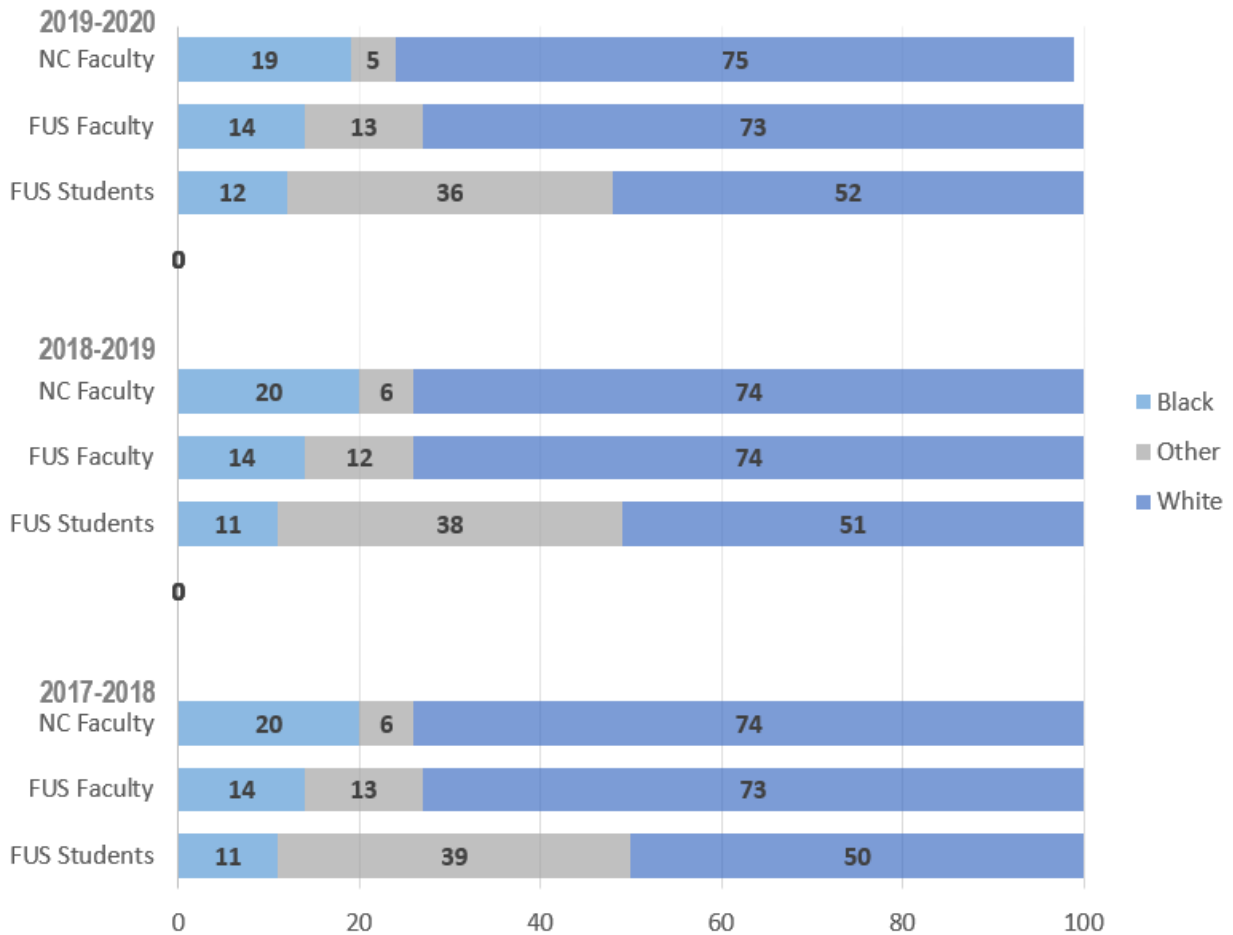
Successfully serving the “have nots” is a different problem. In the October 1, 2017 issue of a local newspaper, Slagel reported that according to a study conducted by the Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis, the district had the second-largest achievement gap between Black and White students in the United States. It had the fifth largest in the nation between Latinx and White students. The Black and Latinx students are often the children of the “have nots”, the disengaged families. The schools are not adequately serving these students; but since some students are achieving in their classes, they often contribute their lack of success to other unknown entities outside of the classroom environment, typically the family/home environment. Yet they lack the true understanding of what parental engagement is and the barriers that may prevent their families from being traditionally involved in schools.

According to the *2019 Racial Equity Report* and the district's *2019 Opening of School Report*, the racial demographics of teachers in FUS are closely aligned to the demographic makeup of North Carolina over the past five years. The most recent data shows 74% of the

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Figure 4

*Demographic Comparison of State Faculty, FUS Faculty, and FUS Students**



Note. Demographic information is presented in percentages.

teachers being White and nearly 49% of the students being non-White (see Figure 4 above).

Based on the demographic numbers, the impact of the racial makeup of the teaching staff compared to the student population isn't just a concern for the FUS district but it is a challenge for public schools in NC. The *2019 Racial Equity Report*, recommends that one way schools can equalize opportunities for students of color is by having a more diverse school staff; noting that low-income Black students who have one Black teacher in elementary school are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college. Therefore, it would appear that a quick and easy

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solution would be to simply hire more teachers of color. Yet research shows that teachers of color often have similar biases because of social disjuncture (Myers, 2015). This social disjuncture is often the result of such things as financial, educational status, and/or residential location differences between the educators of color and Black families.

Like many districts, FUS's answer has been to create parental involvement activities that "train parents" on how to be involved in the school and how they believe they should interact with their children. They have extremely active SIT and PTA teams (all are predominantly White, even the teams at the dual-language schools), they have a parent academy, and have been "talking" about equity for over twenty years. All of their plans are showing little or slow results because the goal has been to change one subset – PARENTS. The goal may instead need to be to develop a better understanding of how to work with disengaged families while empowering them to become engaged in their children's learning. Essentially changing families' and teachers' perceptions of each other.

During a March 2019, interview with two FUS parents, it was clear that parents, like educators, may not have a clear understanding of the distinction between family engagement and family involvement. Two parents, who would typically be considered disengaged were asked about their involvement in their children's education. Unsurprisingly, they measured their level of engagement against "traditional" forms of involvement and felt the need to explain why they were unable to be "involved." H. Barry (personal communication, March 19, 2019) said,

For me, we try to stay involved, but a lot of the activities that they have planned, they conflict or some of the stuff doesn't happen, it happens when people are still at work. And then a lot of the things they want during the school hour, they don't give people ample time to plan and take off of work. They'll send the email out the day or the next

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day saying, "Oh, by the way, we're having this," and so it really makes it hard to participate and makes it look like maybe you don't want us to participate.

They also stated that when they attempted to become involved in traditional ways, with PTAs or School Improvement Teams didn't feel valued or included.

...being African American they really don't want to hear my opinion or I feel like it's going to get shunned to the side..." and "...I don't necessarily fit into that socio-economic background. Would they be interested in what a poor parent has to say... (H. Barry and T. Greene, personal communication, March 19, 2019).

When questioned if they felt they were engaged in their children's education despite the fact they were not involved in the school in traditional ways, both parents agreed they were. Stating that even if it was uncomfortable for them they always showed up for their children at school. The parents understood that it was important that they were "visible" to the school staff if they were to be viewed as effective advocates for their children.

In general, Black parents report that helping their children navigate the school system is both "physically and psychologically taxing on the well-being" of the entire family (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 21). Interactions such as having to defend their children against a suspension for being insubordinate, explaining to their children why the teacher thinks the Black kids are bad or having to understand if their child is truly ADHD or if the teacher misunderstands his behavior are common concerns for Black parents as they interact with the school. Yet, they continue to see education as a segue to a better life and want their children to experience success in the educational system.

In Myer's (2015) study, Black parents reported that to have a relationship with schools there must be 1) nonjudgement by teachers and 2) mutual respect which acknowledges their

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contribution to their children's education and shows that their children matter. Both Ms. Barry and Ms. Greene felt their children's school held negative perceptions about their families and it impacted their ability to develop a positive relationship.

Ms. Barry believes that her family is being judged negatively by the elementary school because of an encounter that occurred when her oldest son (who is now in the seventh grade) was at the elementary school. She says,

Ever since that, it doesn't seem like this certain school does not like the family. And I say that because even the principal herself won't bring herself, it seems like she struggles to speak to me, but she greets everybody...So it does come across that they don't like our family. I don't know if it's cause we're poor...cause we brought an issue to the school...if it's because, you know, the children are mixed. We don't know, but it's definitely evident (H. Barry, personal communication, March 19, 2019).

This is particularly sad for Ms. Barry's family given that they have a pre-K student at the elementary school and the family will be interacting with the staff for at least another five years.

Ms. Greene believes the school perceives her negatively because she is willing to advocate for her daughter. Her daughter, Kisha has a 504 Plan, as a result, Ms. Greene feels it's necessary to stay on top of teachers (and her daughter) to ensure her daughter's academic success. From her perspective, the academic team doesn't respect her knowledge of her daughter's needs. She contributes this to teacher apathy and the fact that her daughter needs additional assistance.

I felt like the school knows that Kisha has a disability and she's been on paper. So it's like they are nonchalant with it. I tell them certain issues that I see and that she needs to work on and every time I mention anything about her, they just push it to the side, or they

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really not trying to see her improve in areas. They just keep pushing along, pushing along, pushing along, and brush it off like it's not their concern so they are just not helpful. They feel that I am too much in her business. ...it's really frustrating how they treat my kid and another child (T. Greene, personal communication, March 19, 2019).

And both parents believe they would be treated differently if their children were White. As a result, many of the families, particularly Black families, do not participate in the school because of their unwillingness to interact with unexamined racial biases by teachers and staff (Myers, 2015).

The viewpoint expressed by the FUS parents further reinforces that engaging the family in their children's education far exceeds holding activities at the school and expecting or asking families to volunteer in the school building. It reiterated the need for parents and schools to develop relationships if all students are going to be successful in school. If educators are "going to address the race-based traumatic stress Black students experience, then schools will have to find ways to build stronger partnerships with Black parents and community members" (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 24).

Theory of Improvement

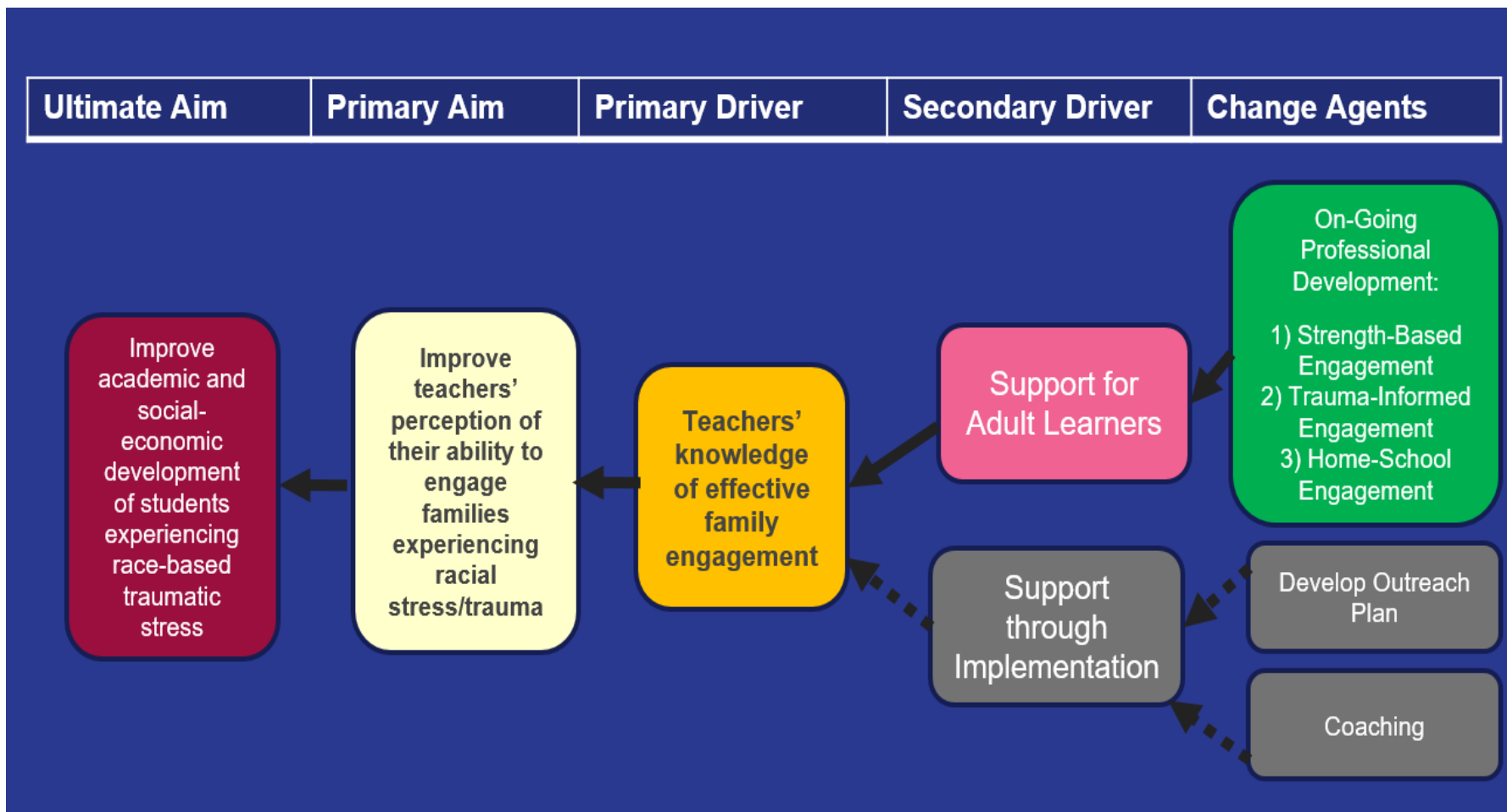
The primary aim of this study was to improve teachers' perception of their ability to engage families experiencing race-based traumatic stress. The driver diagram (Figure 5 on page 29) identifies three change agents necessary for this to begin to occur. For the purpose of this research, I focused on the professional development necessary to create a foundation to support educators.

My theory of improvement held that formalized, research-informed, professional development provided to teachers which challenges their perspectives would improve teachers'

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Figure 5:

Driver Diagram



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beliefs in their ability to effectively partner with families experiencing race-based traumatic stress, thus improving the academic and social-emotional development of students living under these conditions.

‘Just as no child should be left behind, so, too no parent should be left behind in the American educational enterprise’ (Lapp & Flood, 2004, p. 70); therefore, school districts must realize the importance that families play in children’s school success and take responsibility for bridging the home and school environments (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009, p.34).

In his book, Constantino (2016) says if schools are to engage in parental engagement they must reach out to families. Also, Blitz, et al. (2013) recommend the framework for an effective parent engagement plan must be 1) strength-based, 2) trauma-informed and 3) system-informed.

According to Epstein, “(h)istorically, most public schools have struggled to build productive relationships with parents of color, and teachers and administrators typically have been more responsive to parents who are middle-class and White” (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 24). Yet, as previously stated, educators have not been adequately prepared to engage families to impact student academic achievement and socio-emotional development. For it to be effective and authentic it will require teachers to examine their beliefs which often impair their ability to connect with families.

What is clear is that professional development around family engagement is not a one-time workshop. While single in-service activities may produce an “ah-ha moment” for some, in the end, little progress is made. According to Amatea, et al. (2012) new and veteran teachers will need to participate in high quality, ongoing professional development that will:

- Strengthen their knowledge and skills regarding working with families;

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- Address working with students from diverse populations;
- Focus on issues of multiculturalism and equity;
- Provide opportunities to question and challenge their beliefs.

As previously stated, the professional development in the study focused on three key areas - 1) *strength-based engagement*, 2) *trauma-informed engagement* 3) *system-informed engagement*.

By focusing on these areas educators can obtain the foundational knowledge necessary to help develop the skills needed to begin establishing the essential condition of relational-trust Dr. Mapp says is necessary for an effective home-school partnership.

Strength-based Engagement

The goal of strength-based engagement is to help educators begin to understand the importance of effective home-school partnerships on students, schools, and families. For this initiative, the professional development provided in the area of strength-based engagement focused on helping schools engage with Black families to increase the academic and social-emotional development of their children. Successful strength-based engagement requires educators to understand the differences between *engagement* and *involvement* and to begin examining the barriers that may prevent families from traditional engagement and involvement. In addition, educators must come to understand that a necessary requirement to effectively utilize strength-based engagement with Black families is to confront and understand their own biases and privileges, and more importantly, understand how their deficit thinking impacts the families and students they serve.

Trauma-Informed Engagement

Students are not alone, most live in some form of a family unit. And just like “traditional” families, these families need support with their students. As previously stated, most school-based

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programs focus on changing behaviors or skills, specifically those of the child. In her dissertation Houston (2014) states,

Programs that address adverse behavior exhibited by children...often do so without understanding the extent that such behaviors can be directly related to the mother's unresolved childhood dilemmas including abuse, harsh disciplinary practices, and adult stresses associated with parenthood, financial concerns, inadequate support, institutional racism, and sexism, and inadequate preparation for the parenting role (p. 8).

Organizations, such as the National Education Association, are engaging in finding ways for schools and educators to provide trauma-informed support to students (Starr Commonwealth, 2019). While there is a lot of information regarding working with students who are living in toxic environments, there is not as much about educators working with families living with racial trauma, (i.e., working with families who are learning to navigate our school systems while simultaneously dealing with the traumatic stress of being Black in America).

Educators receiving professional development in this area would examine how stressors impact families' engagement with the school system. The goal would be to help them understand the behavior they are presently encountering may be a result of P.T.S.S., generational and other traumas.

System-based engagement

The third area of professional development will be system-informed engagement. This professional development will explore how systems impact engagement and how schools should set realistic expectations as partnerships are developed with Black families as they socialize their children in the larger society. The necessary socialization that occurs in Black families explains not only how parents present in a school environment but gives context to the cultural capital and

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skills that parents bring to the home-school partnerships. Wilson (2018) states that to build a co-partnering relationship with Black families it is necessary to be responsive to the “families’ experiences, strengths, aspirations, internal diversity, and needs” (p.52). This response should be used to create what Wilson refers to as an Afro-affirmative partnership that recognizes the various “cultures, ...traditions ...SES, geographic origins, faith/religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, and individual traits...” (p.63) that create the experience of Blacks in America. More importantly, they will understand the importance of building the relational-trust necessary for effective home-school partnerships.

The professional development will be designed for educators to specifically examine their ideals towards engaging Black families experiencing race-based traumatic stress in their schools. It will be aimed to challenge educators to shift their perspective of Black parents in order to develop the capacity to build relationships with Black families for effective, asset-based home-school partnerships. It will require educators to have a specific understanding of the unique Black American experiences. As a result, educators will understand the importance of gaining and maintaining the trust of Black people.

Improvement Methodology

Design Team

The design team was made of seven individuals including myself and First University School district employees. They were the principals of the two targeted school sites, a trauma-informed trained social worker, the Director of Mental Health and Wellness, the Director of Family and Community Engagement, and the Executive Director of Professional Development. Each person was selected because of their area of expertise or access.

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The principals of each of these schools previously invited me to their schools to provide professional development for their staff regarding parental engagement, as well as to work with their parents on how to effectively advocate for their children. They are actively working on issues of equity and are ready to encourage their staff to look specifically at what is impeding effective engagement with families of color. The Director of Mental Health and Wellness and the trauma-informed social worker assisted in designing and facilitating the trauma-informed module. This collaboration ensured that we integrated and were aligned with the trauma-informed training that is currently occurring in the district. In addition to assisting with recruitment, the Executive Director of Professional Development made sure we were meeting the requirement for the participants to receive continuing education units (CEU) for participation.

Improvement Initiative

The improvement initiative focused on providing formalized, research-informed, professional development (PD) designed to help teachers partner with Black families who are experiencing race-based traumatic stress. This PD was presented in three online modules described in detail below.

Implementation Plan

Cultural change and building trust take time and effort, two qualities school staff have at a minimum. Therefore, when introducing any new initiative, it's imperative that staff understand the long-term results are worth the effort. In addition to understanding the difference between engagement and involvement, an important step is knowing that all parents want their children to succeed, even if the parents lack the tools to help them reach their goals. Effective parental engagement requires changing the culture of schools and building relational-trust with families (Constantino, 2016; Bryk, et al. 2010).

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This improvement initiative focused on providing formalized, research-informed, professional development (PD) designed to support teachers in building their capacity to engage Black families experiencing race-based traumatic stress to positively impact students' academic and social-emotional development to help teachers partner with Black families. According to Amatea, et al. (2012) when teachers have more confidence in their ability to work with and build trusting relationships with families who are different from them, it enables them to meet the needs of the students they serve.

Teachers participated in three online professional development modules which focused specifically on formalized, research-informed professional development designed to challenge and change educators' perception of their capacity to build authentic relationships with Black families. The design team intended for the modules to be presented virtually, but synchronously. Upon returning to in-person instruction during a pandemic, FUS teachers have expressed stress concern, impacting participation in professional development. As a result, the modules were restructured and offered asynchronously. This allowed teachers who volunteered to participate to complete each module at their own pace within a given window. The research-based information was divided into three modules described in detail in the "Timeline" section.

Participants

The school board was informed that the staff was experiencing an excessive amount of stress in late October 2021. The stress was largely contributed to the changes and accommodations required to help students adjust as school resumed in-person instruction amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the FUS district's responses to staffs' concerns was to allow teachers to only participate in required professional development.

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In the initial proposal, the design team suggested participants be third-, fourth-, or fifth-grade teachers because it is when students begin statewide testing and are typically being identified for additional services (exceptional, gifted, etc.). There was concern that teachers would perceive participating in the intervention as an additional task that would be increased stress for unnecessary professional development. The design team recommended 3rd - 5th-grade teachers remain a priority but to ensure there were enough participants, any K-5th grade educators in the two schools were allowed to participate. After conducting the information sessions, I found it was necessary to include additional elementary teachers.

Initially, nine individuals signed up for the study; seven teachers completed the study. Of the seven participants, all identified as female. Five of the seven participants identified as Black, and two as White. Interestingly, while the two White individuals indicated participating in previous workshops/trainings, none of the five Black individuals reported prior family engagement professional development training.

Participants created a three-digit identification number to use instead of their names in order to remain anonymous throughout the intervention process. For reporting purposes, I am utilizing a pseudonym in place of the three-digit identification number. An overview of the participant demographic information is shown in Table 1 on page 37.

Timeline and Description of the Intervention

The timeline of the study including pre-and post-data collection was from October 2021 to January 2022. During the intervention, participants engaged in three professional development modules designed to improve their belief in their capacity to engage with Black families experiencing RBTS. The modules were presented virtually. The modules were initially designed to be presented synchronously. This format would have allowed the teachers to interact

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Table 1

Participants' Demographic Information

Name	Age Range	Race	Grade Level	Prior Professional Development in Family Engagement
Ellie	30-39	White	1st	Yes
Whitley	50-59	Black	2nd	No
Kristan	40-49	Black	4th	No
Maddie	30-39	White	3rd	Yes
Natasha	40-49	Black	Kindergarten	No
Janae	50-59	Black	3rd	No
Toni	30-39	Black	3rd	No

and learn with each other, and communicate concerns directly with the facilitator. The modules were adjusted to be completed asynchronously. Educators were given a one-week window to complete each part of the module. This allowed flexibility in teachers' schedules, increasing the likelihood of participation and completion given the increased stress and responsibility teachers were reporting.

Week 1: Informational sessions with each school explaining the improvement initiative. During the week, consent forms were sent to participants and signed electronically. The need to adjust the participant requirements became apparent during the recruitment process, (See "Participant" section).

Week 2: The participants completed a pre-survey in Qualtrics.

Week 3: The pre-survey data was reviewed.

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Week 4&5: This module focused on strength-based engagement. The professional development was divided into two sessions released over two weeks. The module covered the following topics: 1) a framework for home-school partnerships, 2) involvement versus engagement, 3) the impact of deficit thinking, and 4) barriers to family engagement. At the completion of the module, the participant submitted exit ticket responses demonstrating their understanding of family engagement and the impact of barriers that prevent family engagement. In addition, they submitted a journal entry reflecting upon what prevents them from developing authentic relational-trust with Black families and how it impacts their ability to effectively serve Black students.

Week 6: The module I data was scanned to see what information needed to be reviewed, as well as, what needed to be added to the curriculum to maximize learning for participants in the next module.

Week 7 & 8: The second module focused on trauma-informed engagement. The professional development was divided into two sessions released over two weeks. It covered the following topics: 1) race-based traumatic stress; 2) P.T.S.S., generational trauma, cycles of Disengagement; and 3) adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Participants focused on the impact of ACEs on not only their students' lives but their own lives. They reflected upon whether their growing understanding was shifting their perspectives of Black families.

Week 9: The module II data was scanned to see what information needed to be reviewed, as well as, what needed to be added to the curriculum to maximize learning for participants in the next module.

Week 10 & 11: The final module focused on system-informed engagement. The

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professional development was divided into two sessions released over two weeks. It covered the following topics: 1) socialization practices in Black families; 2) cultural capital; and 3) building relational-trust in order to develop effective home-school partnerships. Participants explained what they believed families experiencing RBTS needed in order to be engaged in their students' education, and identified their role in the larger system.

Week 12: The participants completed post-surveys.

Week 13: This was the last module. The module III and post-survey data were checked for completion. (See Figure 6, pg.40 for Weekly Timeline)

Evaluation

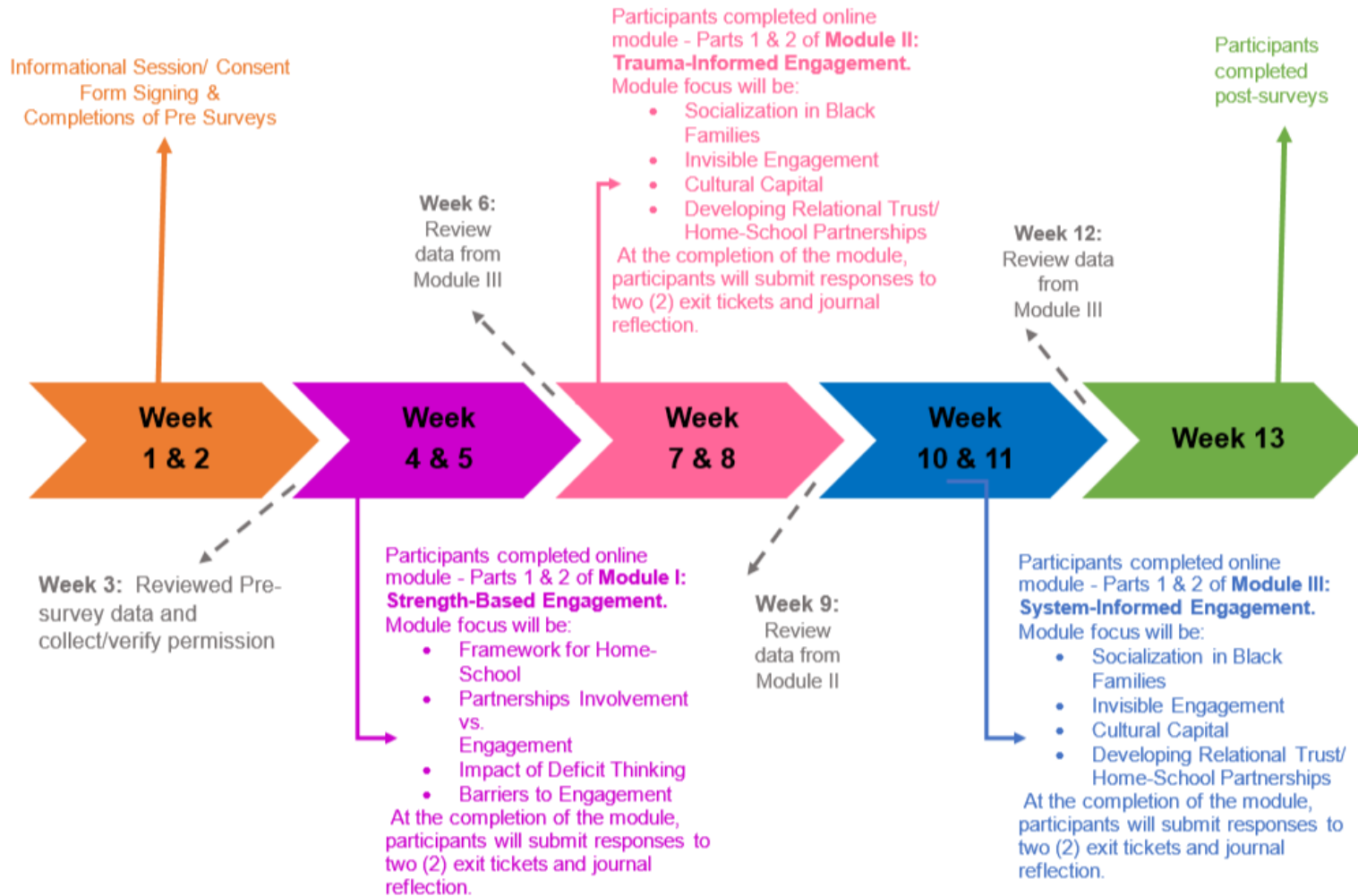
As previously stated, the overall goal of this research was to improve the academic and social-emotional development of students experiencing RBTS. This improvement initiative aimed to build educators' perception of their capacity to build authentic relationships with Black families experiencing race-based traumatic stress by providing formalized, research-informed professional development.

Hinnant-Crawford (2020) stated that it's important that the practical measures utilized did not require educators to do additional work, but that the collection of data can somehow be included in their daily work. Since educators in FUS had expressed concern about added stress due to returning to school during the COVID 19 pandemic, it was best to meet the needs of teachers and keep data collection as simple, and relevant, as possible. The modules were designed for educators to complete asynchronously to accommodate their schedules. The assessments were utilized to allow the educators to not only respond quickly but to be reflective as they fully expressed what they were learning.

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Figure 6:

Implementation Timeline



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Assessments Used

Process, driver, and outcomes measures were used to determine if the change was a result of the implemented improvement. Formative and summative data collection methods were utilized throughout the implementation process to measure fidelity and effectiveness.

Exit ticket data was collected at the end of each part of the module. This process measure was utilized to determine the fidelity of the intervention. The exit tickets were designed to collect data about what the participants understood regarding key themes and to scaffold the next module, if necessary. The exit tickets questions (Appendix A) were designed with the assistance of the design team.

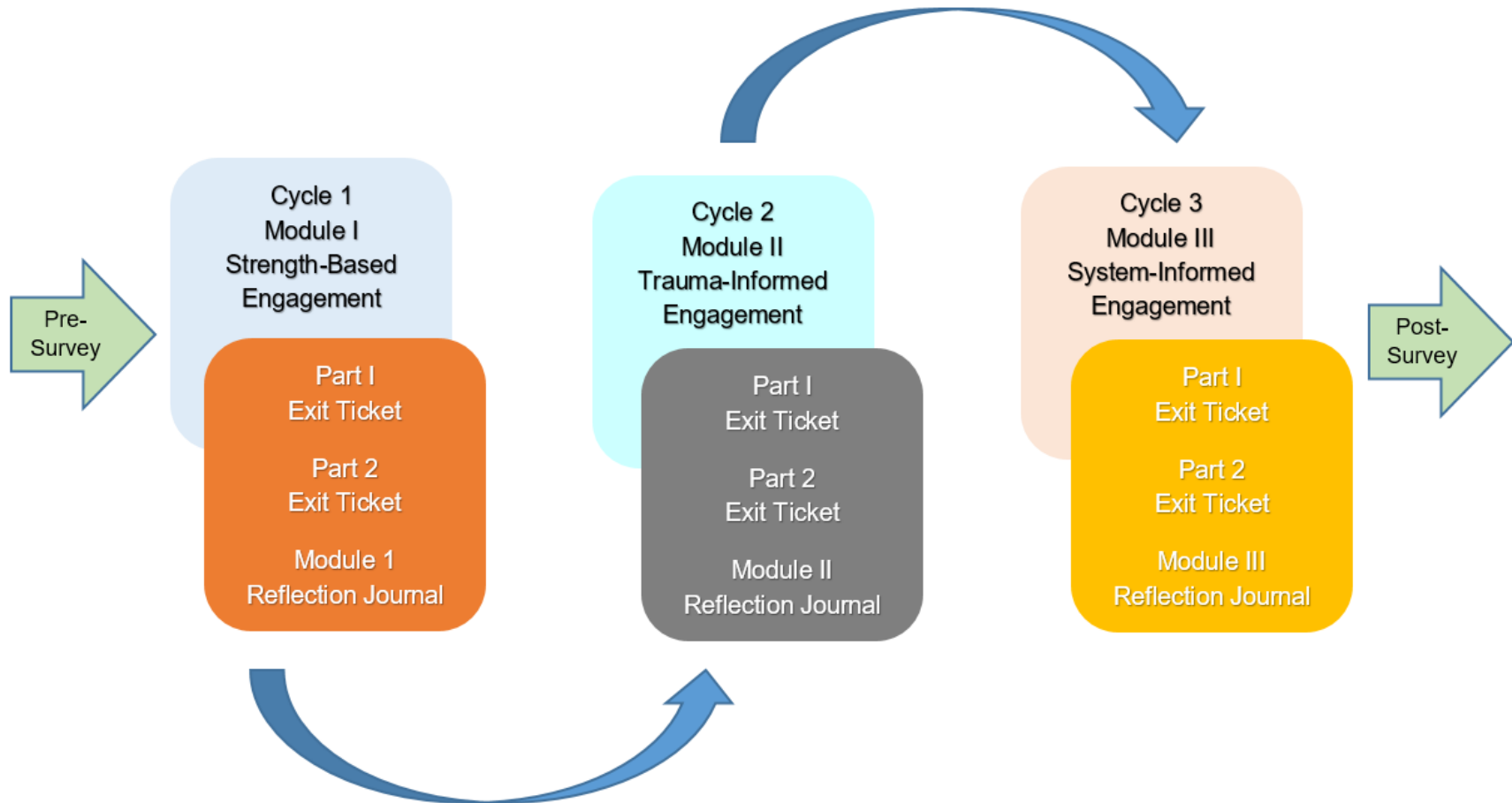
Qualitative driver measures in the form of journal responses were also used to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. The journal entry prompts (see Appendix B) were also designed with the assistance of the design team. Participants were asked to complete a reflective journal and respond to the prompts at the end of each module.

Identical pre-and post-surveys were used to measure what the participants learned as a result of participating in the process. This quantitative data was collected via Qualtrics. This instrument (see Appendix C) was composed of selected statements from Siwatu's Culturally Responsive and Teacher Multicultural Awareness Survey (Siwatu, 2007), Amatea et al.'s Teacher Efficacy in Engaging Families Scale (TEEFS), and Teacher Family Role Expectation Scale (TFRES) (2012). Collectively, the twenty statements created a self-efficacy survey to measure how educators perceived their capacity to engage families experiencing RBTS through the use of strength-based, trauma-informed, and system-informed engagement strategies.

The implementation cycle of the balancing measures is explained in Figure 7 on pg. 42.

Figure 7:

PDSA Cycle



Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation to measure how participants were learning throughout the process was collected utilizing exit tickets and journal entries. Exit tickets data described what participants were learning during the modules. The journal reflections data measured if the module effectively met its objective.

The qualitative data expressed in the exit tickets and journal reflections entries were analyzed using in-vivo and values coding (Patel, 2014). Both in-vivo and values coding required examining the words of the participants. In-vivo coding examines “coding with a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” and values coding “assess a participant’s integrated value, attitude, and belief systems” (Patel, 2014).

The following questions and reflections statements elicited the most consistent and impactful responses:

- Family engagement is...
- How has generational trauma prevented Black parents’ from engaging in schools in a traditional manner?
- What prevents you from developing authentic relational-trust with Black families? What do Black families need from schools in order to begin developing effective home-school partnerships?

After an analysis of the exit tickets and journal entries, the participants’ responses centered around three predicted themes: family engagement, the impact of trauma, and the importance of developing trusting relationships.

Family Engagement

Understanding the difference between engagement and involvement is a necessity in

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effective family engagement, and is essential if schools are to partner with families experiencing race-based traumatic stress. After the first cycle, 100% of the participants had developed an understanding of family engagement and the impact of educators' perception of how and why families engage. When asked to describe family engagement in their own words, participants describe family engagement as a "collaboration", "partnership", and/or "relationship" with "families and schools" (and two participants, included "community" in the partnership).

Four out of the seven educators identified the purpose of family engagement as to ensure the "success of the student/child/whole child". This indicates the educators also understood the purpose of engaging families is not to get more families at activities/events but to increase the academic and social-emotional development of students.

Natasha stated that she is working towards this goal by making a change in her approach with family, "One of the things that I have started to do this year is asking families what their hopes and dreams are for their child, and how I can be a part of making that happen."

Kristan stated, "...we have to know families [that present as disengaged] are not interested in their student failing." Toni expressed it was important to "(ensure) the parent that we all have the same goal in mind when it comes to their child." The goal is to develop a trusting partnership to enable their student to be academically successful and socially emotionally secure in our educational institution.

Trauma

The trauma-informed module focused on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), P.T.S.S., and generational trauma. It was designed to explain this specific barrier – race-based traumatic stress – and how it may prevent Black families from engaging in the educational process. RBTS

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impacts families physically, emotionally, and psychologically, it directly impacts how families show up and interact in our larger society, including our schools.

After viewing the module participants indicated a growing awareness of the trauma experienced by families and some reported a shift in their viewpoint. As a result of developing a better understanding of trauma, Kristan, stated, “Yes, it changed my view” regarding how to interact with students and families experiencing trauma and high ACEs scores. Others stated it not only changed their thinking but changed how they would interact with families in the future. Ellie remarked,

(It) makes me think more deeply about students that I have taught in the past and it makes me curious what they would have scored, even at the age of 6... I will be more intentional and sensitive when working with parents that seem to be affected by generational trauma.

Toni agreed stating, “This has shifted my thoughts on how I would engage with parents allowing for more grace and reminding myself to make sure all parents feel welcomed and comfortable.”

While this shift in thinking can be positive, it is important to be mindful of the impact overgeneralization can have on families, if not followed with more intensive work around trauma (see “Implications/Recommendation” section).

Trusting Relationships

Dr. Mapp (2021) stated that an effective partnership would not be possible unless schools were able to develop relational-trust with families. While the educators were developing an understanding of family engagement and its barriers, for a shift to occur in their perception it was necessary to address what they perceive as barriers to preventing them from developing

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relational-trust. The participants also addressed how they could individually contribute to effective home-school partnerships.

Initially, when presented with the question, “What prevents you from developing authentic relational-trust with Black families?” Three responses were: “stereotypes” and “...implicit biases”. Two participants contributed it to the “attitudes of the parents”, one even admitted,

Sometimes the attitude of the parents can get in the way of me developing relation-trust with Black families. And unfortunately, that can affect the way I see the child.

However, I will continue to make sure the student is successful academically

As educators progressed through the study, they began to indicate an understanding of what Black families needed to develop authentic relationships. Toni identified that “Black families need(ed) trust”, and while Ellie agreed “trust” was most important, she added, “...Black families need to know that they are safe and that they have the support that they need to allow their child to have a successful time at the school”. Both Natasha and Maddie agreed that “nonjudgement from teachers and mutual respect” was needed.

By the completion of the third cycle, five out of seven educators explicitly stated “yes” there was a need to shift the culture of the school district in order to effectively engage Black families. While the change must be systemic, each acknowledged they had an individual role in developing trust with families.

Natasha and Kristan view their roles as being intermediaries between families and the school. Kristan stated, “...My current role is to be the go-between with the school, families, and the community.” Natasha agreed, “My role is to continue to advocate for the African American families and discuss with the administration ways that we could help parents to become more

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engaged with the school.” Whitley felt she could “...be a voice for our students, as well as meet with families to understand the world in which they live.” Like Whitley, Ellie understood the need to learn about the families she served, to fulfill her role. She saw her goal as “to extend my knowledge outside of my classroom and help shape the culture and climate of the school to be more inclusive and understanding.”

Benefit to Black Educators

In addition to the identified themes, Black educators indicated engaging with families experiencing race-based traumatic stress can be challenging despite their race and they benefitted from education/workshops regarding family engagement. Participant Kristan, a Black fourth-grade teacher stated, “Being a part of the community can be a double-edged sword”. As previously stated, a disjuncture often occurs between Black educators and the families they serve. One teacher contributed the disjuncture to “implicit bias...Since most of us were in PWI teacher education programs...” or it can be due to how teachers perceive themselves versus how families and the community perceive them because they are a part of a system that has not always met the need of Black children.

Toni, a Black fourth-grade teacher reaffirmed the need for education/workshops regarding family engagement if they are to effectively engage with families experiencing race-based traumatic stress.

Even though as a single black mother I feel I had a good understanding of the barriers that may prevent engagement when thinking of black families, the discussion of it does serve as a reminder and keep me cognizant of barriers that may not have directly affected me but may affect the families of students in my classroom or school.

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Janae said, "Even as Black educators, we need this information to remind us of barriers affecting some of the families of our students."

Summative Evaluation

The summative evaluation was used to measure what the participants learned as a result of participating in the process. In addition to the qualitative data collected, quantitative data was collected via the identical pre-and post-surveys. The twenty-item self-efficacy survey was designed to measure how educators perceived their capacity to engage families experiencing race-based traumatic stress when they utilized strength-based, trauma-informed, and system-informed engagement strategies. I used a paired sample t-test to determine if there was any significant difference in educators' beliefs as a result of the implementation of the improvement initiative. A test-t is appropriate because no minimum sample size is required to perform this test.

Items in Table 2 on page 49 adapted from Amatea et al.'s (2012) survey allowed educators to express their beliefs regarding strength-based, trauma-informed, and system-informed engagement. A Likert scale with the options "Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neutral, Somewhat Agree, and Strongly Agree" was used to measure the individuals' beliefs. Two items in this portion of the survey indicated some level of growth. Amatea et al.'s item regarding the educators' *willingness to open their classroom to students' caregivers* indicated moderate growth $p = .076$. The most significant level of growth was $p = .005$ for the survey item stating *Students who have more racial pride exhibit behavior problems*.

The qualitative data showed that the educators were growing in their understanding of the need to build trusting relationships with caregivers. This can only be accomplished by opening,

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Table 2

Data Analysis of Items Adapted from Amatea's Survey

Survey Statements	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention		t	df	P-Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
I am effective at providing enough opportunities for working parents to participate in school/classroom-related activities.	4.17	.408	4.50	.548	1.581	5	.175
I am willing to open my classroom to my students' caregivers to visit whenever they can.	4.17	.753	4.67	.816	-2.236	5	.076
I think too much emphasis is placed on adapting school procedures to serve the needs of culturally diverse students and families.	1.33	.516	2.17	1.602	-1.185	5	.289
I will need to adapt my methods of reaching out to families to meet the needs of Black families.	3.33	1.211	3.83	1.472	.698	5	.518
I would be uncomfortable working with parents/caregivers who exhibit values or beliefs that are different from my own.	1.50	.548	1.33	.516	1.000	5	.363
It is not the teacher's responsibility to encourage pride in one's culture.	1.83	1.602	1.50	.837	.500	5	.638
My bias/privilege impacts how I interact with Black students and families.	2.50	1.761	2.50	1.225	.000	5	1.000
Multicultural training for teachings is not necessary.	1.00	.000	1.17	.408	-1.000	5	.363
Regardless of the makeup of the class, it is important for students to be exposed to a culturally relevant curriculum.	4.83	.408	4.83	.408	.000	5	1.000
Students who have more racial pride exhibit few behavior problems.	2.00	1.000	3.40	1.140	-5.715	4	.005
To be an effective teacher, I need to be aware of my students' cultures and economic backgrounds.	4.83	.408	4.50	.837	1.581	5	.175
To work effectively with students of color, I need to incorporate their families' cultural traditions & beliefs into my curriculum.	4.87	.516	4.83	.408	.542	5	.611

their classrooms to caregivers. The educators were aware schools could be spaces of trauma, or not accessible for some families and they would need to engage with them elsewhere. Ellie said, “Being present and attending community events that allow me to interact with these families outside of the school has definitely allowed for a deeper relationship to evolve.”

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Opening their classrooms will require reshaping the physical space if educators expect families to feel comfortable and welcome. This space will have to be reflective of the culture and pride of the school and the entire community. This can only be achieved when the school is aware of what is valued by the larger community.

Schools must become aware of the importance of uplifting and maintaining racial pride of historically racially marginalized families and students as they seek to develop an understanding of their values and norms. Teachers must understand the behavior exhibited by students and families is in response to being educated in a system in which they are often “overlooked, diminished, and denied as a part of the American past and currently lived experiences” (Wilson, 2019). This results in an expression of actions and emotions by the families and students that can be misunderstood by the dominant society. This makes it crucial that schools work to understand the socialization process families undertake, not just to survive, but to instill a sense of dignity, pride, and belief in themselves, even when they are being devalued by others.

Items in Table 3 on page 51 were adapted from Siwatu's (2007) survey. These items focus on how confident the educator was in their ability to utilize specific strategies that would impact educators' ability to connect with Black families, especially those experiencing RBTS. Educators measured their confidence level using a Likert scale with five possible answers, “Not Confident at All, Slightly Confident, Neutral, Fairly Confident, Completely Confident.”

One of the eight items in this section indicated significant individual growth. With a $p = .025$, educators indicated an improvement in the belief in their ability to explain new concepts using examples that are taken from their students' everyday lives. Through these partnerships

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Table 3

Data Analysis of Items Adapted from Siwatu's Survey

Survey Statements	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention		t	df	P-Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Build a sense of trust with Black families.	4.67	.516	4.50	.548	1.000	5	.363
Effectively communicate with Black families regarding their child's educational progress	4.67	.516	4.67	.516	.000	5	1.000
Critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes.	3.67	.516	4.17	.753	-2.236	5	.076
.Design a classroom environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures.	4.00	.632	4.33	.816	-1.581	5	.175
Explain new concepts using examples that are taken from my students' everyday lives.	4.00	.894	4.67	.516	-3.162	5	.025
Identify ways that the school culture (e.g. values, norms, and practices) is different from my student's home culture.	4.00	.632	4.33	.816	-1.000	5	.363
Teach students about their cultures' contributions to society.	4.17	.753	4.33	.516	.415	5	.695
Use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.	4.00	1.095	4.33	.516	-1.000	5	.363

with families/communities, educators will begin to gain knowledge of and have access to the cultural capital they possess and begin to understand the importance of creating space for them in the educational environment.

Analyzing the two parts of the efficacy survey showed evidence of overall growth indicated in Table 4 on pg. 52. Items in the Amatea et al. portion of the survey showed significant growth with $p = .048$. This indicated the participants experienced significant growth in their beliefs in how a greater understanding of strength-based, trauma-informed, and system-

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Table 4

Analysis of Compiled Pre-and Post-Survey Data

Survey's	Mean	SD	t	df	P-Value
Amatea's pre-and post	-.29630	.27815	-2.609	5	.048
Siwatu's pre-and Post	-.20620	.20990	-2.406	5	.061

informed engagement will increase their ability to develop relational-trust and build partnerships with families experiencing race-based traumatic stress.

Items in the Siwatu portion of the survey showed moderate growth with $p = .061$. This signaled that educators demonstrated an increase in the belief in their overall capacity to utilize strategies that would allow them to connect to Black families. Overall, the K-5 teachers who participated in this improvement initiative indicated that formalized, research-informed, professional development provided to teachers which challenged their perspectives improved their belief in their ability to effectively engage families experiencing race-based traumatic stress.

What the qualitative and quantitative data shows is that one form of engagement is not effective, it will require strength-based, trauma-informed, and system-informed engagement strategies to begin developing the relational – trust to engage these families. The impact of educators' misconceptions and disjuncture from the communities was evident in their collective qualitative and quantitative responses.

Maddie stated, “I think that educators often don't think of parents as assets, as having a wealth of knowledge... (having) conversations...help break down the barrier with Black families.” Other educators noted the importance of attending community events and home visits to build relationships and learn more about the culture of families they serve. This aligns with

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the significant growth demonstrated as educators seek to connect to students' everyday life. Understanding that school culture and curriculum is not naturally structured to address the needs of historically racially marginalized students means the more connection educators can bridge, the more students achieve.

At the end of the first cycle, an educator responded, "I feel I already have authentic relationships with Black families" and another indicated she had "Nothing" to learn. Therefore, this growth was important, indicating that participants tend to rate themselves as more confident at the beginning of an initiative, not understanding that they don't know, what they don't know.

COVID -19 Effect on Study

This initiative focused on challenging educators' perspectives of their ability to engage families experiencing race-based traumatic stress. The format in which the professional development occurred made this challenging and impacted communication that could enhance learning.

In March 2020, the First University school district converted to 100% virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2021, schools re-opened under a hybrid model giving students the option to return to school or continue remote instruction for the remainder of the 2020-2021 academic year. Schools returned to full in-person instruction during the 2021-2022 academic year. This return to in-person instruction amidst a pandemic proved to be emotionally draining for students and staff. As such, the district had to adjust the school calendar to implement mental health wellness days. To avoid additional stress and responsibility, certified staff were only required to participate in professional development offered at the district and state levels. These district transitions greatly impacted teachers' willingness to participate in the

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initiative. Therefore, the team recommended adjusting the modules to accommodate teachers' schedules/daily lives; and expanding the grade span requirement to include more participants.

Due to the current professional development restrictions in the FUS school district, it was best to implement this initiative virtually. Offering the initiative virtually and asynchronously, allowed teachers the flexibility of completing the modules at their own pace and increased the number of individuals willing to participate. The limitation of this decision was that it did not allow me an opportunity to interact with the participants throughout the professional development. It was key to monitor how the participants' personal beliefs were changing. I was unable to address information/questions that may have arisen to avoid expanding or erroneously validating deficit thinking because the modules were virtual and asynchronous.

In addition, there was also the concern about the generalization of information being presented. For many teachers, the modules were their first introduction to engaging with families experiencing race-based traumatic stress. This was particularly true in the trauma-informed module and the issue of ACEs. Toni stated, "I also learned some of the things I dealt with as a child and thought as normal, such as my parents divorcing, is seen as an adverse childhood experience."

Natasha said, "I learned that I was exposed to more than I realized."

Whitley said, "...I realize that my score is high, which explains a lot of my health issues; and Janae added, "All people have been exposed to some type of trauma."

Understanding the impact of race-based traumatic stress (and other forms of trauma) is very different from being exposed to an overview to develop an awareness of the issue. If educators are to gain knowledge in this area that will allow them to effectively engage with families, they will need to participate in ongoing research-based professional development and

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training. Otherwise, there is the risk of educators' generalizing their thinking about the Black population, resulting in deficit thinking and recreating another cycle of negativity for students and families.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Context

In the First University School district's strategic plan, the family and community engagement goals are to engage families in the educational process and create meaningful partnerships by building trust, collaboration, and engagement. The district must understand that it cannot engage families without first building the trust necessary to begin the collaboration. This can only occur when the district recognizes how (and why) families show up in the educational system, and what capital they bring.

The FUS district is focused on embedding equity into all aspects of its work. It is currently undertaking trauma-informed work as part of the district-wide social-emotional learning (SEL) initiative. I would recommend the district lift working with families (and students) experiencing race-based trauma into the system-wide initiative. This would allow the information to become a part of the equity, trauma-informed, and family engagement training, providing opportunities for educators to be exposed to the information repeatedly and in numerous formats. This would begin to embed it into the culture of the school system, without adding professional development, and it would become a part of the systemic change that 100% of the participants indicated needs to occur.

Recommendations for School and District Leadership

Schools that have higher levels of parental engagement, not only have better stakeholders, but most importantly, they have higher student achievement scores (Brock &

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Edmunds, 2010). Yet, our data shows the district is only educating a specific population even though they have the knowledge and resources to make the change. Continuing in this pattern, year after year indicates the district has decided it is acceptable to allow some students, specifically, Black students, to fail.

My initial recommendation is to provide educators with formalized, research-based, professional development. Educators cannot be taught how to be authentic; they can be taught to be more effective by developing an understanding of the forms of engagement needed to connect with families. Helping teachers to understand the skills necessary to effectively partner with families requires providing ongoing research-based, professional development to increase their knowledge of strength-based, trauma-informed, and system-informed engagement. As their knowledge grows, so does their belief in their capacity to engage with families experiencing race-based traumatic stress. This is evident by the results of this improvement initiative.

Districts must remember students do not live in a vacuum. They are a part of a family unit and a larger community. We must recognize and validate what has and is occurring in the larger society and unfortunately being replicated in our educational institutions. Educators and districts should examine if the school culture, curriculum, and physical space reinforce negative cultural stereotypes or uplift racial pride.

We have to learn to utilize the intellectual and physical cultural capital of the families and communities, not just during Black history month to reaffirm the oppression, but throughout the year to gain knowledge of the day-to-day lives of the families we serve. Therefore, I also recommend, that the district employs school-based community liaisons. These individuals would provide a level of knowledge and connection to the community not currently present in the district. FUS currently employs a Director of Family and Community Engagement and a

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Family Engagement Specialist. While an admirable step in the right direction, two individuals cannot adequately address the family engagement needs of an entire school district.

Engaging families in their children's learning far exceeds increasing attendance at open houses, academic nights, and getting more Black parents on the PTA and school improvement teams. It entails building an authentic, effective partnership with families to ensure their students are receiving the best education.

Gaining the relational-trust of families allows schools to develop partnerships with families and provide opportunities for them to become engaged in their children's education. This partnership focuses on building a collaborative relationship between Black families and schools to increase student success in an environment that has historically failed its students. Schools acknowledge engaging these families is challenging. Yet, they are still encouraged to create plans and provide more opportunities for families to be involved at the school site, leaving staff frustrated and complaining about the inability to connect with families.

This will require examining written or unwritten policies/practices that may create or prevent families from engaging in their education. It is not necessary to have a driver's license to enter our buildings, and all IEP meetings do not have to occur at the school site. Intentionally seeking alternative ways to engage families is key.

This may include examining and then expanding our policies regarding the meaning of "family" and the role of "fictive kinship" in students' lives as well as expanding the boundaries of our school community. For example, is it necessary that "Meet the Teacher" or report card pickup occurs at the school site instead of the local recreation center, or instead of "Donuts with Dads" or "Muffins with Moms" do "Breakfast with Buddies" or a "Fish Night with Family" for

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working families? These events move our schools into the community and expand our connection with families.

We cannot knowingly continue to violate the promise to educate all children. It is not simply thinking outside the box; it's understanding the way we have previously involved families has failed Black children. Schools must change how they interact and engage with Black families to ensure the academic and social-emotional success of their children.

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend this information be presented in person when possible. The curriculum in this study is designed to challenge the perspective of the participants. Direct interaction and connection with a professional in the field as the participants are learning, will make it easier to clarify information and dispel myths that can lead to deficit thinking.

Additionally, this study could be expanded to focus on building the capacity of Black educators to engage with Black families. In doing so, I would focus specifically on the challenges faced by Black educators as members of the community in which they are attempting to engage. It could be further expanded by including how Black families perceive Black educators' roles in ensuring their children are academically successful and socially-emotionally safe in the current political climate.

Summary

Educators need to develop an awareness and respect for the families they serve if they are to cultivate an environment of relational-trust necessary for authentic home-school partnerships. Without such a relationship, it is easy to formulate a deficit perspective of families that do not acknowledge their strength and resilience to overcome the realistic struggles they often face. As previously stated, when educators do not understand nor capitalize on the invisible engagement

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occurring in their students' homes, they will continue to view their families as "barriers/hindrances", instead of, "assets" to students' learning.

Until schools understand the physiological and psychological needs and barriers that impede families (and children) from fully engaging in the education process, they will continue to fail children.

If we as educators could successfully teach all children by ourselves, then it seems to me we would have already done so. The fact that we haven't should be all the motivation or evidence we need that engaging every family in the educational life of his or her child is essential to desired school outcomes (Constantino, 2016, pg. xv).

Therefore, schools must begin to implement means of engaging families outside of the traditional activities, if they are to meet the needs of all students. This will require educators to become knowledgeable of their student families' lives and cultures.

Ron Edmonds' quote regarding family engagement continues to ring true.

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do this. Whether we do it or not must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we have not done it so far" (Constantino, 2016, pg. 31).

Gaining the relational trust of Black families experiencing race-based traumatic stress is not an individual teacher's responsibility, nor can it be quickly achieved. It is a systemic issue that will require schools and districts to examine how educators are trained, policies and procedures are implemented, the curriculum being taught, as well as, personnel employed to effectively engage families in student learning. Academic achievement and social-emotional

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stability for Black students will become a priority when schools decide to invest in engaging Black families.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A

Exit Ticket Statements / Questions

1. Complete the following statement in your own word: Family engagement is...
2. Does understanding the barriers that may prevent engagement impact your thinking about Black family engagement? Why or why not?
3. What did you learn from taking the ACEs exam? What additional questions/concerns/reflections do you have about ACEs?
4. How does P.T.S.S. continue to impact students today?
5. Explain the concept of double consciousness.
6. What do Black families need from schools in order to begin developing effective home-school partnerships?

Appendix B

Journal Prompts

Prompt 1: What prevents you from developing authentic relational-trust with Black families? Do you believe this impacts your ability to effectively serve Black students?

Prompt 2: How has generational trauma prevented Black parents' from engaging in schools in a traditional manner? Has this shifted/changed how you might choose to engage with this group of parents?

Prompt 3: Is there a need to change the culture of the school and/or district in which you work to build effective partnerships with Black families? What will your role be? Has your view of what you should do / can do change?

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Appendix C

Pre and Post Survey

Create a 3-digit identification that you will use on the pre-and post-survey. This number can be the last three digits of your phone number, your father's birthday, your street address, or some other significant 3-digit number.

Age

- 21-35 years old
- 31-45 years old
- 41-55 years old
- 50+ years old

Please specify your ethnicity

- African American / Black
- Asian
- Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- Latino / Hispanic
- Native American
- White / Caucasian
- Two/ or More
- Prefer not to say

Grade level you currently teach (You can select more than one)

- Kindergarten
- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th
- 5th

Have you participated in previous family engagement trainings / workshops

- Yes
- No

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The following statements will give you an opportunity to describe how confident you are in your ability to perform specific culturally responsive teaching practices. Please rate them from Not Confident at All to Completely Confident.

	Not Confident At All	Slightly Confident	Neutral	Fairly Confident	Completely Confident
Build a sense of trust with Black families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effectively communicate with Black families regarding their child's educational progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Design a classroom environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain new concepts using examples that are taken from my students' everyday lives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify ways that the school culture (e.g. values, norms, and practices) is different from my student's home culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtain information about my students' home life and cultural background.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	Not Confident At All	Slightly Confident	Neutral	Fairly Confident	Completely Confident
Use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following statements will allow you to express your beliefs regarding strength-based engagement, trauma-informed engagements, and home-school partnerships. Please rate them from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I am effective at providing enough opportunities for working parents to participate in school/classroom-related activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am willing to open my classroom to my students' caregivers to visit whenever they can.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think too much emphasis is placed on adapting school procedures to serve the needs of culturally diverse students and families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will need to adapt my methods of reaching out to families to meet the needs of Black families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be uncomfortable working with parents/caregivers who exhibit values or beliefs that are different from my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
It is not the teacher's responsibility to encourage pride in one's culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My bias/privilege impacts how I interact with Black students and families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multicultural training for teachings is not necessary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regardless of the makeup of class, it is important for student to be exposed to a culturally relevant curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students who have more racial pride exhibit few behavior problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To be an effective teacher, I need to be aware of my students' culture and economic backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To work effectively with students of color, I need to incorporate their families' cultural traditions & beliefs into my curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>