Early Career Teachers' Efficacy in Working with Families

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EARLY CAREER TEACHERS’ EFFICACY IN WORKING WITH FAMILIES

A Dissertation

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Abstract

Partnering effectively with families is an important skill for teachers to have to support student achievement, and one that is especially important for early career teachers in order to protect them from burnout and attrition. However, research has demonstrated that teachers do not feel prepared to work with families, and further research is needed to see what difficulties are specific to early career teachers. The following research questions were addressed in the study: 1) What current situation and prior training factors affect early career teachers’ perceptions of efficacy in working with families? 2) Which family-school partnering topics do teachers report the most experience in their prior preparation programs and in their current daily practice? 3) Is there a relationship between number of years reported teaching and overall efficacy scores? 4) What family-school partnering training do early career teachers believe would have been or would be beneficial to receive in their teacher preparation programs versus during their first five years of practice?

A survey was created which included a pre-existing self-efficacy scale adapted to reflect family partnering language. This survey was disseminated to 76 first through fifth year Colorado teachers. Results indicate that age of current school placement had a significant effect on overall self-efficacy scale scores, while several other variables had an effect on subscales of the efficacy scale. Recommendations are presented for future research, teacher preparation programs, and school district mentoring.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Teachers in today’s society are under a substantial amount of pressure to perform, arguably more pressure than teachers who have worked before them. There is great focus on the ability to be an effective teacher who increases student outcomes and uses proven methods to produce results. These stressors can be seen even more evidently in early career teachers, those who are just beginning their time in the profession. In addition to the pressure to be effective, early career teachers must also learn to navigate the school system, manage a classroom on their own, and work with families, concepts that they may not have had any experience with prior to beginning their professional career.

A significant factor when considering the success of teachers are their own feelings of self-efficacy: how much they feel they personally can succeed in their work. Perceptions of self-efficacy have a large impact on a variety of aspects of a teacher’s work, the ability to persevere, and the experience of teacher burnout. Teachers are prepared in a variety of ways by their undergraduate or graduate programs and may have varying levels of self-efficacy with teaching skills. However, there is one area where teachers indicate that they do not feel prepared: working with families (Markow & Pieteres, 2009).

The primary purpose of this study was to 1) examine feelings of self-efficacy in working with families in early career, Colorado teachers; 2) examine the types of
activities early career teachers engage in, in the area of family-school partnering; and 3) examine what training teachers wish they had received in family-school partnering.

This research is important to conduct, as family-school partnering has a critical impact on students’ outcomes both in academics and social emotional development. By examining teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy towards working with families and the training that they have received, more in-depth information can be gathered and used to potentially shape future standards and teacher preparation programs.

**Early Career Teachers**

Evaluation of skills and examining effectiveness is required for all teachers, regardless of their level of experience. However, early career teachers may also face additional stressors and challenges. According to Feiman-Nemser (2003), “The early years of teaching are a special time in a teacher’s career, different from what has gone before and what comes after” (p.25). These beginner teachers are facing new challenges without being completely confident in how to navigate them.

Self-efficacy is an area in which early career teachers experience more challenges as compared to their veteran colleagues (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Early career teachers have had less time to hone their skills in the classroom and to increase their positive feelings towards their work. In the current research study, an early teacher is defined as a teacher in the first through fifth years of the professional teaching career. This does not include teachers in student teaching or internship positions. It is important to study this population as addressing the issues that they may be encountering early on may help to reduce said challenges and increase self-efficacy.
Evaluating Teacher Performance

While being evaluated has always been a part of the teaching profession, the process itself has historically been more for protocol without providing meaningful feedback and change (Hull, 2013). However, in the past two decades assessing the effectiveness of teachers has become more formalized and impactful. With the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), national standardized student achievement using assessment became a requirement, reflecting strongly on teachers’ ability to influence student outcomes. Additionally, NCLB introduced the concept of “highly qualified teachers”, which states are required to provide to all students. This requires more stringent qualifications that teachers must demonstrate. In Colorado, the 2010 passage of the Educator Effectiveness Bill introduced additional evaluation requirements for Colorado teachers, principals, and related professionals. This entails annual evaluations on quality standards on teacher effectiveness, and quality standards that measure student learning (Colorado Department of Education, 2014). Both of these new standards highlight the increased high-stakes evaluation that current teachers in Colorado receive.

Self-Efficacy in Teaching

Self-efficacy, defined by Bandura as personal judgments of one’s capabilities to organize and execute action in order to attain a particular goal (1977), can have an important impact on individuals’ lives and job performance. Feelings of self-efficacy in teachers have a significant impact on a variety of areas. Maintaining positive feelings of self-efficacy can act as a resource to protect against burnout in teachers (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). Additionally, teacher beliefs of self-efficacy have also been shown to
affect both student academic achievement and job satisfaction (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006). Examining teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy allows professionals to address challenges that novice teachers may be facing in their careers, and make changes so as to increase effectiveness and positive feelings of efficacy. This may in turn increase the longevity of teachers in the profession.

**Basic Definition of Family-School Partnering**

Family-school partnering, for the purpose of this study, can be defined as the intentional sharing and joint responsibility of a student’s learning between schools and families (Lines, Miller, & Arthur-Stanley, 2011). Rather than the responsibility for a student’s learning residing solely with the school, partnering encourages both home and school to work together to support a student. This has been recognized as an important activity to support student outcomes and strengthen school community, and one that many educational organizations, such as the National Parent-Teacher Association and state departments of education, advocate for.

Engaging in family-school partnering has been shown to have a positive effect in a variety of areas. Weihua and Williams (2010) found that families had a positive effect on not only English and math grades of students, but also their academic self-efficacy and motivation. Additionally, when a school implemented more family and community involvement activities, fewer in-school suspensions, detentions, and trips to the principal’s office were given out (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). It is clear that partnering activities can affect students holistically, and do not appear to be limited to one area.
**Family-School Partnering in Legislation**

While research has demonstrated that family-school partnering has significant positive impacts on student outcomes academically and social-emotionally, family-school partnering is also significant because it has become more embedded in legislation throughout the country.

In the last two decades, a variety of laws have been passed, nationally and in individual states including Colorado, that call for active involvement and partnering with families by educators. These laws have an effect on many different student and teacher performance areas such as reading, working with children with disabilities, and educator effectiveness. With the passage of these pieces of legislation, working with families and being an effective partner have become meaningful parts of teachers’ careers.

**Self-Efficacy in Working with Families**

The idea of self-efficacy affecting performance is not limited to classroom activities, but also extends to family-school partnering. Teachers who believe that they are effective in working with families are more likely to reach out to families to involve them in their students’ education (Coleman, 2012). The opposite can then also be assumed - if teachers do not feel effective in working with families, they would be less likely to reach out to families to partner with them.

Despite the demonstrated importance in working with families and the effect that self-efficacy has on partnering, The Harvard Family Research Project (2010) reports that this is the area that teachers feel least prepared in, and find very challenging. Additionally, further research has found that while higher education faculty may recognize the importance of family-school partnering, they are not focusing on training
future teachers in this area (Miller, Lines, Sullivan, & Hermanutz, 2012). However, there is a lack of research on this area both nationally and specifically to the state of Colorado. In order to fully answer the research questions posed in this study, it was determined that a new survey should be created. The research questions to be addressed in the present study are forwarded in response to these concerns.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: What current situation and prior training factors affect early career teachers’ perceptions of efficacy in working with families?

RQ1a. Does type of teacher preparation program attended affect teacher efficacy scores?

RQ1b. Does amount of pre-service exposure in interacting directly with families reported affect teacher efficacy scores?

RQ1c. Does amount of early career mentoring received in working with families affect teacher efficacy scores?

RQ1d. Does percentage of total program dedicated to family-school partnering concepts predict teacher efficacy scores?

RQ2: Which family-school partnering topics do teachers report the most experience with in their prior preparation programs and in their current daily practice?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between number of years reported teaching and overall efficacy scores?

RQ4: What family-school partnering training do early career teachers believe would have been beneficial to receive in their teacher preparation programs versus mentoring desired during their first five years of practice?
Definition of Key Terms

The key terms to be used throughout the paper are defined here.

**Early Career Teacher**: Also referred to as early career educator, novice teacher, or beginning teacher; a teacher in the first through fifth years of their professional teaching career; does not include internships or student teaching (Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson, Burke, & Louviere, 2013).

**Family-School Partnering**: The intentional sharing and joint responsibility of a student’s learning between schools and families (Lines, Miller, & Arthur-Stanley, 2011).

**Mentoring**: Support provided by experienced teachers to novice teachers; can be both inside and outside the classroom (Odell & Ferraro, 1992).

**Post-graduation**: Following graduation from a teacher preparation program.

**Pre-service**: Time during teacher preparation program, prior to graduation.

**Self-Efficacy**: Personal judgments of one’s capabilities to organize and execute action in order to attain a particular goal; the way in which people’s beliefs have an influence on their lives (Bandura, 1977). Zimmerman (2000) additionally states “self-efficacy measures focus on performance capabilities rather than on personal qualities” (p.83).

**Self-Efficacy in Family-School Partnering**: Teachers’ personal judgments of their ability to partner effectively with families; how effective teachers feel in their work partnering with families.

**Teacher Preparation Program**: The institution of higher education that a teacher attended in order to receiving training to teach professionally.
Teacher Self-Efficacy: Teachers’ certainty that their instructional skills are effective (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987, p.425). Also defined as teachers’ confidence regarding their ability to promote student learning or important outcomes (Hoy, 2000).
Chapter Two: Literature Review

In the past several decades, the profession of teaching has seen an increase in high-stakes testing and evaluations of teacher effectiveness. While teaching may have once been viewed as an “easy” profession that persons entered because they were not sure which career path to take, it is now a career that places much emphasis on outcomes and demonstrating effectiveness.

The pressure to increase student achievement and outcomes is just one area that teachers must contend with on a daily basis. While all teachers are under these stressors, one could argue that early career teachers may face more stressors than any other group of teachers. In addition to demonstrating effectiveness, this group must also learn to navigate school bureaucracies, to avoid burnout, understand the expectations of their particular schools, and work with families, which has been shown to be an area where teachers do not feel prepared (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010). It has been suggested that burnout and attrition in the field of education are seen more frequently in early career teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Holding positive feelings of self-efficacy in regards to their teaching may be one way to deal with these challenges.

While the concept of family-school partnering has been demonstrated as an important one, research on teachers’ perceptions indicates they do not feel prepared to work with families, and may view themselves as ineffective in working with families.
There is a lack of research available specifically on self-efficacy in working with families, and how certain pre-service and post graduation variables may impact teachers’ self-efficacy and reported practice.

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the topics of teacher effectiveness and perceived self-efficacy, family-school partnering, and critical pre-service and post-graduation factors regarding teachers’ work with families.

**Early Career Teachers**

Beginning a career can often come with increased stress, and teaching is no exception to this. It is critical for the field of education to look more closely at new teachers beginning their professional careers. This specific set of teachers can potentially experience challenges that are particular to being in the first parts of their careers, and these may prevent them from wanting to continue in the profession.

**Attrition.**

One of the most critical struggles pertaining to early career teachers is that of attrition or burnout from the profession itself. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (as cited in Seidel, 2014), approximately 500,000 teachers move or leave the profession each year, which equals about 15% of total teachers. The number is higher, 20% attrition, at schools that serve a high-poverty population. Even more staggering, it is estimated that 40 to 50% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years. While some may argue that turnover can be considered healthy, this teacher attrition does not fall into a healthy category (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Though attrition is an issue that affects all teachers, Ingersoll and Smith (2003) argue that it is one that affects novice teachers more frequently. They also report that that many public schools are having
difficulty finding enough qualified teachers, and thus are potentially lowering their standards or making significant recruitment attempts to attract new teachers.

Teacher turnover and attrition are important to consider for a variety of reasons. The 15 percent attrition rate per year as of 2014 (Siedel, 2014) costs the country a reported $2.2 billion dollars. Individual schools also incur high costs with attrition.

According to Darling-Hammond (2003):

Such schools must continually pour money into recruitment efforts and professional support for these new teachers. Other teachers, including those who serve as mentors, are stretched thin and feel overburdened by the needs of their colleagues in addition to those of their students (p.8).

She also notes that this funding is then taken away from basic school improvements and the students. Attrition is more common in schools that serve high-poverty populations and students of color (Simon & Johnson, 2013), populations that may already be at a disadvantage and falling behind. The lack of stable and qualified teachers may further be contributing to the achievement gap and negatively affecting the ability of students to achieve academic success.

The reasons for leaving the teaching profession are varied and affected by personal and professional factors that change across a teacher’s career path (Borman & Dowling, 2008). However, some factors appear to affect educators more universally when it comes to attrition. Simon and Johnson (2013) found that teachers might be leaving their positions at low-income schools due to social working conditions, such as less positive relationships with colleagues, school culture, and impactful leadership. Ingersoll (2002) reports that the conditions of schools and organizational characteristics are significantly responsible for teachers leaving. Dissatisfaction due to low salaries is
another explanation as to why teachers choose to leave and pursue different careers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

**Challenges of early teachers.**

In addition to struggling with the issue of attrition and burnout, early career teachers also experience other challenges in their professions. Romano and Gibson (2006) conducted an in-depth analysis of one teacher’s reflection on struggles and successes experienced throughout the first year of teaching. The teacher identified 29 struggles throughout her year with an equal number of identified successes. These included issues with external policies, working with families, working with students with special needs, curriculum, classroom management, teacher evaluation, and personal issues. Natale (1993) found similar teacher struggles, including inadequate salary, poor social conditions, and not being given authority to make decisions. This illustrates the numerous challenges and obstacles that teachers may face during their early years (and beyond). These stressors potentially leave them overwhelmed and unable to cope and may subsequently affect decisions to leave the profession.

A final significant area where early career teachers may be struggling more than their seasoned counterparts is in the area of self-efficacy. Perceived feelings of self-efficacy is an area that significantly influences not only how effective teachers are in their classroom practices and instructing, but also their ability to overcome obstacles and achieve longevity in their careers (Protheroe, 2008). With lower levels of self-efficacy in regards to their teaching, it is possible that early career educators are operating at lower levels of effectiveness than those with more experience. In fact, teachers report developing some of their important skills - such as classroom management - on the job,
which early career teachers may not have had enough time to do yet (Hicks, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

**Summary.**

It is important to the field of education as a whole to study new teachers and the unique challenges and struggles that they may encounter during the beginning of their careers. Many early teachers leave the profession altogether, and it is important to identify where struggles may be encountered and how to offer appropriate and significant supports to help teachers get through these struggles (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). The study by Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found that teachers who were provided mentors and who participated in collaboration and planning with other teachers were less likely to leave the teaching field after their primary year. Rather than focusing on recruiting new teachers, a shift to focus on retaining current teachers and provide them with positive work environments and supports in order to increase their teaching abilities and perceived feelings of self-efficacy may yield better results.

**Evaluation and Effectiveness of Teachers**

In the majority of careers in modern society, there is an aspect of professional evaluation. Employers assess their employees based on skills and performance and promotional or remedial action can be taken based on these assessments. Teaching is one such profession that employs evaluation, though the method for evaluation varies greatly based on state standards, local standards, and specific school district standards. And while teachers have been undergoing evaluation for many years, some would argue that historically the process itself was more out of routine and did not resulted in significant action based on evaluation results (Hull, 2013). However, in the past few decades the
evaluation of students, and subsequently teachers, has become a more high-stakes and visible process with test-based assessment becoming expected and normative in order to determine the effectiveness of teachers (Jennings & Rentner, 2006).

**Definition of an Effective Teacher**

Though it would be ideal to maintain a consistent definition of what it means to be an effective teacher, there appears to be great debate among those in the field regarding what effectiveness truly entails and how to know if a teacher is effective. As Peiser (2012) states, “Teacher quality and effectiveness are of paramount concern in public education today. However, the nation still lacks a uniform set of standards and assessments that can be used to assess teacher quality” (p. 68). The recent increase in high-stakes assessment testing suggests that many believe that a teacher’s effectiveness can be measured in part by examining the increase in student outcomes throughout the year, and that this is a direct reflection on the educator’s ability to teach effectively. However, others may disagree with the use of high-stakes testing to evaluate a teacher’s performance and may advocate for relying on the more traditional attainment of post-secondary degrees and subsequent certification in his or her area of work. Peiser notes that yet another group may advocate for focusing on teacher performance as evaluated by their students. A comprehensive research synthesis conducted in 2008 detailed seven distinct, individual methods for evaluation of teachers, not counting ways in which these methods may be combined into hybrid evaluation (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008). These methods included classroom observation, evaluation by principal, review of documents and objects, portfolio review, report by individual teachers, student survey, and value-added model. These authors advocated for a comprehensive review of teacher
effectiveness, rather than reliance on one method. This variety in potential assessments, disagreement of the best option, and lack of clarity in how effective teachers are defined may not only leave educators confused as to how they should perform and what they should strive to achieve, but may also be adding additional stress to their daily lives and taking away from their teaching. Despite the variation on the fundamentals of what makes a teacher effective, the test-based assessment approach is one that continues to be favored. According to Goe, Bell, and Little:

Increasingly, policy conversations frame teacher effectiveness as a teacher’s ability to produce higher than expected gains in students’ standardized test scores. This focus on attributing gains on standardized tests to teachers and measuring the result of teaching by averaging test score gains has a number of strengths. It is parsimonious; it can be measured using data collected as part of NCLB requirements; and it has a certain amount of credibility—most would agree that an effective teacher should help students learn more than expected (p.8).

No Child Left Behind.

One of the most well-known and controversial movements in recent years in the area of evaluation is the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, a reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The overall goal of this act was to increase public school student achievement and to close gaps in achievement among various student demographic groups by implementing testing and ensuing federal level intervention, if necessary (National Education Association, 2015). While the focus of this testing appears to be students, much pressure is also put on teachers as they are viewed as most directly responsible for educating these students and thus raising their achievement. In addition to the indirect evaluation through student achievement, NCLB also implemented requirements that local education agencies ensure Title I program teachers are “highly qualified teachers” (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2009).
Generally, this means that teachers hold a bachelor’s degree, certification, and competence in teaching and subject knowledge. While the intention behind this is to increase student achievement by hiring qualified teachers, these measurements have presented some issue with special education teachers, or those who may instruct in more than one area (Jennings & Rentner, 2006). Additionally, NCLB may be having a negative effect at the teacher education level by turning off potential future teachers from entering the field due to the emphasis on testing (Selwyn, 2007).

**Educator Effectiveness Bill.**

While NCLB has received a lot of attention over the past decade, teacher effectiveness legislation has also been passed at the state level, with Colorado being no exception. In 2010, the Colorado Legislature passed Senate Bill 191, known as the Educator Effectiveness Bill. The basic tenet of this bill is that by having effective teachers and school leaders, the foundation will be set to build on and assist students in increasing achievement (Colorado Department of Education, 2014). This bill overhauled the way in which all educators are evaluated in order to support continuous professional development. Half of an educator’s evaluation is based on student learning over time, with the other half based on Quality Standards that define an effective educator.

In addition to the NCLB requirements, as well as any local district requirements, state bills such as this one add another layer of evaluation based on factors that may be new to teachers, and that may introduce additional strains. Despite the movement towards a uniform evaluation process, it is important to remember that one does not yet exist. This lack of clarity with increased assessment may leave teachers feeling unprepared, unsure, and under more stress than in previous decades.
Self-Efficacy

A relatively new concept, self-efficacy was first introduced by Albert Bandura in 1977 as a component of social cognitive theory. Perceived self-efficacy can be defined as individual, personal judgments of one’s capabilities to organize and execute action in order to attain a particular goal, and the way in which people’s personal beliefs have an influence on their lives (Bandura, 1977). Zimmerman (2000) additionally states “self-efficacy measures focus on performance capabilities rather than on personal qualities” (p.83). This belief acts as the foundation for people’s abilities to accomplish tasks, their emotional well being, and their motivation. Self-efficacy differs from other comparable concepts such as self-esteem, self-concept, or perceived control (Zimmerman), as it is specific to the ability to achieve tasks, rather than about a person’s general ideas about themselves.

Conversely, according to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy will determine how hard a person will work in the face of obstacles to overcome these hindrances or negative experiences. If a person has a higher self-efficacy, he or she will work harder to overcome obstacles. Self-efficacy determines not only how one feels about their abilities, but also the ability to persevere.

Self-efficacy is significant when considering this ability to overcome hindrances presented throughout one’s life:

Successes raise mastery expectations; repeated failures lower them, particularly if the mishaps occur early in the course of events. After strong efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success, the negative impact of occasional failures is likely to be reduced. Indeed, occasional failures that are later overcome by determined effort can strengthen self-motivated persistence if one finds through experience that even the most difficult obstacles can be mastered by sustained effort (Bandura, 1977, p.195).
In other words, a person who has developed strong perceptions of self-efficacy will be more likely to take an adverse experience, overcome it, and further strengthen his or her personal positive feelings and the ability to achieve.

**Effects of self-efficacy.**

Self-efficacy has been linked to a variety of abilities and areas in a person’s life. One area where this concept has been researched in-depth is that of academic achievement and motivation, particularly when considering students. Zimmerman (2000) posits that students with higher self-efficacy take on more challenging tasks more willingly than other students with lower self-efficacy. Additionally, he states, “There is also evidence that students’ performance in academically threatening situations depends more on efficacy beliefs than on anxiety arousal” (p.87). Multon, Brown, and Lent (1991) conducted a meta-analysis regarding self-efficacy and academics and found a significant positive relationship across diverse subjects between perceived self-efficacy and academic performance, as well as persistence. This relationship remained across experimental designs, methods, and across a variety of academic subjects. The variety of research on self-efficacy in academics demonstrates that higher self-efficacy affects not only academic performance and outcomes, but also emotional regulation and perseverance.

Positive self-efficacy also has effects beyond academics, notably in a professional working environment. In a review of research, Lunenburg (2011) found that self-efficacy – defined as “a person’s belief that she is capable of performing a particular task successfully” (p.1) - has an impact on the goals a person may find challenging. When considering managers and employees, a manager’s self-efficacy acts as a partial mediator
in the relationship between the manager’s rated effectiveness by employees and the employees’ engagement (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). In this study, self-efficacy was defined as “an individual’s beliefs about his or her abilities to mobilize cognitive resources and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context” (p.379), and measured by a self-report questionnaire.

Though it may be assumed that self-efficacy is most influential when carrying out a cognitive or school-based task, it has also been shown to have a significant influence on a person’s health. Strecher, DeVellis, Becker, and Rosenstock (1986) found a positive relationship between self-efficacy - “one’s confidence in one’s ability to perform a specific task or accomplish a certain objective” (p.18) - and changing one’s health behaviors and maintaining that change, including when considering exercise activity, weight control, cigarette smoking, and alcohol abuse. Carroll (1995) found self-efficacy (as measured by a self-report scale) to be an important factor when examining the recovery of elderly patients who had just undergone coronary heart bypass surgery. In another literature review, an association was found between self-efficacy (defined as “beliefs about how capable one is of performing the behavior that leads to outcomes” (p.74), and measured primarily through self-report survey) and changes in health measures such as pain and depression following a stress-management program (Smarr et al., 1997). These studies indicate that increasing or maintaining a high level of self-efficacy is beneficial towards improving overall health.

**Summary.**

The research studies that have been conducted clearly demonstrate the importance of self-efficacy and the potential impact on a variety of areas of a person’s life, across
many different age levels and populations. In fact, in examining the research available, there was a lack in research indicating negative effects of self-efficacy. The influence that these feelings can have is clearly significant. These studies examined suggest that with self-efficacy, people maintain positive feelings of being able to overcome obstacles, attributing the power to their own abilities. In many studies measuring self-efficacy, there is a similar definition for the concept and a similar method to measuring self-efficacy. It is frequently defined as an individual’s abilities in regards to achieving a specific objective, and is most often measured by self-report survey.

**Self-Efficacy in Teaching**

The concept of self-efficacy and belief in one’s own abilities can be applied specifically to many different areas of a person’s life, as well as to a variety of professions; this includes the profession of teaching. According to Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987), self-efficacy in teaching can be defined as “teachers’ certainty that their instructional skills are effective” (p.425). Hoy (2000) offers a complementary definition: teacher self-efficacy is teachers’ confidence regarding their ability to promote student learning. These definitions demonstrate how a teacher’s view of personal ability to carry out activities may affect a variety of teaching areas. Like general self-efficacy, these feelings can affect the goals that teachers set, persistence over obstacles, resilience during struggles, and the investment that is made in teaching (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). The development of self-efficacy feelings in educators is important for a variety of reasons, not the least being that these effects once developed appear to remain constant (Hoy), suggesting that once developed, teachers are likely to remain confident in their abilities. In addition to being an individual concept, self-
efficacy in teaching has also been shown to be something that can be experienced collectively. According to Protheroe (2008), “Teachers in a school characterized by a can-do, ‘together we can make a difference’ attitude are typically more likely to accept challenging goals and be less likely to give up easily” (p.44). This illustrates that the self-efficacy that teachers possess may be affecting their colleagues and their perceived abilities. It is important to note that contextual factors – such as environment or administrative support - also have an effect on their self-efficacy.

**Self-efficacy and the classroom.**

As mentioned, self-efficacy can affect a variety of areas of a teacher’s practice. One of these areas in which there has been a substantial amount of research over the past several decades is teacher self-efficacy and student achievement or outcomes. Midgley, Feldlaufer, and Eccles (1989) reported that students who transitioned from a high efficacy mathematics teacher prior to junior high to a low efficacy math teacher in junior high had the lowest perceived performance and expectations for their work. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) developed an instrument of collective teacher efficacy, which they define as “the perceptions of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students” (p.480). Using this instrument, the researchers found a positive relationship between collective efficacy and student achievement in math and reading in an urban elementary school.

Another area in which teacher self-efficacy can have a significant effect is classroom management. A review of literature on this topic found that “Teachers with high efficacy are effective managers and student counselors. They know how to handle misbehaving students; they can effectively organize classrooms in which learning and
good performance will be achieved” (Dibapile, 2012, p. 9). Teacher self-efficacy has also been shown to have an effect on the type of management skills that teachers use.

Woolfolk, Rosoff, and Hoy (1990), using a measure of self-efficacy called the Teacher Efficacy Scale (a self-report scale), found that teachers who had higher self-efficacy used more humanistic methods of classroom management with their students. Across these studies, self-efficacy again was defined as a teacher’s belief in their abilities to have an effect on student learning or performance.

Additionally, perceived self-efficacy of teachers can affect teachers personally, and not just the students they work with, especially when considering things such as job satisfaction and burnout. Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, and Malone (2006) found that, in addition to students’ academic outcomes, self-efficacy beliefs (as measured by a self-assessment scale) had an effect on teacher job satisfaction. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) also found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Teachers in Spain who had a high level of self-efficacy, as measured by a likert self-efficacy scale, and more resources to help them cope suffered less burnout and stress than those teachers who had a low level of self-efficacy and resources (Betoret, 2006).

**Self-efficacy, mastery, and early career teachers.**

Self-efficacy research has found that engaging in mastery experiences is a critical aspect, if not the most important, of developing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). This holds true for teachers, as well: “Efficacy beliefs are raised if a teacher perceives her or his teaching performance to be a success, which then contributes to the expectations that future performances will likely be proficient” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007, p.946).

In a survey conducted by Hicks (2012) of novice teachers, the majority reported learning
their classroom management abilities while on the job, rather than in their pre-service training. Early career teachers may rely less on mastery experiences for self-efficacy development, and may be most influenced by contextual variables, such as the amount of support received in their school setting (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy). This demonstrates that early teachers may not have sufficient mastery experiences, and if they are not receiving adequate support, their self-efficacy for teaching may suffer.

Summary.

It is evident that self-efficacy plays a significant role in a teacher’s ability to be a productive educator and affects many areas of a teacher’s life. Therefore, it is important to work to foster perceived feelings of self-efficacy in order to improve performance, especially in early career teachers. In doing so it would be important to understand critical performance areas where teachers might feel least efficacious. As demonstrated by previously explored research studies, self-report is a viable and common approach to measuring self-efficacy in teachers. One such area that may benefit from further examining self-report in self-efficacy is teachers’ abilities to work with families.

Family-School Partnering

Though there are a variety of definitions of family-school partnering, for the purpose of this research the definition that has been adopted comes from Lines, Miller, and Arthur-Stanley (2011). According to these authors, family-school partnering is the intentional sharing and joint responsibility of a student’s learning between schools and families. Family-school partnering provides support for increasing student opportunities and outcomes. As stated before, this is a shift away from a parent volunteering at a bake sale or coming to school when a student is exhibiting negative behaviors. Family-school
partnering is not limited to just parents and teachers, either, though it affects them most frequently. In this new movement, all significant adults in a student’s life – grandparents, aunts, uncles – and all school personnel – secretaries, principals – are involved in supporting students holistically. According to Lines, Miller, and Arthur-Stanley, there are three basic foundational beliefs to build partnering off of: student success as the cornerstone of partnering, education as a shared responsibility between school and family, and that families and educators bring their own experiences, culture, and perspectives to the table.

**A shift in traditional views.**

Traditionally, when considering the idea of parent involvement in education, one may think of volunteering at fundraisers, parent-teacher conferences, or the occasional drop-in visit with a student’s teacher. The responsibility for a student’s education fell solely on the schools, while parents were relegated to positions of volunteering at the school or participating in the Parent Teacher Organizations, as requested by the school. The parents, and not extended members of a student’s family, were the only parties communicating with the schools. And when communication occurred, the school or teacher often initiated it, usually with news of how a student was struggling or having problems. As Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies (2007) discuss, in traditional school settings parents would often see school personnel as the experts who had much of the power, with parents only to participate in school matters when explicitly requested.

This type of power dynamic prevents families from becoming true partners who are involved in their students’ education, as they may feel neither welcomed nor enough of an expert to offer their knowledge. This feeling of the inability to support their
children in academic endeavors is most frequently seen in low socioeconomic, ethnically diverse, and immigrant families (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). Not only do these families already feel as though they are at a disadvantage in regards to contributing to their children’s education, but these feelings are sometimes reinforced by school personnel who claim that these families do not care about their children’s education. These perceptions result in further feelings of unwelcome in families, thus continuing the negative cycle of non-participation, which can often be perceived by school personnel as disinterest in their student’s school activities.

Family-school partnering seeks to change this power dynamic and equalize the responsibility for students’ education. The concept is based on the idea that all families, no matter what their background, care about their children’s education, and want to help support their children. As Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (2003) states: “All families care deeply about their children’s education, and hope that their progeny will be happier, more productive, and more successful than they have been in their lives” (p. 109). This is especially important to keep in mind when working with families of lower socioeconomic status or different ethnic backgrounds who may not be as outwardly vocal regarding their children’s educations.

Family-school partnering also works to address and incorporate the unique personal experiences of both school personnel and families that may be influencing their perceptions and their ability to work positively together. In qualitative research done on families and teachers working together, it was found that all of those in the education field may bring memories of adverse or negative experiences – “ghosts” – to the work that they do currently which then can affect that work, whether consciously or
subconsciously (Lightfoot, 2003). For example, if a parent was treated poorly in his or her school when they were a student, this “ghost” may affect their ability to trust school personnel and the decisions that the school is making for the student. According to Lightfoot, recognizing and being able to discuss these “ghosts” allows schools and families to be able to move beyond them and establish true relationships with one another.

**Applications of family-school partnering.**

As with the definition of family-school partnering, the specific activities that support partnering can be defined in a variety of ways, and may vary on the situation in which the partnering is occurring. However, there are certain activities that are critical to any effort to build partnerships. According to the National PTA (n.d.), there are six foundational standards for establishing family-school partnerships. Creating a welcoming environment is one of the first necessary steps to this process. This welcoming space should celebrate the contribution of all families and school personnel, and allow all parties to feel connected to the student learning. Two-way communication is another necessity – it is frequent, initiated by both parties, and is not limited merely to notification of negative behavior by students. Encouraging families to act as advocates and speak up for their children is another basic tenet of partnerships. Supporting student success and sharing of power as foundational concepts both allow families to be full participants in their student’s work and to make joint decisions. Finally, involving the community allows families to seek resources and support that they may need outside of the school. Epstein et al.’s (2002) work also establishes six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and
collaborating with community. Though they are not exactly the same as the PTA standards, the foundation established by these six types is very similar, with similar notions.

There are a variety of ways and examples of how these foundational principals can be implemented in schools. In order to create a welcoming environment, schools can make contact with each family prior to the beginning of the year to share important information and show personal interest. To promote two-way communication, teachers may send home correspondence with families to let them know their student is doing well, and ask for some type of response from families. To involve the community in partnering, it may be beneficial for schools to keep a library of resources and contacts that they can connect families to who may be in need of additional help. And to promote acting as an advocate and sharing in decision making, families can be invited to meetings about their students, where their opinions are both sought after and taken into consideration, with decision-making being a joint activity.

**Importance of Family-School Partnering**

The significance of family-school partnering on the lives of children, families, and communities cannot be minimized. While it is a relatively new area of research in education and studies are still being conducted in order to examine various aspects of family-school partnering, its effects have been shown to have impact across developmental domains, in students and families of varied demographics, and for students of varying abilities. Rather than being an intervention that is targeted at one struggle a student may be facing, or one content area that one does not do well in, family-school partnering is a way of working together that affects a child holistically. It involves
intentional and continual action by all parties involved. Working with families in an effective manner through family-school partnering is a significant way that educators can help families.

**Academic outcomes.**

Research on family-school partnering has shown that it is very important to and positively supports a student’s academic development and success. Weihua and Williams (2010) found that families had a positive effect on not only English and math grades of students, but also their academic self-efficacy and motivation. Sheridan, Knoche, Kupzyk, Edwards, and Marvin (2011) found that disadvantaged children were more successful in writing and language skills after a literacy and language family partnering intervention. Another study examined the effects of interactive science homework given to students, which had an explicit parent involvement component. Those students who reported higher family involvement also received higher science grades (Van Voorhis, 2003). Indeed, while all types of family partnerships are valuable, working to promote home learning and supporting student-learning activities at home through family have been shown to have the greatest effects on student achievement (Dervarics & O’Brien, 2011). The positive effects of family-school partnering appear to reach across all disciplines in school, and are not content-area specific.

**Mental health and social-emotional outcomes.**

The positive effects of family-school partnering are not limited to improving academic outcomes. When considering behavior, mental health, and social development, engaging in family-school partnering has also been shown to have positive effects. Sheldon and Epstein (2002) examined longitudinal data and found that as a school
implemented more family and community involvement activities, fewer in-school suspensions, detentions, and trips to the principal’s office were given out. Additionally, schools that improved the standards and quality of their partnering programs also reported less disciplinary action. When considering mental health treatment, most practitioners and experts believe partnering and family involvement to be effective and important (Lines, Miller, & Arthur-Stanley, 2011). And while social-emotional learning was often considered more of a home-based process, with schools responsible for academic learning, the importance of schools being involved in social-emotional learning is now recognized (Albright & Weissberg, 2010).

Typically developing children are not the only ones to explicitly benefit from engaging in partnering; children with disabilities also appear to benefit greatly. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) process that families of children with disabilities must go through can often be an overwhelming and daunting one. There are meetings, excessive amounts of paperwork, and teams of intimidating professionals with whom families must discuss their child. Many families find this to be a very stressful experience, and not often a positive one. This, however, can be somewhat alleviated when family-school partnering is a part of the IEP process. In a study done by Childre and Chambers (2005), the researchers found that though there are barriers to working together during IEP and planning meetings, families were more satisfied and positive when using a student centered approach that took much more consideration what the families thought and felt. Before the student centered approach, the families reported feeling mostly negative. Afterwards, however, they left feeling more engaged and positive about their child’s future. By engaging in partnering practices for children with
disabilities, not only do the children receive better services because all those people who know them best are involved, but families also feel more engaged and more willing to participate. And family-school partnering should not be limited to those students in targeted or intensive levels of intervention, but is an appropriate practice across all Response to Intervention (RTI) levels (universal, targeted, and intensive). As stated by Lines, Miller, and Arthur-Stanley (2011), “…families and educators may need different levels of partnering to support a student’s school success” (p.7). Partnering activities can be individualized based on the RTI tier that a student is in.

**Partnering across groups.**

The impacts of family-school partnering are also not limited to families of certain demographic backgrounds. The effects can be seen in families of different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Sanders (1998) interviewed African American adolescents and found that, along with church involvement, students’ perceptions of their family and teacher support increased their self-perceptions, and thus indirectly increased their school success. Jeynes (2005) conducted a meta-analysis and found that there is a positive relationship between academic achievement and family partnering can be seen in both Caucasian students and students of color in urban settings. While families of low-income students may originally participate less than their higher-income counterparts in certain areas of school involvement and may be more challenging to begin relationships with, developing new approaches to partnering and engaging in community-centered strategies could potentially help increase family involvement (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007).

The significant effects of working successfully with families can also be seen across varying educational levels of students, from the early years through secondary
school. In early childhood aged children, families who work with their children on literacy concepts at home and provide a play supportive environment help promote their children’s development and future academic achievement (Belway, Duran, & Speilberg, 2009). Partnering with families of young children as soon as they begin early childhood education may also help to ensure that they will continue to do so as their children get older. Additionally, quality rating systems for early childhood programs, such as the current Qualistar rating in Colorado, recognize the importance of working with families and incorporate this as one of the areas on which programs are scored. In elementary school children, Sheldon (2003) found that when a higher emphasis was placed on overcoming changes to family-school partnering, a higher percentage of students scored at or above satisfactory on a state achievement test. The effects of family-school partnering also extend to older students. Simon (2001) found that various family-school partnering actions, such as home learning activities, had positive influences on a variety of high-school student outcomes including grades, credits finished, attendance, and good behavior. Family engagement in education also leads to overall increases in college enrollment (Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007). However, despite the presence of some research on the impact family-school partnering in secondary schools, family-school partnering activities may decrease in middle and high school, due in part to the age of the student and their desire for independence, as well as changes in the school (Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss). This demonstrates the need for additional research to be done on this particular topic, with further focus on how to engage in family-school partnering with older students and their families.
While much of the research is focused on how engaging in family-school partnering can impact students at the individual level, partnering can also help impact families in a more universal sense, and build and sustain support for schools in their communities. Schools can create their own ways to help connect families to their communities – such as a resource library, staff person who acts as a liaison, or by offering extended school hours to help connect families with outside organizations (Carter, 2003). By doing this, the school is providing both educational support and outside support that can help meet the needs of and strengthen families and improve their ability to partner with schools in the future. Additionally, creating these relationships between the school, community organizations and businesses, and families will benefit the businesses as well as the schools and families, and strengthen the community overall (Carter, 2003).

**Family-school partnering in legislation.**

Family-school partnering is important for both families and schools, and influences a variety of outcomes for students. However, these are not the only reasons that family-school partnering has become a significant topic in education in recent years. As family-school partnering has become a more visible and researched area in the education realm, legislators have also begun to recognize its importance. This recognition is evident in a variety of pieces of legislation that have been passed at national and individual state level, including in the state of Colorado.

No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are two recent pieces of federal legislation that mandate educators’ partnering with families in order to serve students (NCLB Action Briefs, 2004; National Center for Learning
Disabilities, 2015). In Colorado, the State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) Bill, Educator Effectiveness Bill, Colorado Reading To Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act, and the Parent Engagement Bill are all examples of legislation that focus on the effectiveness of teachers in the state, mandate the involvement of families in specific areas of school life, and emphasize the importance of family-school partnering research and practices (Miller, Lines, Hermanutz, Colebrook, & Sullivan, 2014).

This recent legislative activity that mandates that schools partner more thoroughly with families and emphasizes educator effectiveness makes Colorado a leader in this area throughout the country. This movement also highlights the importance of Colorado teachers having the training to work effectively with families, and having the confidence to do so on a daily basis in order to support students and families.

**Self-Efficacy and Family-School Partnering**

It has been established that teachers’ perceived positive feelings of self-efficacy improve the outcomes of students that they work with, and that family-school partnering practices work to improve student outcomes, as well. Therefore, one can see how it is important for educators to feel efficacious when working with families. Coleman (2012) demonstrated that those teachers who believe that they are effective in working with families are more likely to actively reach out to families in order to involve them in students’ education. Garcia (2004) conducted similar research, and notes:

As Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy theory stipulates, precepts of efficacy in an area contribute to the amount of effort a person places in the accomplishment of a specific outcome. Results from this exploratory study corroborate this theory and suggest that teachers who perceived themselves as more efficacious in their ability to work with families made more attempts to involve families in the
educational process of their children (p.308).

Katz and Bauch (1999) reported that teachers who had taken a family-school partnering course were more prepared to work with families, and also were more likely to engage in inventive activities in family-school partnering. They also reported that as educators interact with families more, their attitudes about family-school partnering and using family input become more positive.

Despite the importance of specific self-efficacy in working with families, there is a lack of research on self-efficacy and teachers’ abilities to work with families and employ family-school partnering strategies and concepts to everyday interactions, compared to other areas of family-school partnering. However, the research that does exist indicates that many teachers do not feel adequately prepared or confident in working with families, or find working with families to be a great challenge. The Harvard Family Research Project (2010) found family-school partnering to be the area where teachers feel least prepared, and the area that they find to be the greatest challenge. Some educators may have negative or judgmental attitudes towards families, which may be affecting their confidence in and ability to work with families (Flanigan, 2005).

While educators may understand the theory behind the importance and necessity of partnering with families, research indicates that there still remains a gap from knowledge regarding family-school partnering to actually implementing the ideas. A study conducted by Jakubowski, Miller, Hughes, Nguyen, and West (2011) of Colorado school psychologists found that there was a belief to practice gap: while school psychologists thought that family-school partnering was important, they were not engaging in these practices in their everyday work. Another Colorado survey of
education faculty in institutes of higher education found that while the majority of participants were familiar or highly familiar with family-school partnering research, less than half of the participants had some or extensive training in their own graduate work, and even less reported having a standalone course on family-school partnering that they taught (Miller, Lines, Sullivan, & Hermanutz, 2012). Those preparing future teachers may have some knowledge of the importance of family-school partnering, but may not have received any training in their own programs, and thus are not incorporating it into their classes.

A related important concept to examine in the efficacy of teachers in working with families is the training that was received in their teacher preparation programs. In a survey done by Flanigan (2005) of pre-service teachers, it was found that “teachers were concerned about the quality of the preparation of pre-service teachers for family involvement in the traditional student teaching program” (p.6). In the survey study in Colorado institutes of higher education faculty, 70 percent report infusing the topic of family-school partnering into the courses they teach, rather than having a standalone course, which 17 percent reported having (Miller, Lines, Sullivan, & Hermanutz, 2012). When family-school partnering training does occur, it is often focused in the areas of special education or early childhood training, rather than general education (Epstein, Sanders, & Clark, 1999). Epstein and Sanders (2006) found that despite evidence of improvement in attitude and teacher preparation offerings,

Most SCDEs [schools, colleges and departments of education] offer at least one course and some coverage of topics on partnerships, but not enough to prepare all teachers, counselors, and administrators to conduct meaningful programs and practices of school, family, and community partnerships (p.86).
It is also important to examine the type of teacher preparation program attended, such as a large university or online institute of education, as this may result in differences in the training and perception of preparedness. In an examination of an undergraduate statistics course, Summers, Waigandt, and Whittaker (2005) found that while there were no differences in grades received between online and traditional students, online students reported being less satisfied with the course than their traditional counterparts.

**Summary.**

Overall, the data that is available shows that teachers, especially early career teachers, feel that they are not prepared or comfortable in regards to effectively partnering with families and carrying out family-school partnering activities. However, in order to address this perceived inability to work with families, more in-depth research must be conducted to understand what family-school partnering practices early career teachers are experiencing on a regular basis, and to examine situational and prior training factors that might predict early career teachers’ perceptions of efficacy in partnering with families. This information could help determine if there is a relationship between prior or current experiences and training and teachers’ reported levels of efficacy. Finally, information is needed to determine what family-school partnering training would be most beneficial to early career teachers during their preparation program, and also once they are working full-time. Such questions would be best addressed through self-report approaches where teachers are asked to provide honest and anonymous perceptions of these issues. This teacher report information would be important to collect in states like Colorado where teacher turnover rates remain high - 17 percent in 2013 (Colorado Department of Education, 2013). It is also important as Colorado is experiencing
substantial changes in legislation that now stress the expectation and role that teachers play to help involve families in their child’s education.
Chapter Three: Method

The method chapter describes the overall study design, as well as the process for obtaining participants. In addition, the creation, testing, and reliability and validity of the measure are described, as well as the data collection process. Finally, the method of analysis of the data to address the research questions is described.

Design

This study utilized a quantitative, non-experimental design. Specifically, a correlational design was utilized, in which researchers “use the correlational statistic to describe and measure the degree or association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores” (Creswell, 2013, p.12). Even though the research questions in this study are associational and thus match this design, an ANOVA was used rather than the originally proposed regression, thus meaning that the analysis does not precisely match the correlational design.

Participants

In order to gather the appropriate data, early career general education teachers who worked in the grades kindergarten through twelfth grade in Colorado were recruited. Teachers in the early years of their careers were chosen as the sample as research indicates they may be struggling more than their veteran counterparts, and gathering information on their perspective allowed recommendations to be crafted to help address these challenges and keep teachers from leaving the profession. Early career teaching can
be defined as the first through fifth year of work, and these are the educators that made up the research sample. Additionally, family-school partnering is important across grade levels, but may differ in the amount that it is implemented, which is the reason that teachers from the broad K-12 range were included in the study.

The participants were obtained through four avenues. The first was to recruit participants through their school districts. To do so, the researcher completed internal research applications for the school districts. The second avenue was to recruit participants through their teacher preparation programs by sending a request to participate to the appropriate alumni or program contact. The participating programs then sent a participation request to their alumni email distribution lists. The third avenue was to distribute the survey to professional colleagues who may have connections to potentially interested participants. Finally, contact was made with teacher and education associations and it was requested that the survey be sent to their email listservs.

The districts that participated included: Adams 12 Five Star Schools, Englewood Schools, Poudre School District, and Pueblo City Schools. Table 1 provides the most recently available general demographics on these districts (Adams 12 Five Star Schools, 2013; B. Little, personal communication, February 26, 2015; Poudre School District, 2013; Pueblo City Schools, 2013). The teacher preparation program that participated was the University of Denver. Table 1 provides the most recently available general demographics on this teacher preparation program (University of Denver, 2014). Additionally, the Professional Association of Colorado Educators (PACE) sent information on the survey to their membership in their monthly newsletter. Prior to
beginning any data collection, approval was gained by the University of Denver Institutional Review Board.

Table 1

*Participating District and Program Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Areas Served</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent Students on Free and Reduced Lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams Five Star</td>
<td>Broomfield, Federal Heights, Northglenn, Thornton, Westminster</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>42,230</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englewood Schools</td>
<td>Englewood</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2,876</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poudre School District</td>
<td>Fort Collins, Laporte, Timnath, Wellington, Red Feather, Livermore, StovePrairie, Windsor</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pueblo City Schools</td>
<td>Pueblo</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18,066</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation Program</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Students in Program</th>
<th>Public/Private/Online</th>
<th>Programs Offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Denver</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>Approximately 78-135 students admitted per year across programs</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>MA, PhD, EdD, ECED, TEP MA and CERT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Design and Analysis

While surveys have been conducted in the past to assess teachers’ levels of familiarity with family-school partnering, an appropriate survey was not found that addressed all of the research questions put forth in this study, particularly when considering self-efficacy in regards to working with families. In order to properly address the research questions, the researcher created a new survey, titled the Efficacy in Partnering with Families Survey.

Due to the fact that a new instrument needed to be created, developing the survey was an equally critical portion of the research as collecting the data. The researcher went through many drafts of the survey, working with the dissertation committee in order to create appropriate questions. Other steps were taken to ensure that the survey created indeed worked as intended. Experts were asked to review the questions to examine and establish the validity of the survey. Volunteer participants were asked to both pilot the survey, and to participate in cognitive interviews in order to examine the wording of the questions. Finally, the preliminary construct validity was assessed. If issues arose regarding any of the questions in the survey, the items were either re-worded or removed from the survey itself.

The Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire.

The first section of the new survey was reconstructed from a previously existing scale, the 1987 Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire by Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (The Family-School Partnership Lab, 2005). This scale contains 12 items that are answered on a 6-point scale (1=disagree very strongly to 6=agree very strongly). Examples of items on the questionnaire include “I am successful with the students in my
class” and “My students’ peers influence their academic performance more than I do”.

The scale contains both positively and negatively worded items, and higher scores indicate greater perceived teacher self-efficacy. Various reliabilities have been reported on this item: alpha = 0.83 (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987), alpha = 0.83 (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992), alpha = 0.81 pre-test and 0.86 post-test (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002). The researcher was not able to locate information on whether or not a factor analysis was completed on the Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire.

A re-wording of this scale to change it from student to family focused was done for the new survey. Table 2 shows the adapted scale items. The original scale items can be found in Appendix A. Similar scoring was adapted for the new scale, with scores potentially ranging from 12 to 72 points, and higher scores indicating higher levels of teacher self-efficacy. These adapted questions, in addition to questions created regarding pre-service training, current family-school partnering practices, and desire for additional training, combined to make the new Efficacy in Partnering with Families Scale.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adapted Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am making a significant difference in the lives of my students by working with their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families are so private and complex, I never know if I am getting through to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually know how to get through to families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of a student’s school motivation depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a limited amount that I can do to help families to raise the performance level of students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42
I am successful with the families in my class.
I am uncertain how to reach some of my families.
I feel as though I am not making any progress with some of my families.
The families that I work with are influenced more by other families than by me.
Most of a student’s performance depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.
Other families have more of an influence than I do on the school participation of the families I work with.

**Additional survey sections.**

In order to fully address the research questions, several additional sections were created for the survey, based on family-school partnering research. The full survey can be found in Appendix B. Part 2 asks questions regarding the prior preparation received by teachers. These questions were added to the survey in order to examine the training received by the respondents, as the research demonstrates that educators may not be adequately trained in family-school partnering, and that their experiences may differ based on program and experiences required. Part 3 of the survey asks questions on the respondents’ current school placement, based on research that shows that family-school partnering implementation can vary by type of school and age level worked with. Age level, demographic of school, and school support being received were chosen as potentially important predictors. Part 4 of the survey asks respondents to choose from topics in family-school partnering, and identify if they have received past training on the topics, are implementing them currently, or if they would like more training on these topics. The topics were chosen based on the review of the literature and the most significant areas in family-school partnering. Finally, Part 5 asks open-ended questions in order to gather pertinent information that may have been missed, and also to allow respondents to name any other resources that they would have found helpful in regards to
family-school partnering training. Having this information will allow suggestions directly from educators to be crafted into recommendations for stakeholders. Part 5 also asks for respondent ethnicities, to examine if there are any differences based on varying backgrounds of teachers and students.

**Expert content review.**

To assess the content validity of the items on the Efficacy in Partnering with Families Survey, an expert panel was asked to review the survey. Four types of family-school partnering professionals were invited to participate as the experts: a faculty member at an institute of higher education with a significant background in family-school partnering; the chair of a state-wide advisory organization on family involvement; the author of the original Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire; and a director of family-school partnerships at a state government organization. Of the four invited, all agreed to participate with the exception of the author of the original Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire.

The three participants were electronically sent an overview of the research study, the new Efficacy in Partnering with Families Survey, including the adapted self-efficacy scale items. They were asked to assess the appropriateness of the adapted items, as well as the rest of the survey questions, when considering the goals of the study. They were also asked to review the appropriateness of the directions given. The full list of directions sent to the experts can be found in Appendix C.

**Expert content review results.**

The feedback received from the three content experts was very positive overall. The experts expressed that they thought the survey was a beneficial tool, and were
looking forward to the data and results from the survey. The majority of the suggestions made were about specific wording, in order to keep the questions clear and consistent with family-school partnering concepts and research, or clarification on directions. The survey questions that elicited the most comments from the experts were the self-efficacy scale items, Part 1.

In order to reflect the suggestions made by the content experts, examples of types of mentoring activities were added to the directions in Part 3 and to question 25. The directions for Part 4 were changed into bullet points, rather than a lengthy paragraph. The word “barrier” was changed to “challenge” throughout the survey, the word “infused” was changed to “included” in question 15, and the phrasing in question 16 was edited to be clearer for participants.

For the self-efficacy scale in Part 1, the word “peer” was removed from several of the scale items and replaced with the word “others” so as not to confuse the participants on what the question is asking. Wording that titled families as difficult was changed in order to reduce any negative connotations toward families (i.e. to “difficult to reach” families). Finally, several of the scale items were clarified to ensure that they were not asking identical questions.

**Pilot of the survey.**

In order to further assess the Efficacy in Partnering with Families Survey, five teachers in their first through fifth years were recruited to take the survey and provide feedback. These teachers were recruited through the researcher’s professional connections, and were from school districts that did not participate in the research.
Additionally, the researcher requested that if the participants were to receive an official request to participate in this research to refrain from doing so.

The pilot participants were split into two groups. The first group of three participants was sent the survey electronically, in the same format as the survey that was distributed to collect data. However, in the pilot version, each of the five sections contained a series of questions regarding the survey itself, including if it was easy to understand, or if they would make any changes. The participants were instructed to read the directions at the beginning of the survey and each of the five sections, complete the survey, and then answer the questions at the end of each section, based on what they had filled out. The full instructions sent to participants can be found in Appendix D.

The second set of pilot participants, two respondents, was asked to go through the process of cognitive interview with the researcher. As stated by Desimone and Le Floch (2004), “Cognitive interviews provide an excellent methodology for examining the extent to which tools of inquiry validly and reliably capture respondents’ experiences” (p.6). The participants were given the same electronic survey as the survey participants, but went through the survey with the researcher, and were asked to explain what they understood each question to be asking. Gathering this information allowed the researcher to be sure that the questions were in fact getting to the information that was desired.

**Survey pilot results.**

The piloting process yielded suggestions that were very similar to those given by the content experts. Questions 14 and 15 were reworded to reduce confusion in regards to what the question was asking. The directions for question 22 were broken down into bullet points, which was also a suggestion from the content expert review. Also for
question 22, the possible column selections were described in further detail, as opposed to one-word descriptions, to help participants when selecting their answers. The pilot participants did not express that any of the questions made them feel uncomfortable.

**Dissertation committee feedback.**

In addition to changes made to the survey based on content expert review and piloting, changes were also made after review by the dissertation committee. In addition to a few changes being made to ensure that the grammar and syntax of the questions were correct, three additional questions were added. The first question regarding the number of teaching years was added so that participants that did not meet the five years of teaching criteria could be eliminated from the sample. Question 23 was added to determine respondents’ biggest challenges, and to determine if there were any similarities across participants. Finally, question 27 was added so that potential analyses could be done to examine differences among teachers’ reported ethnicities.

**Reliability of the survey.**

In order to further assess the reliability of the efficacy scale, internal consistency was assessed. The outcome for this analysis will be discussed in the results section.

**Procedures**

The following section describes the process for data collection, as well as the process for analysis of the data.

**Data collection.**

The designed survey was put into an electronic format using the Qualtrics electronic data collection system. Once approval was obtained from the University of Denver Internal Review Board, each participating district and alumni email distribution
list was asked to send the survey link out electronically. The email sent as an introduction can be found in Appendix E.

Participants were given the opportunity to enter in a raffle to win one of five $25 electronic gift certificates to Amazon.com. Additionally, participants could provide their email addresses to receive an executive summary of the study once completed. The collection of email addresses for the raffle and executive summary was done separately from the survey itself in order to protect the anonymity of the participants, and to encourage respondent participation. This is a typical approach in order to increase the return rate of online surveys. Upon completion of the study, five participants were randomly selected and received the email gift certificate to Amazon.com.

**Power analysis.**

In order to determine the power of the main statistical test conducted – the analysis of variance (ANOVA) of overall efficacy scores – an a-posteriori power analysis was carried out. The power for the overall efficacy scale was 0.76, which is approaching the accepted level of 0.80. However, the power for individual variables type of preparation program (0.19), exposure to working with families (0.38), school demographic (0.45), amount of family-school partnering mentoring (0.13), and school level (0.64) were lower than the overall model. The low power on these variables may potentially explain why an effect was not seen in analysis.

**Analyses.**

Analyses were undertaken to answer each of the research questions posed for this study. In order to answer Research Question 1, an ANOVA was carried out. The self-efficacy score gathered by summing survey items 1 through 12 acted as the dependent
variable, and type of college/university, amount of exposure, demographic of current school, age level of current school, and mentoring received (survey items 13, 18, 19, 20, and 21, respectively) acted as the independent, tested variables. In addition, three further ANOVAs were conducted using subscales derived from the overall scale. Once conducted, further examination of the ANOVAs was carried out in order to answer Research Questions 1a, 1b, and 1c. In order to answer Research Question 1d, a regression was run examining percent of program (survey item 16) and total efficacy scores.

To answer Research Question 2, general descriptives and rankings were used to examine the number of family-school topical areas that teachers received exposure to in both their teacher preparation programs and that they engage in currently. To answer Research Question 3, a correlation was run between the number of years that teachers reported being in the profession and the overall efficacy scores.

Descriptives were also used to answer Research Question 4. Ranking of the categories that received the most answers under the “Preparation” section of item 22 of the survey was done, as well as ranking of the categories that received the most answers under the “Mentoring” section of item 22 of the survey. Finally, qualitative data was also used to answer this Research Question, and a comparison was done across both pre- and post-training.

It is important to note that the original plan for analysis included a multiple regression utilizing six independent variables and examining whether or not these independent variables predicted overall efficacy scores. Upon further consideration, the analysis method was changed from a multiple regression to factorial ANOVA, due to the
categorical nature of the variables and the complexity of the model that would have needed to be developed to accommodate multiple dummy variables.
Chapter Four: Results

This chapter describes the process for data analysis and subsequent results from the research study described in the previous chapters.

Preparation of the Data

In order to ensure that the data was as complete as possible, listwise deletion was used for any response that did not fully complete the twelve-question efficacy scale and answer through question 21. Five surveys were removed from analysis by listwise deletion. Those participants who indicated that they had over five years of teaching were automatically taken to the end of the survey, as they did not qualify. The final data was entered into SPSS and some variables were re-coded. New variables were also created in order to conduct analyses. Additionally, items on the efficacy scale that were negatively worded were reverse coded (questions 3, 5, 6, and 8-12), and total efficacy scores were determined for each respondent.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

To assess construct validity of the efficacy scale, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2012), a sample of fewer than 100 would be considered a poor factor analysis; for this reason, the results from the analysis should be considered preliminary. Three factors were extracted through principal component analysis. When loadings less than 0.50 were excluded, the analysis yielded three-factors (factor loadings > 0.50).
These three factors and the loadings are described in Table 3. Five items loaded on to factor 1. These items all relate to teachers’ abilities to reach families and parties that have an influence on families and their behaviors. This factor was labeled the Influence Scale. Four items loaded onto factor 2. These items relate to teachers’ abilities to partner with families and the factor was labeled the Partnering Scale. The remaining three items loaded onto factor three. These items relate to student motivation and academic performance and this factor was labeled Motivation Scale. Table 3 presents the groupings of the items.

Table 3

Subscale Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Subscale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Families are so private and complex, I never know if I am getting through to them.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am uncertain how to reach some of my families.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel as though I am not making any progress with some of my families.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The families that I work with are influenced more by other families than by me.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Other families have more of an influence than I do on the school participation of the families I work with.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel that I am making a significant difference in the lives of my students by working with their families.</td>
<td>Partnering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated families.</td>
<td>Partnering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I usually know how to get through to families.</td>
<td>Partnering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am successful with the families in my class.</td>
<td>Partnering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Most of a student’s school motivation depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There is a limited amount that I can do to help families to raise the performance level of students.</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Most of a student’s performance depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since the correlations between factors 1 and 2 and 2 and 3 were higher than 0.3, an oblique rotation was used rather than an orthogonal rotation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The correlation matrix presenting inter-correlations is presented in Table 4. It is also important to note that the correlations between factors were not too high, which might indicate that the individual factors were not different enough.

Table 4

Component Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability

To examine the internal consistency reliability of the total efficacy scale (questions 1-12), Cronbach’s Alpha was used. The resulting alpha was 0.84, indicating that the overall efficacy scale had good reliability.

A reliability analysis was also conducted on each of the three separate scales that emerged during the exploratory factor analysis using Cronbach’s Alpha. The results for each were very similar. For the Influence Scale, alpha = 0.786, for the Partnering Scale, alpha = 0.796, and for the Motivation Scale, alpha = 0.795. These results indicate that each of these scales on their own had good reliability. In order to further assess the scales, an item analysis was conducted on each of the three scales. Only two of the items, if deleted, would increase the overall reliability of the scales. Item 2, if deleted, would increase the Partnering Scale from an alpha of 0.796 to 0.802. Item 6, if deleted, would
increase the Motivation scale from an alpha of 0.795 to 0.796. As the reliability of the scales would change very little with the elimination of these items, the items were retained for this study. However, further analysis should be conducted if these subscales were to be utilized again.

**Overall Analysis for Main Study**

As mentioned, the data was analyzed using SPSS first by examining descriptives and frequencies. In addition, several factorial ANOVAs were run using both the overall efficacy scores and three subscale scores in order to examine mean differences in efficacy, and post-hoc analyses of these results were run using Bonferroni corrections in order to prevent type I error. Finally, a simple regression was conducted to examine if early career mentoring in family-school partnering has an effect on overall efficacy scores, and a correlation was conducted in order to examine differences in efficacy scores based on number of years teaching. The open-ended information gathered was also examined and coded for trends in responses from participants.

**Demographics.**

The survey yielded a sample of 76. All of the responses analyzed completed the survey through question 21, which included the efficacy scale, demographic questions, and the topical training/mentoring table, but did not include the open-ended questions or the ethnicity identification question. The efficacy scale and demographic questions were determined to be most important for the analyses being conducted. Statistical significance for the analyses conducted was set at 0.05, and the N for each analysis was 76. Refer to Table 5 for a summary of participant demographic information.
Of the respondents, 31% were in their 0 through 1st year of teaching, 41% in their 2nd through 3rd year, and 28% in their 4th through 5th year. Thirty-nine of the 76 respondents reported having attended a public school for teacher preparation, 19 of 76 a private school, and 3 out of 76 an online exclusive school. Seven of the participants indicated that they considered their program to fall into the “other” category.

The large majority of participants – 82%– identified their ethnicity as white. Fewer than 9% identified as Hispanic or Latino and 1.3% as Black or African American. Seven percent chose more than one identifier, and 1.3% chose other. No respondents identified solely as Native American or Indian, or Asian/Pacific Islander. Four participants chose not to identify their ethnicity.

In regards to school age level, almost half of the 76 participants (45%) identify as working in an elementary school. High school teachers make up 30% of the sample, middle school 21%, and K-8 teachers 4%. In regards to school demographics, the majority of participants (95%) reported working in either an urban or suburban setting.
Table 5

*Participant Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years Teaching n = 76</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity n = 72</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Indian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than One Selection</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation Program n= 76</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Exclusive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Age Level n = 76</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Demographic n = 76</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Efficacy scores.**

The overall efficacy scores of the participants (n = 76) surveyed were varied. The total scores ranged from 33 to 65, with a mean of 43.76 and a standard deviation of 6.15. A higher score on the efficacy scales indicates feeling more effective in working with families, while a lower score indicates feeling less effective in working with families. In examining average efficacy scores by the major demographics of the survey, the overall
scores did not vary greatly. Respondents who attended private preparation programs, those who had two to three years of teaching, and those who currently worked in a rural school demographic had the highest averages of their groups. The highest overall efficacy score average was for teachers who currently worked in a rural school. The lowest overall efficacy score averages came from teachers who are in K-8 schools, and those who have spent four to five years in the profession. The standard deviation was similar across the groups with the exception of teachers who attended online exclusive preparation programs; that standard deviation was much higher (SD = 17.44).

Table 6

Average Efficacy Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Average Efficacy Score</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>43.88</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45.10</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Prep</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43.54</td>
<td>5.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44.19</td>
<td>5.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Exclusive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42.86</td>
<td>6.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Age Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41.98</td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43.63</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46.83</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41.33</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Demographic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>43.69</td>
<td>5.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43.24</td>
<td>6.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49.25</td>
<td>8.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to analyzing the overall efficacy score averages by demographic group, each survey item was examined separately. The average score by survey item was determined after the negatively worded items were recoded. For example, item 3, “families are so private and complex, I never know if I am getting through to them” was one of the items re-coded. The re-coding was done so that higher scores always indicated the highest levels of perceived efficacy. If this item had not been re-coded, a higher score would mean that the participants agreed with the item, indicating low efficacy.

The item averages ranged from 2.83 to 4.41. Three of the items had averages in the 4-point range, eight of the items had averages in the 3-point range, and one item had an average in the 2-point range. Higher averages indicate a higher level of perceived effectiveness, while lower scores indicate a lower perceived effectiveness for the items. The two statements that recorded the highest averages included item 4, “I usually know how to get through to families”, and item 1, “I feel that I am making a significant difference in the lives of my students by working with their families”. Table 7 presents the average scores of each individual item.
Table 7

*Average Score by Scale Item*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel that I am making a significant difference in the lives of my students by working with their families.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated families.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Families are so private and complex, I never know if I am getting through to them. *</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I usually know how to get through to families.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Most of a student’s school motivation depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence. *</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There is a limited amount that I can do to help families to raise the performance level of students. *</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am successful with the families in my class.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am uncertain how to reach some of my families. *</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel as though I am not making any progress with some of my families. *</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The families that I work with are influenced more by other families than by me. *</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Most of a student’s performance depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence. *</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Other families have more of an influence than I do on the school participation of the families I work with. *</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An * indicates that the item was re-coded

**Research Question 1**

In order to examine current situation and prior training factors that could potentially affect early career teachers’ perceptions of efficacy in working with families, a 3 (public-private-online-other) x 3 (none-a little-some-a lot) x 2 (urban-suburban-rural) x 3 (none-a little-some-a lot) x 3 (elementary-middle-high-K8) factorial ANOVA was carried out. The total efficacy scores of the respondents acted as the dependent variable, and there were five independent variables: type of teacher preparation program, pre-service exposure to working with families, demographic of current school placement, age level of current school, and current amount of mentoring on family-school partnering. A
subsequent analysis was also conducted on the three subscales that emerged from the exploratory factor analysis to examine factors that may potentially have an effect on certain specific aspects of partnering.

The total efficacy ANOVA results indicated only one significant main effect, age level of current school, $F(3) = 2.759, p = 0.05$. A Bonferroni correction was used for post hoc analysis. The results from this post hoc analysis indicate that there is a significant difference between the school level variables elementary and high school ($p = 0.021$). Tables 8 and 9 present the ANOVA and Bonferroni correction results. Figure 1 presents the means for the overall efficacy scores by school age level for elementary ($n = 34$) and high school ($n = 23$) levels. In this figure, it can be seen that the high school teacher respondents report a higher overall efficacy than the elementary teacher respondents.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50.37</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21274.81</td>
<td>609.13</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPEPREP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24.07</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPOSURE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>52.06</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOLDEMO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80.54</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSPMENTOR</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.33</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOLLEVEL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96.31</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.050*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>34.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 presents the means for the overall efficacy scores by school age level for elementary ($n = 34$) and high school ($n = 23$) levels. In this figure, it can be seen that the high school teacher respondents report a higher overall efficacy than the elementary teacher respondents.
**Table 9**

*Bonferroni Correction Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>-1.65</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>-4.86</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-8 School</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>-3.20</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-8 School</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-8 School</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8 School</td>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>-.64</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>-2.29</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>-5.49</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.** Mean Difference of Overall Efficacy Scores. This figure illustrates overall efficacy score differences by school age level.
Due to the fact that three new scales were determined to be reliable, additional separate ANOVAs were run using each scale in order to answer Research Question 1. In this analysis, there were found to be several significant main effects. Examining the Influence Scale age level of current school, $F (3) = 4.69, p = 0.05$ was found to be significant. The post hoc Bonferroni correction revealed that there was a difference between elementary and high school levels, $p = 0.02$, with high school means as higher, indicating a higher level of efficacy regarding teachers’ abilities to reach families and parties that have an influence on families and their behaviors. Figure 2 shows the means for the Influence Scale score by school age level for the elementary respondents and high school respondents. In this figure it can be observed that the high school respondents report a higher level of perceived effectiveness on the Influence Scale than elementary respondents.

![Mean Difference](image)

*Figure 2. Mean Difference of Influencing Subscale Scores. This figure illustrates Influence Scale score differences by school age level.*

On the Partnering Scale, two main effects were discovered: age level of current school, $F (3) = 2.92, p = 0.041$, and family-school partnering mentoring currently being
received, $F (3) = 3.39, p = 0.023$. The post hoc Bonferroni correction revealed differences between elementary and middle school, $p = 0.029$ on the school age level variable. Figure 3 presents the means for the Partnering Scale scores for school age level for the elementary and middle school levels. The figure shows that scores on the Partnering Scale were higher in the elementary sample than the middle school sample, indicating higher levels of efficacy on teachers’ abilities to engage in partnering with families.

Differences were also revealed on the family-school partnering mentoring currently being received variable. These differences were between levels none and some, $p = 0.03$ and levels a little and some, $p = 0.031$. Figures 4 and 5 present the means for the Partnering scale for these variables. It can be observed on these figures that participants who indicated they receive some mentoring currently in family-school partnering ($n = 24$) had higher partnering efficacy than those participants who indicated they receive a little ($n = 25$) or none ($n = 20$) in regards to current family-school partnering mentoring.

![Mean Difference](image)

*Figure 3. Mean Difference of Partnering Subscales Scores 1. This figure illustrates Partnering Scale score differences by school age level.*
Figure 4. Mean Difference of Partnering Subscales Scores 2. This figure illustrates Partnering Scale score differences by amount of mentoring.

Figure 5. Mean Difference of Partnering Subscales Scores 3. This figure illustrates Partnering Scale score differences by amount of mentoring.

Examination of the Motivation Scale, which included items on student motivation to achieve, also yielded two main effects. Once again, school age level was significant, $F (3) = 3.56, p = 0.019$. While the Bonferroni correction did not reveal significance between variables on the school age level variable, an LSD post hoc analysis did reveal differences between elementary and middle school, $p = 0.014$, and elementary school and
high school, \( p = 0.015 \), with high school and middle school being higher. The LSD analysis was done because the ANOVA indicated significance, but the Bonferroni did not, and further examination was needed; however, these results should be taken with caution. Figures 6 and 7 present the means of the Motivation Scale scores for school age level variables elementary and middle school, and elementary and high school. It can be seen in these figures that middle school level respondents and high school level respondents had higher mean scores on the Motivation Scale than elementary level respondents.

An additional significant finding was in regards to the school demographic, \( F (2) = 3.91, p = 0.025 \). The post hoc Bonferroni correction revealed a difference between urban and rural levels, \( p = 0.042 \), with rural respondents yielding higher scores on the Motivation Scale than the urban respondents. Figure 8 presents the means of Motivation Scale scores for the urban and rural levels, and it can be observed that the rural respondents report higher scores.

![Mean Difference](image)

*Figure 6. Mean Difference of Motivation Subscale Scores 1. This figure illustrates Motivation Scale score differences by school age level.*
Figure 7. Mean Differences of Motivation Subscale Scores 3. This figure illustrates Motivation Scale score differences by school age level.

Figure 8. Mean Differences of Motivation Subscale Scores 3. This figure illustrates Motivation Scale score differences by school demographic.

Research question 1a.

This research question examined if type of teacher preparation program attended – public, private, online, or other – affects teacher total efficacy scores. The ANOVA
results indicate that type of program did not have a significant effect on overall efficacy scores, \( F (3) = 0.69, p = 0.562. \)

**Research question 1b.**

Question 1b sought to determine if amount – none, a little, some, or a lot – of pre-service exposure in interacting directly with families reported affected teacher total efficacy scores. The ANOVA results indicate that pre-service exposure did not have a significant effect on efficacy scores, \( F (3) = 1.49, p = 0.226. \)

**Research question 1c.**

This question examined if amount – none, some, a little, or a lot – of early career mentoring received in working with families has an effect on teacher total efficacy scores. The ANOVA analysis indicates that early mentoring did not have a significant effect on efficacy scores \( F (3) = 0.41, p = 0.75. \)

**Research question 1d.**

To examine question 1d - does percentage of total program dedicated to family-school partnering concepts (\( M = 7.28, SD = 10.51 \)) predict teacher total efficacy scores (\( M = 43.76, SD = 6.15 \)) - a regression was carried out. The results of this analysis were not significant \( (t = -0.41, p = 0.68). \) Table 10 presents the results from this regression.

Table 10

*Single Regression Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>43.97</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Total Coursework</td>
<td>-.028</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>-.0147</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2

To answer Research Question 2, each family-school topical area was examined for number of responses given in regards to the most experience in prior preparation, as well as the topics that are engaged in the most in daily practice. The total number was noted for each topic and answers were ranked to determine the top three or four topical areas in both prior preparation and current practice. Table 11 presents these rankings.

Table 11

*Training Received and Currently Engaged in Areas*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family-School Partnering Topical Area</th>
<th>Ranking – Training Received</th>
<th>Ranking – Currently Engaging In</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research on family-school partnering</td>
<td>4 – tie</td>
<td>5 – tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships with families</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with families who might need additional supports</td>
<td>2 – tie</td>
<td>2 – tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnering on strategies to support student learning at home</td>
<td>4 – tie</td>
<td>2 – tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving conflicts with families</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming personal barriers to family-school partnering</td>
<td>4 – tie</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming structural barriers to family-school partnering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 – tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming systemic barriers to family-school partnering</td>
<td>4 – tie</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top three areas checked in terms of training that was received in prior teacher preparation programs included 1) building relationships with families, 2) collaborating with families who might need additional supports, and 3) overcoming systemic challenges.
The top three responses checked for areas currently being engaged in daily practice included 1) overcoming personal barriers to family-school partnering, 2) collaborating with families who might need additional supports, and 3) partnering on strategies to support learning at home.

**Research Question 3**

To determine whether or not a relationship exists between the years of teaching experience reported (M = 7.28, SD = 10.51) and overall efficacy scores (M = 43.76, SD = 6.15), a correlation was carried out. The results indicate that there was not a significant relationship ($r = -0.13$, $p = 0.26$).

**Research Question 4**

To answer the final Research Question, the family-school partnering topical areas were examined to determine which were selected the most in regards to training that would have been beneficial to receive and in regards to desired additional mentoring. The topics were ranked based on which were selected most frequently. When considering training respondents would have liked to receive in their preparation programs, research on family-school partnering, resolving conflicts with families, and overcoming structural barriers to family-school partnering were the topics that were chosen the most frequently. Overcoming structural barriers, collaborating with families who might need additional supports, and resolving conflicts with families were the topics that respondents would like to receive additional mentoring support in their current placements.
Table 12

*Training and Mentoring Desired*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family-School Partnering Topical Area</th>
<th>Ranking – Training Desired</th>
<th>Ranking – Mentoring Desired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research on family-school partnering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 – tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships with families</td>
<td>7 – tie</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with families who might need additional supports</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 – tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnering on strategies to support student learning at home</td>
<td>4 – tie</td>
<td>2 – tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving conflicts with families</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 – tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming personal barriers to family-school partnering</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming structural barriers to family-school partnering</td>
<td>7 – tie</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming systemic barriers to family-school partnering</td>
<td>4 – tie</td>
<td>6 – tie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Open-Ended Questions*

Though fewer participants included answers for the open-ended questions, there was important data that emerged from the analysis. Eighty-nine percent provided a response for question 23 which asked respondents about their top two challenges in working with families, 63% for question 24 which asked about additional training desired, and 53% for question 25 which asked about additional mentoring desired.

Responses given for the three open-ended questions were reviewed and categories were created to reflect the answers given; responses were sorted into these categories. All responses given were easily coded into one of the categories. These categories were created by the researcher and based on important topical areas in family-school partnering. The categories were mutually exclusive, as each response was assigned to only one category.
The categories and definitions for question 23 – challenges – included: communication (barriers to communicating with families, knowing how to communicate), perceived family values/perspectives (value placed on education by families, expectations held, roles of families), family partnering (commitment to and engagement in education by families), perceived family abilities (families’ abilities to help students at home, role models at home), cultural barriers (any barrier related to language or culture), school barriers (barriers inherent to the school system and school day), and systemic barriers (barriers related to the larger community or macrosystem).

Coding for question 24 – training – yielded the categories: communication (strategies for and how to communicate), relationship skill building (using interpersonal skills), general partnering (how to engage and partner with families), hands on experiences (experiences that involve working directly with families or role playing), home support (helping families find supports and support their students at home), and cultural training (training on working with diverse families).

Finally, question 25 – mentoring – yielded the categories: professional development, administration support, working with mentor teachers/other teachers, working with other professionals, and general partnering topics. While question 26 was not coded, any pertinent information from respondents was included in the discussion. Table 13 lists each of the categories for the three questions with an example taken from participant responses, and Table 14 illustrates the percentages of responses per category.
### Table 13

**Open-Ended Categories and Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Category</strong></th>
<th><strong>Example from Respondents</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 23 – Challenges</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Lack of communication follow through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived family values/perspectives</td>
<td>Families do not value education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family partnering</td>
<td>Parents not attending meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived family abilities</td>
<td>Parents do not know how to handle behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural barriers</td>
<td>Language differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School barriers</td>
<td>Too little time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Barriers</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 24 – Training</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Effective methods of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship skill building</td>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General partnering</td>
<td>How to engage families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands on experiences</td>
<td>Role playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home support</td>
<td>Engagement strategies for parents at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural training</td>
<td>Cultural sensitivity training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 25 – Mentoring</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>How to interact with families/get them engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration support</td>
<td>New ideas from administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with mentor/other teachers</td>
<td>Hearing things other teachers have tried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with other professionals</td>
<td>Working with counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnering topic</td>
<td>Establish on-going communication with families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14

Percent of Total Responses Per Category Organized from Highest to Lowest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 23 Challenges</th>
<th>Question 24 Training</th>
<th>Question 25 Mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Engagement</strong> – 27%</td>
<td><strong>General Partnering Training</strong> – 29%</td>
<td><strong>Working with Mentor Teachers</strong> – 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication – 25%</td>
<td>Communication – 23%</td>
<td>Administration Support – 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Family Perspective/Values – 15%</td>
<td>Cultural – 16%</td>
<td>Specific Partnering Topics – 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Barriers – 14%</td>
<td>Home Support – 14%</td>
<td>Working with Other Professionals – 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Barriers – 12%</td>
<td>Hands on Experiences - 12%</td>
<td>Professional Development – 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Barriers – 4%</td>
<td>Relationship Building Skills – 6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Family Abilities – 3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative data was also used to further examine the variable that appeared to result in the most significant different responses in regards to overall scores in the ANOVA analyses. Table 15 illustrates the top three categories of answers for questions 23, 24, and 25 by elementary school, middle school, and high school organized from highest to lowest. It is important to note that fewer answers were given by participants as questions continued. Also recall that there were a very limited amount of respondents who identified as working in a K-8 school (n = 4). By examining the results it can be observed that participants are experiencing and reporting a variety of challenges in working with families, as well as variety of training and mentoring that they would have liked to receive or would like currently.
Though there were some similarities in responses, differences were seen across the age levels in terms of categories that their responses fell into, as well as which categories were repeated most frequently.

Table 15

*Top Open-Ended Responses by Age Level Organized from Highest to Lowest*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Age</th>
<th>Question 23 Challenges</th>
<th>Question 24 Training</th>
<th>Question 25 Mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elementary</strong></td>
<td>Communication Perceived Family Values/Perspectives</td>
<td>Communication General Partnering Training Home Support</td>
<td>Working with Mentor Teachers Professional Development Administration Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>Family engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle School</strong></td>
<td>Communication Family Engagement</td>
<td>General Partnering Training Hands on Experiences Home Support</td>
<td>Working with Mentor Teachers Specific Partnering Topics Working with Other Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 16</td>
<td>Communication Perceived Family Values/Perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K-8</strong></td>
<td>Communication Cultural Barriers System Barriers</td>
<td>Hands on Experiences</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School</strong></td>
<td>Cultural Barriers Communication Family Engagement</td>
<td>Cultural Training General Partnering Communication</td>
<td>Professional Development Working with Other Professionals Administration Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Five: Discussion

In this study, Colorado early career teachers’ feelings of efficacy were assessed in regards to working with families. In addition, teachers’ pre-service training and current mentoring supports in working with families were also examined. Four research questions were asked addressing these topics. The goals of the study were to determine how effective teachers feel in working with families, as well as the training and mentoring that they currently receive or desire receiving and how these factors may be affecting their efficacy. It is critical to study these efficacy perceptions and training/mentoring of teachers in order to address gaps and lower the attrition of young teachers from the teaching field. Additionally, partnering with families has now become a large part of teachers’ roles due to both its incorporation in legislation and evidence that working with families leads to increased outcomes for educators and families in addition to students (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

After an extensive review of the literature on early career teachers, self-efficacy, and family-school partnering, a survey was created, including a modified version of Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie’s self-efficacy scale (1987). This scale was chosen as it was short, intentional, and could easily be modified from student-focused language to family-focused. The decision was made to create a new survey because there is a need for more valid and reliable measures to assess teachers’ attitudes, knowledge,
and behaviors regarding working with a variety of families, and problems have been found with many existing self-efficacy scales (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

This survey was distributed to general education, K-12 teachers in their first through fifth years of teaching in one western state. A total of 76 respondents participated in the study. The majority of participants were elementary teachers, but middle and high school teachers were also represented. Most participants attended either a traditional public or private teacher preparation program, and almost all participants currently work in either an urban or suburban setting.

In the remainder of this chapter, discussion of the topics outlined above will first be addressed, followed by implications for the field. The chapter will end with a discussion of limitations and also and recommendations for the future in regards to research, pre-service training, and policies.

**Efficacy of Early Teachers**

In order to answer Research Questions 1 and 1a-1d, participants were asked to complete a partnering with families efficacy scale, as well as several demographic questions. When examining these specific current and prior situation factors and their impact on the total efficacy scale score, only one variable was found to affect total efficacy scores of respondents: age level of current school placement (elementary, middle school, high school, or K-8 school). Type of teacher preparation program attended, pre-service exposure in working with families, and amount of early career mentoring in family-school partnering received were not shown to have a significant effect on total efficacy scores. These results indicate that there is a difference between respondents working in elementary schools and respondents in high schools when considering their
overall efficacy scores. This may be a result of the specific training and/or mentoring that teachers of differing age levels have received, and needs to be examined more in-depth.

The total efficacy scores across the sample of early teachers who responded to the survey indicated that respondents varied in their levels of perceived efficacy. This was reflected in the fact that scores ranged from 33 to 65, with a mean of 43.76 and a standard deviation of 6.15. This score was higher than was anticipated by the researcher, as past research has supported the idea that teachers do not feel prepared to work with families (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Markow & Pieteres, 2009). This average score could be due to a variety of factors. Higher scores could speak to the fact that the survey was self-report, and teachers felt compelled to answer in a more positive manner than they may actually believe. The teachers surveyed could also truly feel more effective in working with families than was predicted or than what is indicated by past researchers. Another reason for this higher than expected efficacy total might be that young teachers are still at the enthusiastic stage of their career and feel that their efforts will be effective and lead to positive outcomes. Research by Hoy and Spero (2005) found that teachers’ perceived feelings of self-efficacy decreased as teaching experience increased. This is supported by the average total efficacy scores in this study, which show that teachers with four to five years of teaching had the lowest overall efficacy score average of all the separate demographic groups examined. While the overall average was higher than anticipated, it is important to note that there was large range of scores with some falling below the average, indicating that specific teachers who feel less efficacious may need more targeted support.
New teachers also may believe that they know how to reach families, but may be unaware of new research and ideas that have emerged in family-school partnering. While it may be assumed that newly graduated teachers are being exposed to this information in their teacher preparation, researchers have shown that this is not the case, as many teacher education programs do not report having family-school partnering courses or much training on the topic (Miller, Lines, Sullivan, & Hermanutz, 2012). This may in part be due to the fact that faculty who are preparing educators did not receive family-school partnering training or courses in their own preparation (Wright, Daniel, & Himelreich, 2000).

Generally speaking, however, higher feelings or ratings of efficacy from some of these early career teachers should be viewed as a positive finding. These scores may indicate a less negative attitude towards working with families in newer teachers just entering the field, and may result in increased aspects of parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987).

Since the total efficacy scale used in this study was newly created, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine if there were separate factors. The factor analysis resulted in three subscales that the researcher titled Influence, Partnering, and Motivation. Additional significant results emerged when examining pre-service and current factors and their effect on these efficacy subscale scores. Examination of the subscales suggests that high school teachers may feel more effective than elementary teachers on the Influence Scale, which included items on teachers’ abilities to reach families, and parties that have an influence on families and their behaviors. Elementary teachers may feel more effective than middle school teachers on the Partnering Scale,
which included items related to teachers’ abilities to partner with families. Examination also suggests that high and middle school teachers may feel more effective than elementary school teachers on the Motivation Scale, which included items on student motivation. These results show the potential variances in experiences of different school age level teachers, and are similar to research done by Rochkind, Ott, Immerwahr, Doble, and Johnson (2007) who highlight the many differences in experiences between first year secondary teachers and first year elementary teachers in terms of training, challenges experienced, and their views on working with students.

Overall the subscale results indicate that teachers at different levels may be receiving different types of training or mentoring in working with families, or may naturally feel more comfortable in particular areas. However, the goal is to have all teachers effective in all areas of working with families. While it has been shown that there are differences between elementary and high school/middle schools in aspects of family-school partnering such as trust between families and teachers (Adams & Christenson, 2000), it may be the case that high school teachers are receiving different training, and feel more effective in certain areas of family-school partnering.

In addition to school level differences, the results indicated that those teachers who identified receiving some mentoring in family-school partnering in their current school placement had higher scores on the Partnering Scale than those who identified receiving none or a little. This data supports the assertion that by continuing to provide consistent mentoring to early career teachers, their abilities can improve substantially (National Education Association, 1999). Examination of subscale scores also yielded results indicating that teachers in rural demographics had higher Motivation Scale scores
than their urban counterparts. This may suggest that teachers in rural settings are receiving different training or mentoring, as the experiences and challenges of rural schools versus those in other areas can be quite different (Debertin & Goetz, 1994).

In order to address Research Question 3, participants were asked to provide their number of years teaching. This data was examined in comparison to overall efficacy scores, and a significant relationship was not found. However, it is still important to consider. This lack of a relationship could signify that teachers of all levels of experience in their first through fifth years of teaching are having similar experiences in working with families. It would be advantageous to examine this type of data further by comparing it with data from more seasoned teachers.

**Teacher Preparation Training**

While these higher efficacy scores may be a positive when considering teachers’ readiness to work with families, the responses in this current survey also indicate that there may be a gap between how effective teachers feel and the actual training that they received or wish they would have received. Overall, the majority (75%) of respondents indicated that they had none or a little exposure in working with families in their teacher preparation programs. Further, when asked what percent of their teacher preparation programs were dedicated to family-school partnering topics, the average was 7.28%. This data highlights the potential disconnect between self-perceived effectiveness and level of training received.

To address Research Question 2, participants were asked which family-school topics they received training in during their teacher preparation programs, and which family-school areas they were engaging in during their current practice. Overall,
participants reported receiving the most training in their preparation programs in the three family-school partnering areas of: 1) building relationships with families, 2) collaborating with families who might need additional supports, and 3) overcoming systemic challenges. However, it is important to note that even these top categories were not chosen frequently (17 participants being the highest), indicating that the participants did not feel as though these topics were often covered in preparation. This lack of topics being addressed is supported by the fact that the areas that are reported as frequently covered in family-school partnering courses include parent-teacher conferences, parents as class volunteers, and parents teaching children at home (Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997).

When considering the topical areas that respondents indicated they currently engage in on a daily basis the top responses included: 1) overcoming personal barriers, 2) collaborating with families who might need additional supports, 3) partnering on strategies to support student learning at home, and 4) resolving conflicts with families. One of these topics is the same as those indicated as the topics that the most training were received in, thus teachers are potentially able to implement the skills that they are learning in their teacher preparation programs. Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000) found that development that is specifically content focused is more highly related to teachers’ increases in applicable skills. They also found that specific types of activities that are more effective are those that have content focus, are longer, and have active learning opportunities. These characteristics are often true of college courses, and thus may explain why topics that training are received in are being implemented in current practice.
Based on survey responses, most participants are not being required to take many classes where family-school partnering topics are either covered or addressed in a separate class during their teacher preparation programs. Only 19 of 76 (25%) participants reported having courses in their teacher preparation programs that infused family-school partnering topics, while only four reported having standalone courses on family-school partnering. These results are similar to Flanigan (2005) who found that only 16% of Illinois higher education faculty surveyed taught standalone courses on family-school partnering, and Miller, Lines, Sullivan, and Hermanutz (2012), who found that only 17% of Colorado higher education faculty surveyed taught a standalone family-school partnering course.

**Desired Mentoring and Training**

To address Research Question 4, respondents were asked what types of family-school partnering training they would have liked to receive, as well as mentoring that they would like in their current placement in family-school partnering. The areas most selected for training they would have liked included 1) research on family-school partnering, 2) resolving conflicts with families, and 3) overcoming structural barriers to family-school partnering. When asked the same question using an open-ended format, participants were able to give more detail on the type of training they would have liked, and their responses fell most frequently into the categories of communication (specific strategies), general partnering training (engaging families and working with them in general), and cultural (working with families of different backgrounds).

The responses given regarding desired mentoring were similar to top areas that respondents indicated they would have liked to receive more training in their teacher
preparation programs. According to participants, overcoming structural barriers to partnering, collaborating with families who need additional supports, partnering on strategies to support student learning at home, and resolving conflict with families are the areas that additional mentoring is desired the most. When asked the same question in an open-ended format, the top answers given were not the same, but were instead focused on the types of supports desired, such as working with mentor and fellow teachers. Ideas from administrators, working with other professionals such as counselors or school psychologists, and professional development opportunities such as workshops or trainings were also suggested. These responses suggest that rather than emotional support from mentors, teachers greatly desire and benefit from learning about the topics mentioned through mentoring or direct work with veteran colleagues (Feiman-Nemser 2003).

Further examination of the amount of mentoring participants currently receive in regards to working effectively with families indicated that the majority of respondents are not receiving frequent support of this type. Fifty-nine percent indicated they receive little or no mentoring, while only 9% indicated they receive a lot. Though new teachers may traditionally receive mentoring in their school placements, it is not necessarily centered on how to work with families effectively. This is in line with research by Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) who argued that mentoring is recently entering a new, deeper phase and should include more topics than it has traditionally, including working with families.

Challenges

Participants were also asked to indicate their top two challenges throughout their careers in regards to working with families. While a large variety of answers were given,
the answers that were given most frequently included challenges around cultural barriers (most specifically, challenges surrounding language differences), a perceived lack of interest from families in partnering and engaging, and a lack of follow through in communication from families. Past research also offers these areas as significant challenges to family-school partnering (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997). These may be the areas that new teachers are struggling with the most in regards to working with families, and where they may need significant support.

**Implications for the Field**

This section will address implications and suggestions for the field. Five topics will be covered: family-school partnering courses in teacher preparation programs, hands on experiences in preparation programs, mentoring and professional development for new teachers, addressing cultural barriers, and policy implications.

**Family-school partnering courses.**

The first implication is that general education teachers may not be receiving the foundational information on family-school partnering that they need in order to put it into practice in daily school life. Many teachers indicated that they did not take any courses that infuse family-school partnering topics into their other work. The fact that a large amount of responses in the open-ended challenges question indicated that that teachers did not know if families valued education, were interested or engaged in their students’ learning, and believed that families were apathetic might lend support to this idea. This is often a misconception surrounding families, and is addressed as a foundational idea in family-school partnering. Dispelling such misconceptions about families can be done by emphasizing communication as well as the idea that parents do care about education but
vary in their abilities to be partners (Davis, 2000; Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997). By working to shift this belief system to a belief in a shared responsibility for educating students and holding both parties as essential to success (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001), teachers will be more readily able to view families as full partners.

Another implication is that teacher education pre-service training programs should include family-school partnering research and topics throughout courses on curriculum, classroom management, and development. By doing so, teachers would continuously be exposed to the importance of family-school partnering, and would also learn that family-school partnering is not a one-time intervention, but rather something that requires a variety of opportunities to partner and continuous and positive communication (Callender & Hansen, 2004). Infusing this information into existing coursework would increase understanding of what family-school partnering might look like and be like in a variety of settings. Such training reform might then address comments such as the one given by one of the survey respondents: “Good topic. Connecting with families is probably powerful if I knew how to do it and had the time.” By infusing this topic into all classes, teachers would also see family partnering as a part of their daily routine. Infusing family-school partnering into preexisting courses also would not add an additional burden on teachers or teacher preparation programs, which may already be overburdened in attempting to meet all credentialing and licensing requirements.

While infusing family-school partnering concepts continuously throughout courses in teacher preparation programs is recommended, a standalone course on family-school partnering would also be a significant idea to reform teacher training programs.
Such a course would allow teachers to understand the empirical research basis behind the practice and understand different approaches to the topic. This type of course would include relationship building skills (such as conflict resolution), communication skills (strategies to engage families), as well as hands on field experiences in how to partner with families and students on key topics, which were the top ranked topics that respondents indicated they wish they had received more training in. These desired topics are similar to some that have emerged from other studies examining training necessary to partner (Caspe, Lopez, Chu, & Weiss, 2011). This type of course would also be a departure from what is reported as typically offered – parent-teacher conferences has been reported as the most frequently taught topic (Hiatt-Michael, 2001), an assertion supported by this study in which 74% of participants indicated that they received training on parent-teacher conferences.

Topics that participants wished they had received more training in were very similar to the topics in which they wish they were currently receiving more mentoring. Such similarity may suggest these are particular areas in which Colorado teachers struggle the most. This may also imply that these areas might be ones that could be addressed more during first year mentoring or coaching programs. These topics should be highlighted but it is also important to note there were many other topics selected, though less frequently, that should not be forgotten in terms of providing support. Beginning of the year needs assessments might potentially be conducted with new as well as seasoned educators in order to pinpoint areas for continued professional development, which could differ based on characteristics of the school or the teachers themselves.
**Hands on experiences.**

According to respondents, specific family-partnering experiences were not a large part of their teacher preparation programs. Parent-teacher conferences were the most reported required experience, with 74% indicating this was required in their program. However, the remaining experiences described were required less frequently – phone calls home at 55%, written correspondence at 48%, home visits at 9%, and homework nights at 9%. Other experiences were noted, including literacy nights and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, but these ideas were only found in a small portion of the sample. Including intentional family-school partnering activities in required fieldwork that occurs in all teacher preparation programs might ensure that educators leave their training ready to apply these critical skills in the field. Family-school partnering in pre-service field experiences will also help early career teachers gain further mastery and efficacy. Mastery experiences are very important and strong sources of self-efficacy due to the fact that they are based on a person’s own skills and because they are direct and individualized (Smith, 2002). These mastery experiences should include teaching educators the necessary skills to partner with families, then allowing them to practice these skills in a classroom setting, and experienced teachers or professors providing specific feedback afterwards (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000).

**Mentoring and professional development.**

Mentoring as a form of professional development is another critical area to consider for early career teachers. In this study, respondents indicated that working with mentor teachers and other professionals would be the type of experience they would like to receive. Providing early career teachers with mentors who have had success with many
different families and who are known as teachers who collaborate effectively would lead to more successful transitions into their careers (Ewing & Manual, 2005). Mentoring would allow early career teachers to work through issues that they might be experiencing while engaging in family-school partnering in a supportive space. This support may lead to ideas that were not covered during their teacher preparation. Mentoring is especially important to consider as a continuation of the family-school partnering courses that educators take. While courses are critical, past survey results reveal that educators desire additional, further training in family-school partnering even after taking a family engagement course (Katz & Bauch, 1999).

Family-school partnering focused mentoring should be provided both during teachers’ pre-service training and their early years in the field. Some current school districts are also providing mentors for veteran teachers who are changing placements (National Education Association, 1999). This practice of providing mentors for those teachers who are transitioning to a new school context or to an environment that is much different than what they were trained in – such as transitioning from an urban to a suburban environment – should be done by all schools, as it will help their transition into the new environment and to working with a different set of families.

Targeted mentoring is also recommended as an area for professional development for early career teachers. While universal family-school partnering mentoring may be sufficient for some teachers who are effective in working with families, there may be some teachers who feel even less efficacious than their counterparts, and what mentees need often varies from person to person and changes over time (National Education Association, 1999). The range of efficacy scores in this study indicate these different
levels of effectiveness and need, and the variety of answers on the open-ended questions indicate the wide range of topics that teachers received training in and experience challenges in. Some teachers may need more focused work on specific areas of family-school partnering based on their skills, background, and knowledge. It may be beneficial to use subscales such as the ones that emerged in this study to determine the areas that teachers may need additional supports. By including this targeted mentoring, teachers who are experiencing significant issues in working with families can be given high quality supports, working to prevent their attrition from the field (National Education Association).

One issue that may be arising in regards to family-school partnering is that teachers are not aware of the training they are lacking – they do not know what they do not know. To address this, administrators might consider working with their teachers to do skills assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the school years to introduce family-school partnering ideas and to allow teachers to become familiar with the types of skills that would be beneficial to have and work on developing. Administrators could potentially adapt and expand pre-existing measurement of change tools, such as the efficacy scales utilized in this study. These assessments would also help to guide and plan the targeted mentoring mentioned above.

Examining overall family-school partnering needs on a district-by-district basis, in addition to individually, is recommended for administration, as needs will vary dependent on the specific characteristics of the population and teachers. In addition to consistent mentoring, administration ideas, and troubleshooting regarding specific topics, respondents in this survey also indicated the desire for professional development
opportunities, workshops, and collaboration with mental health professionals to support their practices with families and to gain more mastery experiences in the field. Collective participation professional development in which teachers work together may also be important in regards to achieving goals, overcoming problems, and creating solutions, and should be considered when creating professional development (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000).

While this particular research study focused on novice teachers, it is also important to consider the type of teacher preparation training that administrators are currently receiving. Many respondents indicated that they would like support and new ideas from their administrators in regards to working with families. For this reason, it is recommended that administrators receive family-school partnering training similar to teachers. This is important not only so that they can offer support, but also because administrators set the tone and attitude for a school, and are often in charge of the type of professional development that teachers receive. This means that the work to partner with families would not fall solely on teachers – it becomes a comprehensive, school-wide collaboration.

Administration may also have a more direct impact when considering the topic of family engagement. As stated by Mohajeran and Ghaleei (2008): “Limited parental involvement could be related to the governance structure of the school, the leadership style of the Principal, and the Principal’s feelings about parents’ status and power, and school climate” (p. 47). Van Voorhis and Sheldon (2004) also found a positive significant relationship between principal support and quality of family-school partnership programs. It is important for administrators not only to be able to support professional development
regarding family-school partnering, but also to be able to positively affect it directly. Administrators can be prepared to offer this support by taking similar family-school partnering courses to teachers, and having family-school partnering infused in their coursework. Additionally, having administrators engage in joint professional development with teachers may be beneficial. This type of collective participation may help sustain changes in the school and contribute to a shared professional vision (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001).

Continuing to offer support to teachers in the area of family-school partnering is significant when considering how to overcome burnout and attrition from the field of teaching. By assessing teachers’ feelings of efficacy in working with families, professional development and mentoring can be provided, thus working to increase these feelings of efficacy. As teachers feel more effective in their abilities, they will not only be more likely to reach out to families (Coleman, 2012), but will also feel more effective as instructors, helping to reduce the feelings of inadequacy and stress that could be contributing to burnout and attrition.

**Cultural barriers.**

It is important to note that cultural barriers, such as differences in languages, were a specific family-school partnering area in which respondents indicated that they had experienced challenges. Training teachers to partner with all families is an important way to prepare them to work in any school district and support students of all backgrounds. Schools may consider developing relationships with and connecting teachers to community liaisons: persons who are invested in the community and school, and have the necessary background to act as a navigator between the school and families. Howland,
Anderson, Smiley, and Abbott (2006) describe the success of a community-school liaison program in which not only was the Latino liaison successful in working with families who spoke Spanish, but liaisons who were not of the same background as the families but instead had similar life experiences or socioeconomic backgrounds were successful at bridging gaps as well. Having these types of liaisons would allow teachers and families to communicate more effectively and to circumvent communication barriers, while also working to bridge any gaps that may not be related to ethnicity or language. It is recommended that schools also consider in-depth professional development trainings and supports for teachers on multicultural education and how to effectively reach out and partner with families of different backgrounds. It is very possible that this is a primary challenge for teachers because they feel unprepared and unsure of how to work with families who are not of their same background. Gay (2002) argues that the knowledge that educators should have regarding cultural diversity “goes beyond mere awareness of, respect for, and general recognition of the fact ethnic groups have different values or express similar values in different ways” (p.107), knowledge which educators may not have been given in training programs.

**Policy implications.**

While it is important to emphasize family-school partnering training mentoring in pre-service programs and school districts, it is also critical to consider how to include the topic in policy. Family-school partnering is beginning to be included in policy at national and state levels, but there are other areas in which this topic can be expanded to. Including family-school partnering in licensing requirements for teachers would ensure that programs are including family-school partnering in their teaching in order to adhere
to these requirements. Implementing family-school mentoring programs will also help to ensure that educators are receiving the support that they need. Attrition and burnout and the connection to increasing efficacy in teachers should be looked at from a social justice standpoint, as oftentimes those students who are most at-risk are experiencing high levels of attrition of teachers in their schools. Examination of family-school partnering from an economic standpoint is also important to consider, as increasing teachers’ efficacy in this area could lead to less attrition, resulting in critical budget savings.

Limitations

Though this study was able to garner important information on Colorado teachers’ efficacy and preparation in working with families, there are several limitations to the study to address, including the study design, measurement, and sample.

Due to the limited nature of the scope of the research and the survey instrument itself contextual factors were not a focus of the research. These contextual factors may have a significant impact on teachers’ ability to partner effectively and may offer additional information. These factors include the school and district environment that the teachers work in, as well as the larger community that they are a part of.

There are some limitations to consider that are inherent to self-report survey as the method of measurement chosen. Participants may have been less likely to answer questions honestly if they were concerned that the information would be viewed by their school administrators, past professors, or that they would be judged as less successful based on their responses.

The content of the survey was based on past family-school partnering research and areas of interest. Content experts reviewed the survey in order to ensure that topics were
being covered adequately and that the wording was appropriate. However, the survey was not lengthy, and there is the potential that the researcher failed to include specific topics or research. This limits the overall data collected as including more family-school partnering topics on the survey or increasing the survey length may have yielded further important data.

Despite the fact that the overall scale and three subscales within the total scale were found to have good reliability, it is possible that this had an effect on the survey data. There may be some items that could be improved to increase reliability if the scale were to be used again in the future, in addition to potentially adding items to each subscale within the overall scale to have a longer survey and more robust subscales. The observed power determined after the ANOVA was run is also a limitation to consider, as it could have affected the ability to observe effects.

The format of the survey may have also had an effect on the data that was collected. In order to collect information in an effective and efficient way for participants, an online format was chosen, and there was no additional follow-up by the researcher. By choosing this format, any face-to-face interaction was removed, which may have limited the extent of the data collected. Additionally, by allowing participants to skip questions, many respondents did not complete the open-ended question section, thus limiting that data.

There are additional potential limitations as a result of the sample itself that was used in this study. Due to time constraints and challenges in obtaining participants, the researcher capped the sample at 76 in order to analyze the data. Additionally, though the researcher is unaware of how many respondents were from each school district or teacher
preparation program due to anonymity, there is the possibility that one district or program could be overrepresented leading to skewing of the data. This smaller sample and potential overrepresentation may mean that the results are not completely generalizable to the whole state of Colorado, much less other states. The majority of participants in the sample selected their ethnicity as White, which could also limit the applicability of the results. The majority of participants attended either public or private teacher preparation, and worked in either an urban or suburban environment. This may potentially mean that those who attended a charter or online school or who work in rural environments may not be as represented by the data.

A brief review of research articles utilizing surveys of new teachers suggests that response rate and sample size are often both larger for this type of research, as researchers frequently have the full participation of school districts. This should be considered when interpreting results and planning for future research.

**Conclusions and Recommendations for the Future**

The data gathered in this study yielded important information for the field of early career teacher efficacy in working with families. It also highlighted the need to continue to research this topic to ensure that new teachers are fully prepared to partner effectively with families.

The limited number of participants in this study might be a factor in drawing conclusions; however, the results seem to concur with prior researcher’s results indicating that teachers are not receiving much training in family-school partnering and that teachers are unsure of how to partner with families. Nevertheless, further work is needed to continue to examine these variables on a larger scale.
A larger, more demographically diverse study of this nature would increase generalizability and would ensure that perspectives and ideas are being gathered from all types of educators. A more comprehensive study should also include not only general education teachers, but also special education teachers, early childhood teachers, and related service providers (for example, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, school psychologists). While teachers may spend the majority of the school day with students, related service providers also support student achievement, and need to possess the same family-school partnering skills as teachers in order to work towards the best possible student outcomes. Some related service providers, such as school psychologists, and early childhood teachers generally receive more training in family-school partnering (Epstein, Sanders, & Clark, 1999) so this may yield interesting data to compare with that of other educators.

Further surveys should aim to gather data using both quantitative and qualitative questions utilizing a mixed methods approach. While requiring additional time and work, using mixed methods would allow researchers to “draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.14). Large amounts of data can be gathered by educators while also allowing further examination of trends and perspectives by speaking to educators face-to-face using interviews or focus groups. Challenges, desires, and feelings of educators can be more fully captured this way.

In addition to continuing research in Colorado, it is recommended that similar studies be carried out throughout the country. While the research in this particular dissertation examined only Colorado in order to focus the sample, this is a topic that
affects educators, students, and families all over the United States, and should be addressed in each state and nationally.

While there was important data that emerged from this study, it is hard to ascertain precisely why scores on the efficacy scale differed by school level, and scores on the subscales differed by school level and school demographic. Further research is needed to examine why differences are occurring by school age level and school demographic in order to determine if the pre-service curriculum and training teachers receive affects their efficacy and skills in partnering with families. This may allow us to better address specific gaps in teacher education training programs and begin to tailor training to best support teachers in the field who are going to work in a variety of settings.

Self perceived teacher effectiveness in working with families should also be assessed using other self-report measures of efficacy. Examples of these include the Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, which has a subscale on colleague/parent cooperation, and Bandura’s Teacher Self-Efficacy scale, which also has a parent involvement subscale (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Bandura, 2001). Though most of the available measures of self-efficacy pertain to the topic of student instruction or motivation, they can be adapted in a similar fashion as was done in this study in order to attempt to address effectiveness specifically in working with families.

There is no one universally accepted mode for teacher evaluation. Work done by the MET Project shows that a balanced approach is best when evaluating teachers, including (but not limited to) classroom observation and student surveys (Cantrell & Kane, 2013). Thus, teachers’ efficacy in working with families should also be assessed in
ways other than self-report of self efficacy. Additional evaluation could include administrative report, student feedback, family report, and observation. Assessing this issue from different perspectives will provide a more comprehensive view of how teachers are able to partner with families. This will help us to more fully understand both the needs of educators and challenges that they face in working to partner with families.

In this study, three subscales emerged from the overall efficacy in partnering scale. This indicates that family-school partnering concepts can be broken down from global ideas to specific factors. Further research should address these factor ideas, and create tools that examine these specific factors in a more in-depth manner, especially considering how different demographics of teachers may differ on factors. Additional efficacy surveys, such as the ones mentioned previously, should be used in order to assess the validity of the constructs.

Mentoring specific to the topic of family-school partnering was a recommendation given in this study, and future studies should focus on examining the effectiveness of this type of mentoring. While past studies have established the importance of mentors to help transition early career teachers (Ewing & Manual, 2005), there is a lack of research on family-school partnering specific mentoring and its effectiveness. Studies on these topics should assess if the mentoring is effective, as well as the specific types of activities that are most effective.

A finding that emerged in this study is that some teachers still hold negative beliefs regarding families’ involvement in education, and believe families are apathetic towards education. As this belief is a significant barrier to family-school partnering, future research should examine training and mentoring that is focused on changing these
negative beliefs, and the types of activities that are most successful in doing so. Shifting this belief system will remove one hindrance to the family-school partnering process.

The results reported here clearly lend further support to the calls for more comprehensive pre-service training regarding how to engage and partner with families in order to support student achievement and success. This new teacher support is critical not only for partnering effectively with families, but also to increase retention of teachers and affect student outcomes (New Teacher Center at the University of California, 2007). Teachers and families who work together in partnerships are more likely to have students with improved grades, attitudes toward school, and test scores, as well as lower drop-out rates and higher self-esteem (Callender & Hansen, 2004). In addition, it will not only ease teachers’ transitions into the field, but also will help protect against early burnout. Indeed, this would help to strengthen the field of teaching overall by ensuring that teachers are fully prepared to support student outcomes through partnering with their families.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire

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<th>Original Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. I feel that I am making a significant educational difference in the lives of my students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Children are so private and complex, I never know if I am getting through to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I usually know how to get through to students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Most of a student’s school motivation depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There is a limited amount that I can do to raise the basic performance level of students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I am successful with the students in my class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I am uncertain how to teach some of my students.</td>
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<td>9. I feel as though some of my students are not making any academic progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. My students’ peers influence their motivation more than I do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Most of a student’s performance depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My students’ peers influence their academic performance more than I do.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Teacher Efficacy in Partnering Survey

Approval Date: 2/27/2015        Valid Use Through: 2/27/2020
Project Title: Early Career Teachers’ Efficacy in Working with Families
Principal Investigator: Kirsten Hermanutz
Faculty Sponsor: Gloria Miller
DU IRB Protocol #: 688578-1

You are being asked to be in an online survey for research. This form provides you with information about the study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don’t understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

This study is being conducted by: Kirsten Hermanutz, Child Family and, School Psychology program at the University of Denver.

You are being asked to participate because you may be a K-12, general education teacher in Colorado, in the first through fifth years of your professional career (in any district). We ask that you read this form and contact us with any questions you may have before completing the survey.

If you agree to participate, you will complete a survey about the type of family-school partnering knowledge and training gained during teacher preparation programs, how prepared educators feel in regards to working with families, and the type of family-school partnering training that teachers would desire more of.

There are no risks associated with this study because the data collection is completely anonymous and the topic is not sensitive. You may skip questions or stop the survey at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable.

You are not likely to have any direct benefit from being in this research study. However, taking part in this study may help researchers to better understand how to effectively prepare teachers to work with families.

Participation in this study will involve no cost to you. You will be given the opportunity to enter in a raffle for one of five $25 gift cards from Amazon.com. Your email address will be collected on a separate survey, so it will not be connected to your survey data. The drawing will occur in Spring 2015 after the data has been collected. Winners will be notified via the email that they provide.

This survey is being hosted by Qualtrics, and involves a secure connection. Terms of Service, addressing confidentiality, may be viewed at www.Qualtrics.com. Your
participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You can skip questions in
the survey and you can withdraw at any time by just exiting the survey.

Contact Information
The researcher carrying out this study is Kirsten Hermanutz. You may ask any questions
you have now. If you have questions later, you may call Kirsten Hermanutz at
303.550.6387.

If the researchers cannot be reached, or if you would like to talk to someone other than
the researcher(s) about; (1) questions, concerns or complaints regarding this study, (2)
research participant rights, (3) research-related injuries, or (4) other human subjects
issues, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of
Human Subjects, at 303-871-4015 or by emailing IRBChair@du.edu, or you may contact
the Office for Research Compliance by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu, calling 303-871-
4050 or in writing (University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs,
2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121).

If you want a copy of this consent for your records, you can print it from the screen. If
you would like documentation linking you to this research study, please email your
request to the Principal Investigator at Kirstenhermanutz@gmail.com.

If you wish to participate, please select the next button below to begin the survey.

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please exit the web page completely.

-------------------------------

Part 1: Impressions About Work with Families

Please indicate the total number of years you have been teaching:
0-1  2-3  4-5  More than 5
(*If the last option is checked, skip logic will bring the participant to the end of the
survey, thanking them for their time but informing them that they did not qualify).

In this section you will be asked questions regarding your feelings and ideas about your
current work with families. Please indicate HOW MUCH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE
with each of the statements, based on your total teaching career to date (adapted from
Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). You may choose not to answer any of the
questions.

For the purpose of this study, the following definition of FSP is adopted: The intentional
sharing and joint responsibility of a student’s learning between schools and families
(Lines, Miller, & Arthur-Stanley, 2011)
1 = disagree very strongly, 2 = disagree, 3 = disagree just a little, 4 = agree just a little, 5 = agree, 6 = agree very strongly

1. I believe that I am making a significant difference in the lives of my students by working with their families.
2. If I try really hard, I can partner with even the most difficult to reach families.
3. Families are so private and complex, I never know if I am getting through to them.
4. I usually know how to make connections with families.
5. Most of a student’s school motivation depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.
6. There is a limited amount that I can do to help families raise the performance level of students.
7. I am successful in partnering with the families of students in my class.
8. I am uncertain how to reach some of my families.
9. I believe I am not making any progress with some of my families.
10. The families that I work with are influenced more by others than by me.
11. Most of a student’s academic performance depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.
12. Others have more of an influence than I do on the school participation of the families I work with.

PART 2: Prior Teacher Preparation

In this section you will be asked to answer questions regarding the college/university that you attended for your teacher preparation. If you attended more than one preparation program, please base your answers on the program you spent the most time at.

13. Please indicate the type of college/university attended for teacher preparation:
   Small Private      Large Public       Online Exclusively      Other: _____

14. During your teacher preparation program, were any standalone courses about working with families required?
   Yes   No   If yes, how many:

15. During your teacher preparation program, were any courses required that included family-school partnering concepts in the coursework?
   Yes   No   If yes, how many:

16. Please indicate approximately what percentage (0-100%) of your total program (coursework and fieldwork) you believe was dedicated to family-school partnering concepts:

17. During field experiences in your teacher preparation program, please indicate which of the following family interactions were required (choose all that apply or add others):
Home visits  Parent-teacher conferences  Phone calls home to families  Written correspondence to families  Homework help nights for families  Other: ____

18. During your preparation program, please indicate how much exposure you feel you received in interacting directly with families (this includes any required contact and assignments with families, participating in parent-teacher conferences or parent meetings, and giving presentations to families):
None  A little  Some  A lot

PART 3: Characteristics of Current Placement

In this section you will be asked to answer questions regarding the school at which you are currently teaching and interacting with families. For the purpose of this section, mentoring is defined as “Support provided by experienced teachers to novice teachers” (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). Mentoring can be activities such as getting new ideas from administration, working with a master teacher, or professional development from experienced teachers.

19. Please indicate the demographic of the school you are currently at:
Urban  Suburban  Rural  Charter

20. Please indicate the age level of the school you are currently at:
Elementary School  Middle School  High School  K-8 School

21. Please indicate the amount of mentoring you are receiving in regards to working effectively with families:
None  A little  Some  A lot

PART 4: Topical Issues in Family, School, Community Partnering

In this section there is a list of topical categories that have a research or evidence base in regards to engaging families in their child’s education. These are also topics that maybe useful for educators who want to learn more about effective collaboration and partnering with families.

Next to these categories, there are four columns that each pertain to a different point in your teaching preparation or career. The first column pertains to (1) training in your teacher preparation program (“Training”). The second column (2) pertains to activities that you already currently engage in with families at your present school/site (“Current”). The third column (3) pertains to areas that you would like to have had more training on in your teacher preparation program (“Preparation”). The fourth (4) pertains to areas that you would like to receive more support in your current school/placement, from a mentor or school administrator (“Mentoring”).
To complete this section:
1. Read the category and the examples given.
2. If you received training in this topic in your teacher preparation program, select the training box.
3. If you engage in the types of activities listed in your current teaching practice, select the current box.
4. If you would have liked more training on this particular category and associated activities during your teacher preparation program, select the preparation box.
5. If you would like to receive more support on this category/activities in your current/school placement, check the mentoring box.

Check as many boxes as appropriate for you – this may be all four columns for a specific category, or none.

22.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research on family-school partnering</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i.e. legal mandates, family-school partnering and its impact on academic or behavioral outcomes)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building relationships with families</th>
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<tr>
<td>(i.e. using two-way communication, creating a welcoming environment, conducting family-teacher conferences)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Collaborating with families who might need additional supports</th>
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<tr>
<td>(i.e. special education, students receiving Response to Intervention, services, linguistically diverse, students receiving 504 services)</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Partnering on strategies to support student learning at home</th>
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<tr>
<td>(i.e. interactive homework, home-school behavior and academic strategies, strategies for homework completion)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Resolving conflicts with families</th>
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<tr>
<td>(i.e. addressing different ideas, effective conflict resolution, mediation, communication, and listening skills)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Overcoming personal barriers to family-school partnering
(i.e. challenges present in the specific individuals involved, including families or teachers - uncertainty on how to create relationships, preconceived notions held by participants)

Overcoming structural barriers to family-school partnering
(i.e. societal barriers affecting the families’ ability to partner - families’ lack of time or ability to meet, poverty, lack of family transportation)

Overcoming systemic barriers to family-school partnering
(i.e. barriers present in the school or district system itself – principal or administrative support, lack of time in school day)

PART 5: Other Issues in Training

23. Please list your top two (2) most challenging issues in working with the families of the students you have taught throughout your career:

24. Please provide any other information regarding training that you would have benefitted from receiving in your teacher preparation program in order to work effectively with families:

25. Please provide any other information regarding the types of mentoring (i.e. working with master teachers, getting new ideas from administration, professional development from experienced teachers) specific to working with families that you would benefit from in your current placement:

26. Please provide any other comments or ideas regarding the topics asked about in this survey:

27. Please select your ethnicity:
   White   Hispanic or Latino   Black or African American   Native American or American Indian   Asian/Pacific Islander   Other: _____
Appendix C
Content Review Survey and Directions

Dear Family-School Partnering expert,

Thank you for agreeing to act as a content expert in reviewing the newly created Efficacy in Partnering with Families Survey (EPF Survey). I am interested in examining early career teachers’ feelings of efficacy in regards to working with families, as well as the training that they received during teacher preparation, their desire for more training, and the characteristics of their current placements.

In order to gather this data, I have created a survey that contains five sections. For the first section, I adapted the Teacher Efficacy scale as first reported in Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie (1987). Minimal word changes were made to shift the scale from student to family focused. Included is a table with the newly adapted items. To assess the appropriateness of this scale, please indicate with a yes or a no whether you believe that each new item is an appropriate re-wording, based on what I would like to achieve with this scale. There is a box at the end of each item where you may leave comments. I have also included the four other survey sections, with a table to indicate yes or no if each item is appropriate, a comment box for each item, and an open-ended comment box after each section. Please consider the questions and what I am trying to achieve when answering these. Finally, after each set of directions there is an open-ended comment box where you may offer feedback on or ask questions regarding the clarity of the directions. For the purpose of this study, self-efficacy can be defined as: Personal judgments of one’s capabilities to organize and execute action in order to attain a particular goal; the way in which people’s beliefs have an influence on their lives (Bandura, 1977).

Thank you in advance for your participation. Having expert content reviewers will allow the construction of an appropriate survey to gather data to answer my research questions.

Sincerely,
Kirsten Hermanutz
Part 1: Impressions About Work with Families

Thank you for participating in this research. This five-part survey is designed to assess early career teachers’ ideas and impressions about partnering with families and to understand the training that teachers might require in the future regarding family-school partnering (FSP).

For the purpose of this study, the following definition of FSP is adopted: The intentional sharing and joint responsibility of a student’s learning between schools and families (Lines, Miller, & Arthur-Stanley, 2011)

Please read the directions at the beginning of each of the five sections, and answer the questions that follow. You may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. However, the more complete your response the better.

*Expert Review Comments on PART 1 Directions:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Experts: Please look at the following items on the adapted Self-Efficacy in Partnering Scale and indicate whether or not they are appropriate, given what I am trying to achieve, and any comments you may have on the items.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Adapted Item</th>
<th>Appropriate Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>I feel that I am making a significant difference in the lives of my students by working with their families.</td>
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<td>If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated families.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Families are so private and complex, I never know if I am getting through to them.</td>
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<td>I usually know how to get through to families.</td>
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<td>Most of a student’s school motivation</td>
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<td>depends on the home</td>
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<td>environment, so I have</td>
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<td>limited influence.</td>
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<td>There is a limited</td>
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<td>amount that I can do to</td>
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<td>help families to raise</td>
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<td>the performance level</td>
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<td>of students.</td>
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<td>I am successful with the</td>
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<td>families in my class.</td>
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<td>I am uncertain how to</td>
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<td>reach some of my families.</td>
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<td>I feel as though I am</td>
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<td>not making any progress with</td>
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<td>some of my families.</td>
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<td>The families that I work with</td>
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<td>are influenced more by other</td>
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<td>families than by me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most of a student’s</td>
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<td>performance depends on the</td>
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<td>home environment, so I have</td>
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<td>limited influence.</td>
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<td>Other families have more of an</td>
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<td>influence than I do on the</td>
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<td>school participation of the</td>
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<td>families I work with.</td>
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**PART 2: Prior Teacher Preparation**

*In this section you will be asked to answer questions regarding the college/university that you attended for your teacher preparation. If you attended more than one preparation program, please base your answers on the program you spent the most time at.*

*Expert Review Comments on PART 2 Directions*:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
13. Please indicate the type of college/university attended for teacher preparation: Small Private   Large Public   Online   Other: _____

   Appropriate? Yes/No       Comments

14. During your teacher preparation program, were any courses standalone courses on working with families taken?  Yes   No   If yes, how many:

   Appropriate? Yes/No       Comments

15. During your teacher preparation program, were any courses taken that infused family-school partnering concepts into coursework?  Yes   No   If yes, how many:

   Appropriate? Yes/No       Comments

16. Please indicate what percentage of your total program (coursework and fieldwork) you believe was dedicated to family-school partnering concepts:

   Appropriate? Yes/No       Comments

17. During field experiences in your teacher preparation program, please indicate which of the following family interactions were required (choose all that apply):
   Home visit   Parent-teacher conference   Phone calls home to families   Written correspondence to families   Homework help nights for families   Other: _____

   Appropriate? Yes/No       Comments

18. During your preparation program, please indicate how much exposure you feel you received in interacting directly with families (this includes any required contact and assignments with families, participating in parent-teacher conferences or parent meetings, and giving presentations to families):  None   A little   Some   A lot

   Appropriate? Yes/No       Comments
PART 3: Characteristics of Current Placement

*Expert Review Comments on PART 2:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

In this section you will be asked to answer questions regarding the school at which you are currently teaching and interacting with families. For the purpose of this section, mentoring is defined as “Support provided by experienced teachers to novice teachers” (Odell & Ferraro, 1992)

*Expert Review Comments on PART 3 Directions:

________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________

19. Please indicate the demographic of the school you are currently at:  
Urban  Suburban  Rural

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<tr>
<th>Appropriate? Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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20. Please indicate the age level of the school you are currently at:  Elementary  Middle  High School

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<th>Appropriate? Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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22. Please indicate the amount of mentoring you are receiving in regards to working effectively with families:  None  A little  Some  A lot

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<tr>
<th>Appropriate? Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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*Expert Review Comments on PART 3:

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PART 4: Topical Issues in Family, School, Community Partnering

In this section there is a list of topical categories that have a research or evidence base in regards to engaging families in their child’s education. These are also topics that maybe useful for educators who want to learn more about effective collaboration and partnering with families.

Next to these categories, there are four columns that each pertain to a different point in your teaching preparation or career. The first column pertains to (1) training in your teacher preparation program (“Training”). The second column (2) pertains to activities that you already currently engage in with families at your present school/site (“Current”). The third column (3) pertains to areas that you would like to have had more training on in your teacher preparation program (“Preparation”). The fourth (4) pertains to areas that you would like to receive more support in your current school/placement, from a mentor or school administrator.

To complete this section, first read the category and the examples given. Second, consider if you received training in this topic in your teacher preparation program. If so, check that box. Third, consider if you engage in the types of activities listed in your current teaching practice. If so, check that box. Fourth, consider if you would have liked to have had more training on this particular category and associated activities during your teacher preparation program, and if so, check that box. Finally, consider if you would like to receive more support on this category/activities in your current/school placement, and if so, check that box. Check as many boxes as appropriate for you – this may be all four columns for a specific category, or none. Then do the same for each category.

*Expert Review Comments on PART 4 Directions:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

22. (Training  Current  Preparation  Mentoring)

Research on family-school partnering
(i.e. legal mandates, family-school partnering and its impact on academic or behavioral outcomes)

Building relationships with families
(i.e. using two-way communication, creating a welcoming environment, conducting family-teacher
Collaborating with families who need additional supports
(i.e. special education, Response to Intervention, linguistically diverse)

Partnering on strategies to support student learning at home
(i.e. interactive homework, home-school behavior and academic strategies, strategies for homework completion)

Resolving conflicts with families
(i.e. addressing different ideas, effective communication and listening skills)

Overcoming personal barriers to family-school partnering
(i.e. barriers present in the persons involved, such as families or teachers - previously developed thoughts regarding families, uncertainty on how to create relationships)

Overcoming structural barriers to family-school partnering
(i.e. societal barriers affecting the families’ ability to partner - families’ lack of time or ability to meet, poverty, lack of family transportation)

Overcoming systemic barriers to family-school partnering
(i.e. barriers present in the school or district system itself – principal or administrative support, lack of time in school day)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate? Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</table>

*Expert Review Comments on PART 4:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
PART 5: Other Issues in Training

23. Please provide any other information regarding training that would have benefitted you to receive in your teacher preparation program in order to work effectively with families:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate? Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

24. Please provide any other information regarding mentoring on specific to working with families that would benefit you to receive in your current placement in order to work effectively with families:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate? Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</table>

25. Please provide any other comments regarding the topics asked about in this survey:

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<tr>
<th>Appropriate? Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
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</table>

*Expert Review Comments on PART 5:

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Appendix D

Pilot Survey and Directions

Dear Pilot Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to review the survey that I have created in order to gather data for my dissertation, titled Early Career Teachers’ Efficacy in Working with Families. Following you will find the survey created to gather data on this topic. Please read the directions for the survey before beginning. There are five sections to this survey - please answer the questions based on your own experiences. After each section are additional questions to be answered on the clarity of the directions and questions themselves. At the end of the survey, there is also an open-ended section for any general comments.

If you receive this survey and a request to participate in the future, please ignore the subsequent requests. If you have any questions regarding this project, please feel free to contact me at Kirsten.hermanutz@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time,
Kirsten Hermanutz

--------------------------------------------------------------------------

Thank you for participating in this research. This five-part survey is designed to assess early career teachers’ ideas and impressions about partnering with families and to understand the training that teachers might require in the future regarding family-school partnering (FSP).

For the purpose of this study, the following definition of FSP is adopted: The intentional sharing and joint responsibility of a student’s learning between schools and families (Lines, Miller, & Arthur-Stanley, 2011)

Please read the directions at the beginning of each of the five sections, and answer the questions that follow. You may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. However, the more complete your response the better.

Part 1: Impressions About Work with Families

In this section you will be asked questions regarding your feelings and ideas about your current work with families. Please indicate HOW MUCH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the statements, based on your total teaching career to date (adapted from Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). You may choose not to answer any of the questions.
1 = disagree very strongly, 2 = disagree, 3 = disagree just a little, 4 = agree just a little, 5 = agree, 6 = agree very strongly

1. I feel that I am making a significant difference in the lives of my students by working with their families.
2. If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult and unmotivated families.
3. Families are so private and complex, I never know if I am getting through to them.
4. I usually know how to get through to families.
5. Most of a student’s school motivation depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.
6. There is a limited amount that I can do to help families to raise the performance level of students.
7. I am successful with the families in my class.
8. I am uncertain how to reach some of my families.
9. I feel as though I am not making any progress with some of my families.
10. The families that I work with are influenced more by other families than by me.
11. Most of a student’s performance depends on the home environment, so I have limited influence.
12. Other families have more of an influence than I do on the school participation of the families I work with.

PART 1 follow-up questions:

1. Were the directions easy to understand? Yes   No
   a. If no, please indicate why:  
2. Did any of the items make you uncomfortable? Yes  No
   a. If so, please list which, and why:  
3. Would you change the wording on any of the questions? Yes  No
   a. If so, please list which questions, and how you would change the wording:

4. Do you have any general feedback on this section of the survey?
PART 2: Prior Teacher Preparation

In this section you will be asked to answer questions regarding the college/university that you attended for your teacher preparation. If you attended more than one preparation program, please base your answers on the program you spent the most time at.

13. Please indicate the type of college/university attended for teacher preparation:
   Small Private      Large Public       Online   Other: ___

14. During your teacher preparation program, were any courses standalone courses on working with families taken?   Yes   No   If yes, how many:

15. During your teacher preparation program, were any courses taken that infused family-school partnering concepts into coursework?   Yes   No   If yes, how many:

16. Please indicate what percentage of your total program (coursework and fieldwork) you believe was dedicated to family-school partnering concepts:

17. During field experiences in your teacher preparation program, please indicate which of the following family interactions were required (choose all that apply):
   Home visit     Parent-teacher conference     Phone calls home to families     Written correspondence to families     Homework help nights for families     Other: ___

18. During your preparation program, please indicate how much exposure you feel you received in interacting directly with families (this includes any required contact and assignments with families, participating in parent-teacher conferences or parent meetings, and giving presentations to families): None   A little   Some   A lot

PART 2 follow-up questions:

1. Were the directions easy to understand? Yes   No
   a. If no, please indicate why: __________________________

2. Did any of the items make you uncomfortable? Yes   No
   a. If so, please list which, and why: __________________________

3. Would you change the wording on any of the questions? Yes   No
   a. If so, please list which questions, and how you would change the wording:

   __________________________________________________________________________

4. Do you have any general feedback on this section of the survey?

   __________________________________________________________________________
PART 3: Characteristics of Current Placement

In this section you will be asked to answer questions regarding the school at which you are currently teaching and interacting with families. For the purpose of this section, mentoring is defined as “Support provided by experienced teachers to novice teachers” (Odell & Ferraro, 1992)

19. Please indicate the demographic of the school you are currently at: Urban  Suburban  Rural

20. Please indicate the age level of the school you are currently at: Elementary  Middle  High School

21. Please indicate the amount of mentoring you are receiving in regards to working effectively with families: None  A little  Some  A lot

PART 3 follow-up questions:

1. Were the directions easy to understand? Yes  No
   a. If no, please indicate why: __________________________

2. Did any of the items make you uncomfortable? Yes  No
   a. If so, please list which, and why: __________________________

3. Would you change the wording on any of the questions? Yes  No
   a. If so, please list which questions, and how you would change the wording:
      ____________________________________________________________

4. Do you have any general feedback on this section of the survey?
   ____________________________________________________________

PART 4: Topical Issues in Family, School, Community Partnering

In this section there is a list of topical categories that have a research or evidence base in regards to engaging families in their child’s education. These are also topics that maybe useful for educators who want to learn more about effective collaboration and partnering with families.

Next to these categories, there are four columns that each pertain to a different point in your teaching preparation or career. The first column pertains to (1) training in your teacher preparation program (“Training”). The second column (2) pertains to activities that you already currently engage in with families at your present school/ site (“Current”). The third column (3) pertains to areas that you would like to have had more training on in your teacher preparation program (“Preparation”). The fourth (4)
pertains to areas that you would like to receive more support in your current school/placement, from a mentor or school administrator.

To complete this section, first read the category and the examples given. Second, consider if you received training in this topic in your teacher preparation program. If so, check that box. Third, consider if you engage in the types of activities listed in your current teaching practice. If so, check that box. Fourth, consider if you would have liked to have had more training on this particular category and associated activities during your teacher preparation program, and if so, check that box. Finally, consider if you would like to receive more support on this category/activities in your current/school placement, and if so, check that box. Check as many boxes as appropriate for you – this may be all four columns for a specific category, or none. Then do the same for each category.

22.  

(Training  Current  Preparation  Mentoring)

Research on family-school partnering  
(i.e. legal mandates, family-school partnering and its impact on academic or behavioral outcomes)

Building relationships with families  
(i.e. using two-way communication, creating a welcoming environment, conducting family-teacher conferences)

Collaborating with families who need additional supports  
(i.e. special education, Response to Intervention, linguistically diverse)

Partnering on strategies to support student learning at home  
(i.e. interactive homework, home-school behavior and academic strategies, strategies for homework completion)

Resolving conflicts with families  
(i.e. addressing different ideas, effective communication and listening skills)

Overcoming personal barriers to family-school partnering  
(i.e. barriers present in the persons involved, such as families or teachers - previously developed thoughts regarding families, uncertainty on how to create relationships)

Overcoming structural barriers to family-school partnering
(i.e. societal barriers affecting the families’ ability to partner - families’ lack of time or ability to meet, poverty, lack of family transportation)

**Overcoming systemic barriers to family-school partnering**
(i.e. barriers present in the school or district system itself – principal or administrative support, lack of time in school day)

**PART 4 follow-up questions:**

1. Were the directions easy to understand? Yes  No  
   a. If no, please indicate why: __________________________

2. Did any of the items make you uncomfortable? Yes  No  
   a. If so, please list which, and why: __________________________

3. Would you change the wording on any of the questions? Yes  No  
   a. If so, please list which questions, and how you would change the wording: ______________________________________________________________________________________

4. Do you have any general feedback on this section of the survey? ______________________________________________________________________________________

**PART 5: Other Issues for Training**

23. Please provide any other information regarding training that would have benefitted you to receive in your teacher preparation program in order to work effectively with families:

24. Please provide any other information regarding mentoring on specific to working with families that would benefit you to receive in your current placement in order to work effectively with families:

25. Please provide any other comments regarding the topics asked about in this survey:

**PART 5 follow-up questions:**

1. Were the directions easy to understand? Yes  No  
   a. If no, please indicate why: __________________________

2. Did any of the items make you uncomfortable? Yes  No  
   a. If so, please list which, and why: __________________________

3. Would you change the wording on any of the questions? Yes  No  
   a. If so, please list which questions, and how you would change the wording: ______________________________________________________________________________________

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4. Do you have any general feedback on this section of the survey?

__________________________________________________________

Please provide any additional suggestions or comments you may have on the survey overall:
Appendix E

Survey Email Introduction

Dear Colorado Teachers,

My name is Kirsten Hermanutz and I am a doctoral student at the University of Denver in Child, Family, and School Psychology. I am currently working on my dissertation, the topic of which is efficacy of early career teachers in working with families.

In order to gather my data, I am recruiting teachers to take a short online survey. If you currently are a general education teacher in Colorado in grades K-12, in the first through fifth years of your professional career (in any district, not including student teaching or internship), please consider taking the following survey. It will take approximately 20 minutes, and at the end you will have the opportunity to provide your email address separately from the survey for a chance to win one of five $25 Amazon gift cards. The survey does not ask any identifying information, and the responses will be kept confidential.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please feel free to contact me at Kirsten.hermanutz@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time,

Kirsten