



TeleNGAGE: Enhancing Collaboration Between Families and Schools

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Abstract: Findings in the literature strongly support the importance of family engagement in education. However, effective partnerships between families and schools are rare, especially in ethnically diverse communities where families may lack efficacy or face structural challenges for engagement. Additionally, educator perspectives toward engagement are often framed by White, middle-class paradigms. Educators often fail to acknowledge structural challenges faced by low-income families or the cultural contributions low-income and/or minoritized families can bring. To facilitate engagement between families and schools, a new ECHO[®] line, TeleNGAGE, was developed at Oklahoma State University, Educational Leadership program. ECHO[®], traditionally used in the field of medicine, has utility for professional development for educators because it offers a platform for case-based learning where real problems are addressed in real-time. Additionally, didactic presentations provide professional development for collaborative learning. Through the lens of Communities of Practice (CoP), this qualitative case study explores how relationships between families and schools changed as a result of participation in TeleNGAGE. Tenets of CoP, negotiated meaning, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire, support a collaborative approach to addressing complex problems. Findings suggest that a CoP has emerged through TeleNGAGE and has resulted in changes in perspectives across families and educational leaders about “what it means to be engaged,” enhanced family efficacy for engagement, and changes in engagement practice as family voice has expanded through sharing of concerns/perspectives. These findings have important implications for equitable engagement in a convenient, cost-free environment where educators and families can communicate and develop mutually supportive understandings and practices.

Keywords: family engagement, professional development, family/school partnerships, ECHO, Communities of Practice

Citation: Curry, K., Harris, E., Olsen, J., Kim, Y., Egure, D. (2023). TeleNGAGE: Enhancing collaboration between families and schools. *Current Issues in Education*, 24(1).
<https://doi.org/10.14507/cie.vol24iss1.2089>

Accepted: January 24, 2023

Introduction

Several paradigm shifts have occurred in the last two decades in the line of research examining relationships between families and schools. One shift has been a move from “parent involvement,” which focused on school-centered strategies, to “family engagement,” which prioritized strategies aimed at empowering families to become change agents within their school communities (Ishimaru, 2019; Stefanski et al., 2016). This shift addressed concerns regarding previous approaches that may have unconsciously proliferated a deficit perspective because it limited family participation to the types of activities that schools perceived as “involvement,” and it failed to address community-level barriers that often limit family participation in those activities (Ishimaru, 2014). Additionally, parent involvement approaches failed to consider societal inequities or acknowledge “fundamental historical, cultural, and social divides between parents and schools” (Ishimaru, 2013, p. 189).

The movement away from parent involvement and toward family engagement presupposed that most families were already doing what they could to help their children succeed in school, and the shift recognized that community structural factors often limited families in their engagement efforts. This perception further acknowledged barriers such as poverty, language and cultural differences, immigration status, lack of dependable transportation, childcare needs, and demands of inflexible work schedules that sometimes limit family presence on school campuses (Baker et al., 2016; Christianakis, 2011; Ishimaru & Bang, 2016). It also addressed the importance of shared understandings so that families and schools could collaborate more effectively (Alameda-Lawson, 2014).

Despite movement from a parent involvement to a family engagement perspective, Ishimaru (2019) argues that both approaches fall short of their intended outcomes because they tend to emphasize “changing – or ‘fixing’- marginalized parents and families” (p. 3). The result is a perpetuation of racialized narratives regarding low-income families or communities of color (Ishimaru, 2019). In contrast, Ishimaru (2019) calls for new practices that provide parents and families “a place at the table to contribute *their* expertise in shaping the education agenda” (p. 4). In these efforts, educational leaders can build and enact equitable collaborations “as a process that moves beyond the ‘good parent/bad parent’ dichotomy to foster solidarities amid difference toward community-determined educational justice and well-being” (Ishimaru, 2019, p. 4). The new perspective of *transformative equitable collaboration* provides space for families, schools, and communities to work together to support student success.

Problem

Advancements in perspectives should arguably lead to enhanced collaboration between families and schools; however, solidarities and understandings between schools and families remain relatively rare, and low-income households and families of color continue to have interactions with schools that are less empowering or satisfying than interactions between schools and White or middle-class families (Rispoli et al., 2018). Socio-economic factors, understood as predictive of involvement (Bardhoshi et al., 2016), continue to limit family access to schools, and educator perspectives toward collaboration continue to be framed by White, middle-class paradigms, which fail to acknowledge that low-income families are often hindered by the structural challenges they face on a daily basis (Alameda-Lawson, 2014). Additionally, educators often enter the profession with limited understanding

of students' cultural contexts (Epstein et al., 2011), and they fail to recognize the cultural contributions that low-income and/or minoritized families can bring (Ishimaru, 2014).

New practices must be shaped, therefore, that position parents as co-leaders and decision makers in schools in order to disrupt barriers and integrate the cultural capital of diverse families. These instances are challenging because, when power sharing between schools and families is implemented, existing norms and practices are disrupted, and consistent attention is needed to implement these changes with fidelity (Ishimaru, 2013). School-centric perspectives that inhibit understandings of how families are actually engaged in education and, as a result, limit family voice in collaborative efforts must be replaced with opportunities for transformative collaboration in equitable spaces to support student educational needs.

Background

In 2017, a group of Educational Leadership faculty at Oklahoma State University (OSU) partnered with the OSU Center for Health Sciences to incorporate the ECHO[®] platform, traditionally used in the field of medicine, into the field of education. Project ECHO[®], originally developed at the University of New Mexico to provide professional development to health care specialists/providers in under-resourced communities, consists of four basic principles (Arora, 2019) with a focus on de-monopolizing knowledge:

1. Cost-effective technology to leverage scarce resources
2. Case-based and problem-based learning to master complexity.
3. Assessment strategies to track and monitor outcomes.
4. Pedagogical and andragogical learning strategies to facilitate learning (“all teach; all learn”).

Utilizing teleconferencing Zoom technology, ECHO[®] links expert specialists at “hub” sites with primary care clinicians in local communities referred to as “spoke” sites. Hub Team members serve as the planning team for ECHO[®] sessions, and Spoke Site members serve as participants in these social learning spaces. During ECHO[®] clinics, two activities are advanced: 1) participants present patient cases that promote interactive hub/spoke discussions that lead to recommendations for best treatment strategies, and 2) participants present a short, ten-to-fifteen-minute didactic presentation regarding a topic of mutual interest. In medical ECHO[®] lines, rather than referring clients to specialists in larger metropolitan areas, rural physicians can receive training to meet the health needs of their clients, resulting in substantial savings and health care efficiency for both the client and the State.

In transferring the ECHO[®] platform to educational leadership, three educational ECHO[®] lines were launched in 2017: TeleED, TeleSPED, and TeleEDGE. These lines provided professional development support centered around bolstering statewide professional growth in three ways: support for remotely located rural educators (TeleED), special education support (TeleSPED), and support for leadership initiatives set forth by the Oklahoma State Department of Education (TeleEDGE). The purpose of each education-related ECHO[®] line is to provide an online, social learning space for professional growth and development to meet the needs of educators across the state.

Instead of traditional professional development opportunities that bring educational leaders to an urban area to receive specialized training, ECHO[®] expands learning opportunities across the state by meeting educational leaders “where they are.” Specialized training, often unavailable in remote areas, is delivered through the zoom platform during bi-

weekly, hour-long meetings. Each meeting is planned by a member of a Hub Team, and the schedule consists of presentation of an anonymous case and a short, ten-to-fifteen-minute, didactic presentation. Each case, presented anonymously, involves a dilemma or concern that is common to most educational leaders. Adhering to strict anonymity, details are shared with all participants, and participants work together to suggest potential solutions to address the challenges of the case.

The ECHO[®] mantra, “all teach; all learn,” undergirds all discussions as exchange of ideas and hearing the “voice” of all participants facilitates an equitable learning space. It is important to emphasize that ECHO[®] is not a webinar; instead, it is a collaborative virtual learning space where all participants can experience professional growth and development. ECHO[®] education lines have proven vital for facilitating high-quality professional development and communication, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when participation in ECHO[®] lines exceeded the five-hundred participant capacity of zoom.

Family/School Collaboration Introduced in ECHO[®]

In Fall 2020, a new ECHO[®] line, TeleNGAGE, was launched at OSU. The purpose of TeleNGAGE was to enhance relationships, facilitate collaboration, and promote shared understandings between families and schools. TeleNGAGE connects families and schools through virtual zoom meetings for exchange of ideas to enhance collaborative understanding and capacity building, a mission that is essential as families have assumed additional educational responsibilities related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

TeleNGAGE met twice each month for one hour on zoom during the course of this study, from Fall 2020 through Spring 2021. Participants were encouraged to attend through email invitations sent to district and building leaders. District and building leaders forwarded the invitations to the families in their districts/buildings. All families were invited to participate, providing a space for “belonging” regardless of ethnicity, identity, or income.

Participation in TeleNGAGE ranged from 25 to 55 participants during the pandemic, with attendance from teachers, educational leaders, and family members. Participation grew as the pandemic progressed, and relational networks were established for the purpose of knowledge production and shared control of knowledge. Because TeleNGAGE is a new application of the ECHO[®] platform for collaborative efforts, the purpose of this study is to understand how participation in TeleNGAGE has influenced transformative equitable collaboration between families and schools.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework applied for this study is relational congruence (Garbacz et al., 2015) embedded in Wenger’s (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP). Wenger defines a CoP as “a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and they learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 4). TeleNGAGE functions as a CoP through bi-monthly, online interactions with a specific focus on enhancing collaboration to support student success. Wenger (1998) explains that a CoP is a system of (1) joint enterprise through negotiated meaning, (2) mutual engagement, and (3) shared repertoire. *Joint enterprise* refers to how members negotiate their response to the conditions/goals of the CoP; *mutual engagement* involves sustained interaction and roles/relationships that arise from interaction; and *shared repertoire* consists of signs, symbols, tools, and language used as resources and have meaning to the CoP (Wenger, 1998).

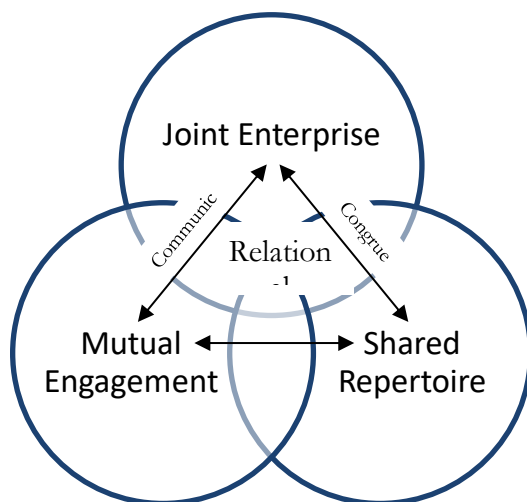
In this work, we expand on Wenger’s CoP model by integrating the concept of relational congruence. Relational congruence is defined as “a multidimensional relationship concerned with the degree of similarity and shared perceptions among participants” (Sheridan et al., 2004, p. 125). We argue that relational congruence, through congruence in communication (Garbacz et al., 2015), is a necessary condition for enhancing the mutual engagement dimension of successful CoPs. Specifically, congruence in communication leads to relational congruence as participants begin to understand the perspectives of one another.

Findings by Garbacz et al. (2015) support this contention. They examined congruence in communication across parents and teachers in consultation efforts regarding student behavior and goals. Their findings indicated that congruent communication moderated the effect of behavioral consultation on student social skills. We argue that relational congruence, through congruent communication, is necessary for joint enterprise, mutual engagement toward the development of negotiated conditions/goals of the CoP, and a shared repertoire of language, signs, and symbols that must be present to provide meaning to the CoP.

The overall success or effectiveness of the CoP depends on the strength of these three overlapping dimensions: domain, the identity of the CoP; community, the quality of relationships and interactions between members; and practice, the activities related to acquiring and sharing knowledge (Snyder et al., 2004; Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). These dimensions support a process of learning that involves participation, membership, and identity formation. Identity formation begins with the processes of self-identification, changes as a product of participation, and, ultimately, influences practice. Snyder et al. (2004) argue that effective CoPs are imperative for increasing an organization’s collective intelligence and creating true learning systems equipped to address large-scale, complex challenges of our global society. We add that relational congruence, through congruent communication, can enhance the effectiveness of a successful CoP, acting as a conduit and increasing the flow of information and usable insights among all participants. A model of the embeddedness of relational congruence into Wenger’s (1998) CoP is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Model for Enhancing Family and School Collaboration Through Communities of Practice



Theoretical Framework and TeleNGAGE

Due to the volunteer, interactive nature of TeleNGAGE, Communities of Practice as a theoretical framework aligns seamlessly with the function of TeleNGAGE. TeleNGAGE participants are individuals brought together by a common desire to learn and solve problems in schools. As individuals become more involved with TeleNGAGE through continual participation, the core components of a CoP are naturally facilitated: joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire. Therefore, utilizing Wenger's dimensions and the practices associated with them could help provide an understanding of how collaboration is enhanced through participation in TeleNGAGE.

Research Questions

How has TeleNGAGE influenced transformative equitable collaboration between families and schools?

Subquestions:

1. How has participation in TeleNGAGE enabled communication congruence between families and schools?
2. How has participation in TeleNGAGE influenced educator and family identities toward relational congruence?
3. If present, how has relational congruence influenced negotiated meaning and goals of the CoP (joint enterprise)?
4. If present, how has relational congruence influenced mutual engagement within this CoP (mutual engagement)?
5. How have tools and resources made available in this CoP promoted collaborative approaches to decision-making (shared repertoire)?

Literature Review

Educational leaders and scholars agree that family engagement in education is critical for student success (Ackley & Cullen, 2010; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Gonzalez & Jackson, 2013; McConnell & Kubina, 2014; Oberg De La Garza & Kuri, 2014). Family engagement can have a positive effect on key educational measures, including student motivation (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012), student behavior (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Sheridan et al., 2012), student optimism toward school (Oberg De La Garza & Moreno Kuri, 2014), and student attendance (McConnell & Kubina, 2014; Sheldon, 2007). Students whose parents are engaged experience higher levels of homework completion (Dettmers et al., 2019), enhanced school satisfaction/optimism (Oberg De La Garza & Moreno Kuri, 2014), higher engagement in school (Hughes & Kwok, 2007), higher graduation rates (Midel & Reynolds, 1999; Parr & Bonitz, 2015), and higher academic outcomes such as test scores and grades (Gonzales & Jackson, 2013; Hughes & Kwok, 2007) and college entrance rates (Ou & Reynolds, 2014; Pernam & Titus, 2005). Ackley and Cullen (2010) also found that home/school collaboration has a positive effect on family relationships, often reducing stress on parents and children in the home.

Family Engagement Perspectives Over Time

Understandings regarding family engagement have evolved over the past several decades. Epstein's (1986) seminal work on "overlapping spheres of influence" was framed during the time when three primary perspectives guided the thinking of researchers: separate

responsibilities of families and schools (Weber, 1947), shared responsibilities of families and schools (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and sequential responsibilities of families and schools (Bloom, 1964; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Epstein's model of overlapping spheres of influence most closely aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model as it builds on the ecology-nuanced engagement reality. In Epstein's model, three spheres—home, school, and community—overlap in shared goals and missions, and with unique and combined influences on children through the interactions of parents, educators, community partners, and students across contexts. Epstein (2011) suggested that, when the spheres of the family, school, and community closely resemble each other through “family-like schools” and “school-like families” (p.46), student learning is supported and facilitated. The degree of overlap of influence is determined by a twin set of forces: time, experiences in families and schools, and also, by shared experiences, philosophies, and practices (Epstein, 2011).

Barton et al. (2004) viewed the practice of parent engagement as ecologies, emphasizing space and capital to describe engagement practices. They also recognized parents' mental nodes of engagement practices. Their conceptual work is built from cultural-historical activity theory and critical race theory to point to engagement practices regarding how the community and its values make or mar engagement practices. According to Barton et al. (2004), all engagement practices are mediated by power and politics. In the light of their framework, Barton et al. (2004) described parental engagement as the mediation between space and capital by parents in relation to others in school settings, and they emphasized that this mediation must be understood as both an action and an orientation to action.

Further, Baquedano-Lopez et al. (2013) questioned previous approaches to family engagement, which they perceived as “neo-deficit perspectives” (p. 150), because they believed that previous models did not acknowledge power relations between educational stakeholders nor inequity issues that influence the ways that families engage in schools. They argued that the “tropes of *Parents as First Teachers*, *Parents as Learners*, *Parents as Partners*, and *Parents as Choosers and Consumers* find their counterpart in government policies on education and reflect deeply held beliefs about parental roles” (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013, p. 172). They argued that these roles are disadvantageous to non-dominant groups but may provide an advantage to White middle-class parents. The authors consequently offered a decolonized and empowerment approach to parent engagement that considered the intersecting dimensions of race and class in engagement efforts.

To be noted, along with this work, are efforts centering communities and families along a framework of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) (Ladson-Billings, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017). At its core, CSP advances educational contexts as sites for “sustaining the lifeways of communities rather than eradicating them” (Alim et al., 2020, p. 262). This important work further promotes a paradigm shift away from deficit-minded family engagement as CSP positions diversity, or cultural dexterity, as a necessary good whereby the work of engaging cultural pluralism is viewed, not by replacing deficits, but rather through critically enriching the strengths of the diverse school community (Paris, 2012).

Current Status of Engagement of Non-Dominant Families

Despite advancements in understandings regarding how non-dominant families can be included in engagement efforts, true collaboration between families and schools remains relatively rare, especially in ethnically diverse communities. Research indicates lower levels of collaboration between low-income families or families of color than between schools and White,

middle-class families. Socio-economic factors, often predictive of involvement (Bardhoshi et al., 2016; Green et al., 2007), and cultural/ethnic disparities between minoritized groups and schools tend to negatively influence collaboration between schools and families (Rispoli et al., 2018). One potential reason for disparities between low-income families and schools is that school efforts to include families are often framed by White, middle-class paradigms (Curry-Stevens et al., 2013). Curry-Stevens and colleagues (2013) state,

Parent engagement has long favored self-motivated parents who are aligned with dominant school culture, meaning White, professionally credentialed parents. This leaves many parents out, to the detriment of both schools becoming the hub of their communities and the elimination of disparities (p. 20).

Specifically, structural challenges faced by low-income families (Alameda-Lawson, 2014; Kohl et al., 2000) and deficit mentalities attributed to misunderstandings of the cultural capital and strengths that diverse families can bring to education result in disparities in the effectiveness of partnerships (Christianakis, 2011; Ishimaru, 2013). These challenges are important because without addressing community-level barriers, collaboration efforts cannot equitably engage families from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and they prevent schools and families from forming shared understandings that can ultimately influence student success. Further, even when school personnel are able to identify structural challenges that impede family engagement, evidence suggests that they struggle to conceptualize the need to address such barriers or to determine strategies that may enhance common understandings (Baker et al., 2016). Baker et al. (2016) suggest that many educators simply lack the training and resources needed to equitably engage all parents.

Transformative Equitable Collaboration: A Move Away From Deficit-Based Strategies

A more recent approach to collaboration has been to collaborate with families in an equitable manner that involves family capacity-building, relationship-building, and systemic capacity-building efforts (Ishimaru, 2017). This process, referred to as “transformative equitable collaboration” (Ishimaru, 2017, p. 2), moves away from deficit-based strategies (Ishimaru, 2017; Olivos, 2006) toward equitable interactions to promote transformative educational change (Ishimaru, 2017). It further recognizes cultural wealth that is present in all neighborhoods (Yosso, 2005) and repositions leadership as a collective effort (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018). This strategy differs from family engagement in that, even though family engagement efforts attempted to empower and include families as “change agents who can transform urban schools and neighborhoods” (Shirley, 1997, p. 73), transformative equitable collaboration addresses power inequities between families and schools by challenging the “rules of engagement” in traditional partnership efforts (Ishimaru, 2017, p.5). Equitable collaboration encourages reciprocal strategies that recognize the “funds of knowledge” and cultural/intellectual resources for more equitable, collaborative interactions between families and schools (Bryk et al., 2010; Moll et al., 1992).

The ECHO® Platform and TeleNGAGE

TeleNGAGE uses the exact process, technology, and infrastructure as ECHO®; however, instead of medical counsel, TeleNGAGE unites families, schools, community members, and professionals to support shared understandings regarding student learning. Through bi-monthly, hour-long meetings, TeleNGAGE virtually connects interdisciplinary stakeholders to create a learning network and to enhance family contributions to their school communities. In line with

the ECHO® model, participants include a Hub Team and Spoke Sites. The role of the Hub Team is to help with session organization, identification and sharing of cases, and didactic presentations. The Hub Team for TeleNGAGE consists of nine members: two university professors, one building leader, one district leader, a classroom teacher, a parent, a school psychologist, a district leader from one of the tribal nations in the state, and a representative from a national parent/school networking platform. Spoke Site participants consist of a diverse group of teachers, administrators, state-level educational leaders, family members, and community leaders. Invitations for TeleNGAGE are sent through email, and anyone who is interested in the discussion may join as a Spoke Site participant.

The goals of TeleNGAGE include:

1. Encouraging shared understandings between educators and families regarding collaboration in education
2. Communication capacity building of families and educators as they learn to work together.
3. Shared understandings of challenges faced by families and schools.
4. Development of strategies to address those challenges.
5. Enhanced family and educator efficacy for collaboration
6. Enhanced family social capital (access to resources, support, etc.) through networks established.

The salience of the timing of TeleNGAGE cannot be overstated. In Spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic propelled families to the center of educational responsibility. TeleNGAGE addressed networking needs by providing the following benefits:

- Case-based discussions to address “real” problems in “real” contexts in “real” time
- Sharing of perspectives, including cultural capital embedded in diverse communities
- Multidisciplinary collaboration in a mutually supportive space.

Additionally, TeleNGAGE will provide a platform to enhance understandings between families and schools as new post-pandemic educational norms begin to emerge.

Methods

The design for this qualitative case study provides a “holistic description and explanation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 51) of participant perspectives exploring the influence of participation in 2020 TeleNGAGE bi-monthly sessions on engagement practices. TeleNGAGE participation involves a nine-member Hub Team and 40-50 Spoke Site members. Hub Team members are responsible for identifying and presenting anonymous cases during bi-weekly sessions and for “taking turns” presenting short didactic presentations focusing on an issue related to school/family partnerships. Spoke Site members include administrators, educational leaders, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders across the State of Oklahoma. These Spoke Site members receive an invitation to bi-weekly TeleNGAGE meetings, and attendance at each meeting has been between 44-50 Spoke Site members. In the spirit of “all teach; all learn,” Spoke Sites participants engage in each TeleNGAGE session by asking clarifying questions and providing recommendations regarding the case that is presented.

Participants

Purposeful criterion sampling was used to select six Hub Team and six Spoke Site members for semi-structured interviews. Criteria included attendance at more than half of all

TeleNGAGE sessions, active participation through TeleNGAGE discussions or presentations, and diversity in professional affiliation. Registration data that had been gathered before each TeleNGAGE session included attendance, participant email addresses, and occupation/position. These data were utilized to identify possible participants in the study, and participants who had attended more than half of the TeleNGAGE sessions during 2020 were invited to participate through email. As potential participants volunteered to participate, purposeful selection was utilized to select participants from a variety of professional positions to access diverse perspectives. Hub Team participants included one district leader, one building leader, one classroom teacher, one parent, one representative from the family engagement network, and one school psychologist. Spoke Site participants included two building leaders, one district leader, two parents, and a community stakeholder. As with the sample from the Hub Team, Spoke Site participants were selected to gain diverse perspectives. Two university professors led the interview process (one from the Hub Team and another from a related program in the university).

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously following Merriam's (1985) constant comparative method. Data sources included interviews with twelve participants (6 Hub Team members and 6 Spoke Site Members), didactic PowerPoint and case presentations posted on the TeleNGAGE webpage, notes that recorded recommendations for addressing problems identified in case presentations, and observation of recorded TeleNGAGE sessions and accompanying field notes. Interviews were conducted via zoom technology because of pandemic protocols, and each lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. All TeleNGAGE sessions were recorded, and all session recordings were included in data analysis. Data were also collected from interactions in the "Chat" feature of TeleNGAGE bi-weekly meetings.

Interview transcript data were coded following Merriam's (2016) constant comparative method of analysis. Each researcher conducted open coding independently so that comparisons could be made across researchers as data were coded. Open coding was followed by axial coding (Charmaz, 2006) to identify relationships among the codes. Researchers met to collectively condense codes into categories, and categories were utilized to identify themes following Merriam's (2009) analysis process called "sorting categories" (p. 187). PowerPoint presentations, TeleNGAGE session recordings, participant comments in the "chat" feature of zoom, case documents, and recommendations for case-based problems were analyzed through the creation of reflective memos (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These additional data sources were utilized for triangulation and to promote trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Coding of memos was an iterative process, allowing continual consideration of how each piece of data related to the study's purpose and research questions. Following the process of constant comparison, reflective memos were coded as data were collected (Merriam, 2016) and were then analyzed to compare findings with themes that emerged from transcript data to further promote trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Themes that emerged from data analysis included: (1) shared understandings of "what it means to support student success," (2) enhanced family efficacy for collaboration, (3) change of practice through sharing of concerns, ideas, and perspectives, (4) the influence of COVID-19 closures on family/school communication, and (5) collaborative problem solving

between families and schools. The themes were then utilized to answer research questions, and the theoretical framework was applied in the discussion of the findings.

Findings

What It Means to Support Student Success

Enabling Conversations

Interview and observational data revealed that TeleNGAGE created channels of communication between families and schools. Due to the intentional lack of hierarchy among TeleNGAGE ECHO[®] participants, through the “all teach; all learn” mantra, all voices are given space and equal weight. TeleNGAGE sessions, we found, served as a mechanism to facilitate the flow of dialogue, back and forth communication between schools and families, enabling communication congruence. One participant explained her perception of communication during TeleNGAGE sessions by stating, “I always forget who is on the Hub Team and who are Spoke Sites. It doesn’t make any difference. We all participate in problem solving together.” Another participant stated, “At first, I thought I would be afraid to speak up, but everyone made me feel comfortable. I really look forward to discussions now.” The case presentations, specifically, provided an opportunity for all participants to participate in meaningful conversations. For example, during conversations regarding suggestions for case presentations, differing opinions and perspectives were presented. However, each suggestion for addressing the situation in the case was presented respectfully, and diverse perspectives enabled conversations to deepen. As one educator participant shared her perspective, a parent participant responded, “I never thought of [the problem presented] that way. That helps me understand why school leaders may respond this way.” In this way, TeleNGAGE served as a community of practice in promoting expanded understandings of different ways to support student success. It is unknown, exactly, how the degree or type of parent input to school staff differed from conversations between schools and families prior to TeleNGAGE; however, observations of dialogue during TeleNGAGE sessions suggest that the efficacy of families to share their perspectives or concerns were strengthened during TeleNGAGE and that these diverse perspectives helped participants to understand the viewpoints of others. School staff comments during TeleNGAGE, such as, “There have been suggestions that parents have made that I had not considered,” support the conclusion that, during TeleNGAGE, school staff heard parent voices in ways that differed from their previous interactions. Relational congruence, therefore, was deepened through first establishing communication congruence.

Family Perspectives

When conversations began in early Fall 2020, parents often described their actions as “getting [name of child] ready for school,” “attending parent conferences,” “helping in the classroom,” “making copies for teachers,” or “volunteering for after school events.” However, as discussions during TeleNGAGE sessions continued, it became apparent that perceptions were changing. For example, during one TeleNGAGE session, the role of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTA) was discussed. Parents and educators were very quick to point out that Parent Teacher Organizations often fulfill roles that are not within the originating purpose of the organization. One parent stated, “I think people are confused about what PTA is meant for. PTA is supposed to be about advocating for our children, not making

copies or hosting bake sales. I think we need to change what we are doing.” Another parent agreed by stating, “Yes, we need a discussion of how [children’s] needs have changed and how PTA can bridge the gap for those needs.”

During interviews, both educator and family participants explained that the opportunity to engage in discussions and didactic presentations through TeleNGAGE encouraged them to perceive collaboration more as “shared responsibility” for learning. During an interview session, one parent noted, “I used to think I sent [name of child] to school to get an education. Now, I see that it is my responsibility too.” A second parent stated during an interview, “[education] shouldn’t all fall on the shoulders of the teachers. We can help at home.” This comment represents perceptions of parent participants during TeleNGAGE sessions who expressed that they had always thought of their roles as “getting the child to school” and “supporting the teacher.” Many had not considered the understanding expressed by an educator during a TeleNGAGE meeting that “a parent is a child’s first teacher.” These findings from both interview and observational data suggest a deeper recognition of individual contributions that both parents and educators make in promoting student success.

Educator Perspectives

During early meetings of TeleNGAGE, when educators were asked, “What does collaboration look like? How do you know that parents are involved?” Educator responses aligned with the responses of parents. They often suggested activities that were school-centric, such as, “attending parent/teacher conferences,” “helping kids with homework,” or “communicating with the teacher.” As time progressed, however, actions and activities such as “talking with [name of child] about the school day,” “family traditions,” and “communicating expectations for learning” have been recognized. One educator stated, “...when parents say things like ‘*when* you graduate from high school, not *if*.’ Those comments let children know that families have high expectations for learning.” Additionally, as families have shared their perspectives during case discussions, educators have noted the important contributions that they bring. During an interview, one educator responded, “There have been suggestions that parents have made that I had not considered. Their comments help me understand different ways to address these problems.”

Prior to a more established relational congruence between parents and educators, important parent suggestions and usable insights easily fell by the wayside. However, as communication increased during TeleNGAGE sessions, so did the shared repertoire of language and tools to reinforce consistent messaging for student success. These shared understandings were evident in observational data as well as interview data. Consistent communication and collaboration during TeleNGAGE sessions allowed for the creation of opportunities toward the mutual exchange of usable insight. When families and educators more consistently engaged in this shared learning space, a shared repertoire of tools and language was reinforced, and the resulting knowledge creation was beneficial both in the home and in the school.

Family Efficacy

The mantra of ECHO[®], “all teach; all learn,” provides a platform for equitable discussion among participants. Professional titles and affiliations are not mentioned, and all participants have the opportunity to voice their opinions. As participation in TeleNGAGE

progressed, parents gained efficacy to engage in conversations with educational leaders. This finding was evident in observational data from TeleNGAGE sessions. During an interview, one parent stated, “It’s getting easier [to participate]. I didn’t know, at first, if my opinion would matter.” During a separate interview, another parent stated, “With all of the experts in the meeting, I didn’t know if I could speak up or not.”

This efficacy was further reflected in enhanced participation during discussions when parent input did align exactly with educator responses. During one of the sessions, when a case study addressed the issue of parents feeling like an administrative decision had limited their participation at the school, one parent stated, “Parents just want to know they are welcome and that their help is appreciated.” This parent made this statement in a session with educational leaders present. Parent confidence to express their perspectives is further evidenced in the “Chat” feature of online meetings. One parent stated, “[administrators need to] find ways to show parents sincere appreciation for their willingness to help and for the tasks that they complete.”

Enhanced efficacy is further evidenced in the frequency of family participation in TeleNGAGE discussions. Parents participated freely, and they often addressed educators and each other in their discussions. These findings from interview and observational data collected during TeleNGAGE were supported in comments in the “Chat” feature of TeleNGAGE sessions. As time progressed, family members increasingly offered their comments through discussion or in “Chat” comments. These interactions suggest an increase in relational congruence as family participant efficacy increased. As parents began to feel more comfortable and established in their role as a partner in these discussions, all stakeholders benefitted, and the goal of supporting student success was mutually advanced.

Changes in Practice

Hearing the opinions, suggestions, and challenges from both educators and families led to less separation or distinction in roles. During one TeleNGAGE session, one participant stated, “I often forget if I am wearing my ‘educator’ or ‘parent’ hat [during TeleNGAGE meetings]!” Evidence suggests that, as identities consolidated toward a unified community with the common goal of enhancing education for students, changes in practice resulted. During one of the TeleNGAGE sessions, a Spoke Site participant suggested that schools need to “touch base” with parents and students on a regular basis during the pandemic. Numerous comments were made from educators regarding how they have integrated this practice in their districts, with one educator stating, “I understand that families are struggling right now and doing all that they can. I need to continue to ask how I can support them at home.” During another TeleNGAGE session, an educator responded to a parent’s suggestion by stating, “I love the suggestion of also getting feedback from students. It keeps them engaged!” During an interview with a Spoke Site district leader, she stated, “We can’t do this alone. We are very dependent on families to help students learn. Knowing what they care about will help us support them.”

An additional perspective that has emerged is the recognition of the social and cultural capital that diverse families can bring. Observational data revealed that participation in TeleNGAGE has grown increasingly diverse, with approximately 25-30% individuals of color during each session. Spoke Site participants included individuals from both rural and urban schools, high- and low-poverty families, families and school leaders with high English language learner populations, and family members from Black, Native American, and

Hispanic/Latinx families. Because urban and rural schools in the state serve a diverse population of families and students, this trend is important. While enhanced diversity continues to be a goal of TeleNGAGE, participants openly shared suggestions that reflect the social capital that they bring. During one TeleNGAGE session, a Spoke Site participant explained, “My family is a large, extended family. We make sure that our babies have what they need [to succeed in school]. If schools let us know what they need, we will all join in to help.” Another Spoke Site participant stated, “If they can’t get it [academic help] at school, we have plenty of help at my church.” Another TeleNGAGE family participant explained, “I have a job that is flexible. I know many don’t have that, but I look for ways to enrich my child’s education. It can’t be all worksheets [to keep them engaged]. I depend on other parents to help me with that.”

At the family level, changes in practice are evidenced as families looked for ways to enhance learning, particularly those whose children are attending class virtually. During interview sessions, families explained that they had learned new approaches to supporting student success, such as reaching out to other families to plan learning activities such as trips to the aquarium or coordinated efforts to tutor students in Algebra 1. Educator practice has been influenced as they began to understand some of the challenges that families were experiencing. For example, participants who were also parents on both the Hub Team and Spoke Sites shared frustration with working from home while also trying to support student learning. This commonality caused blurring of roles as both educators and family members experienced similar dilemmas. Demanding work schedules was a common frustration among TeleNGAGE participants as well.

During TeleNGAGE sessions, educators openly shared some of their frustrations with online learning, and they reached out to parents for ideas and support. For example, educators expressed their concerns with a lack of student engagement in online learning and asked family members for ideas of how to engage students more fully. Conversations during TeleNGAGE sessions involved discussion of delays in learning during school closures that will likely have long-term consequences if not addressed. Educators participating in TeleNGAGE offered ideas such as reading time, adhering to a learning schedule, and other supportive practices that can support learning in the home.

These findings suggest that an increase in communication congruence resulted in more clearly defined relational congruence as educators and family members understood each other’s perspectives. As communication increased, not only between family members and educators, but also among different families and out into the community, the nature of a joint enterprise seemed to be more clearly established. This interdependence seemed to solidify the negotiated meaning and goal of the collective by keeping the promotion of student success at the fore, as explained further in the Discussion section of this manuscript.

COVID and TeleNGAGE

The launch of TeleNGAGE coincided with school closures due to high rates of COVID-19 infection in the state. School closures strongly influenced discussions during TeleNGAGE sessions. During TeleNGAGE sessions, parents were eager to discuss their “new responsibilities” as a result of at-home learning. During an interview with a family member participant, she expressed that TeleNGAGE has helped her adjust to the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic “has propelled [her] into.” Although perspectives regarding online learning were always positive, dialogue helped to support both families and educators during

this trying time. During interview sessions, parents described their roles as more active and “hands-on” in the education of their children, and they expressed that COVID-19 closures have caused “quite a bit of stress” in their homes. One parent stated, “having my children at home all day means that our [family] schedules have changed dramatically. I really didn’t know how to structure a school day before this [pandemic] started” One parent stated, “I am now a teacher for [name of child]. I used to think teaching was all on the school.”

All participants in this study recognized that family roles and responsibilities have rapidly changed because of the pandemic and that “a new normal” is likely to evolve. During an interview, one educator summed this sentiment when he stated, “This is a perfect time to reflect upon and clarify roles. All schools should do that now and after the pandemic, as roles and responsibilities may not be the same.”

It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a disruption of normality for both schools and families. During an interview with a district leader, this leader mentioned that one benefit of disruption, however, “is that it forces innovation.” This leader explained, “as schools and families have been forced to pivot, the need for communication and collaboration between these vital entities has never been greater.” Unintentionally, the ECHO® model and TeleNGAGE were perfectly positioned for such a unique time in human history. As evident in our findings, families and schools were forced to lean into communication and collaboration to promote the success of students during the pandemic. TeleNGAGE helped to provide the structure for these interactions, enabling communication congruence towards re-identified relational congruence.

Collaborative Problem Solving

Within the TeleNGAGE framework, as participants engaged in conversations and made recommendations regarding cases that were presented, educators and parents became aware of diverse solutions to complex problems. Observational and interview data suggest that they also become aware of the care and concern that both families and schools have for student success. Problems that were addressed during case presentations included miscommunication between families and schools, misappropriation in parent-led band booster club activity accounts, challenges with online learning, social and emotional needs of families during crisis events, and expanded learning gaps during COVID closures. During one case presentation that involved a disagreement between several families in the school and an administrator, one educator suggested, “It is important to take the high road, rather than to assign blame. All involved have their own perceptions of what happened. Pick up the pieces and move forward.” A parent agreed with this statement by indicating, “I think it is important to listen as much as share.” An educational leader stated, “We need to be able to apologize sincerely when we make mistakes and laugh with families about our missteps. We are learners too. We need to be genuine.”

This finding suggests an ongoing process of reidentification as schools and families grow toward relational congruence. Relational congruence was supported in interview data when educators and family members recognized the important contributions of the other to support student success. The dialogue back and forth during case presentations further supported this understanding as goals and strategies to support learning were discussed and as all parties mutually engaged in collaborative efforts. Furthermore, this finding suggests that, the more interactive the conversation, the greater the opportunity for sharing of tools

and resources that, ultimately, benefitted the collaborative. This process enriched the shared repertoire, and all participants benefitted from increased learning.

Discussion

Negotiated Meaning: “What it Means to Support Student Success”

Wenger’s (1998) CoP model suggests that, in order to become a functioning CoP, a group must develop joint enterprise through negotiated meaning. From this negotiated meaning, individuals within a CoP learn collectively as they participate together in a “shared domain of human endeavor” (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 4). In TeleNGAGE, joint enterprise explains the process of how members negotiate their response to the conditions and goals of the group.

Concerning negotiating meaning, our findings suggest clarification of “what it means to support student learning” for both educators and families through participation in TeleNGAGE. During early meetings, participants identified support activities that were very “school-centric,” such as “attending parent conferences,” “returning signed forms,” and “communicating with the teacher.” This finding aligns with findings in the literature that educators often perceive families as “helpers” rather than co-contributors of knowledge in the educational process (Christiankis, 2011). Our findings further suggest that families also perceived themselves in the “helper” role. However, didactic presentations and case-based learning have expanded perceptions of collaboration. This conclusion is important because previous perceptions dramatically limited collaborative potential when they were focused on simply “train[ing] individual parents to better conform to existing educator expectations and school practices” (Ishimaru, 2013, p. 191). In this CoP, communication has developed, and varied perceptions indicating the recognition of parents as co-contributors or partners in education have emerged.

This recognition aligns with understandings in the literature regarding the more salient forms of engagement, such as family expectations for learning/achievement (Jeynes, 2012) and the social and cultural capital that families can bring (McIntosh & Curry, 2020). Findings further align with the explained difference between “community ownership,” where community voices are heard through direct engagement, versus “community buy-in,” where communities acquiesce their voices for “compliance with someone else’s [namely political and educational leader’s] vision and agenda” (Stovall, 2016, para. 9). Further, as perceptions changed, participants began recognizing the contribution of others, regardless of role or position. Relational congruence was evidenced as participant perspectives reflected shared understandings. Participants were able to share their stories and experiences to provide illumination of persistent conditions that minimize traditionally marginalized voices (Stovall, 2016).

As an example of enhanced shared understanding and in promoting a less “school-centric” approach to engagement, TeleNGAGE has highlighted family contributions, cultural norms, and cultural capital in homes and communities that may not be visible to educators. An example of cultural capital emerged when an African American participant reminded participants of the resources available through her church, a Black church in the community. She indicated that members of her church have partnered with schools to provide tutoring and mentoring for students. These findings align with findings by Curry and McIntosh (2020) and McIntosh and Curry (2020) regarding the cultural resources that are readily available, yet infrequently accessed, in lower-income communities.

Mutual Engagement: Enhanced Family Efficacy

Mutual engagement can best be understood through a discussion of the “community” aspect of the CoP model and enhancement of family efficacy. “Community” reflects the quality of relationships and interactions between members (Wenger, 1998). Communication in TeleNGAGE allowed participants to freely share diverse perspectives. According to Wenger (1998), for a true community to form, relationships must develop that allow members to “learn from each other” (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 8). In this instance, the “all teach/all learn” mantra of TeleNGAGE created a space where relational congruence developed through inclusion of all participants and promotion of mutual respect and understanding. Even families that indicated that they felt uncomfortable, at first, to speak up in front of educational “experts” over time actively participated and expressed their satisfaction with interactions during TeleNGAGE meetings. Participants felt free to share concerns and challenges as well as successes in supporting student needs.

For example, one case discussion described strained relationships between parents and a building administrator in a small, rural district. A parent participated by suggesting, “parents just want to know that their voice is heard. It makes us feel like we are needed.” Additionally, one parent stated, “I care very much about my child’s education. Sometimes, I feel like my efforts aren’t recognized.” These parents’ contributions enhanced understandings between families and educators and encouraged a re-envisioning of how family members support their children’s education both at school and at home. Family members felt that their voice was heard and that their actions were recognized. Through communication, relational congruence was enhanced, and this finding aligns with our previous finding regarding the expansion of family and educator perceptions regarding how families support student success.

Further, the enhancement of family efficacy can be explained through Wenger’s (1998) CoP model. Wenger (1998) suggests that identity formation in a CoP requires participation, membership, and identity formation. Identity formation begins with the process of self-identification/reflection and changes as a product of participation. As families participated in discussion and offered their opinions, they developed confidence, and their participation increased. TeleNGAGE discussions offered the opportunity for differing perspectives without judgment, and they encouraged self-reflection regarding preconceived ideas and perceptions of the efforts and actions of others. Both educators and families explained that their perspectives were widened in statements, such as “I had never thought about [the problem] this way.”

The function of communication practices in TeleNGAGE differ significantly from understandings advanced in traditional parent involvement research. Historically, family engagement practices were formed with the intention of passing along information to families (Hirsto, 2010). This intention stands in stark contrast to the acknowledgment of the importance of congruent conversations where family members and schools come together to enhance shared perceptions and mutual understandings.

In summary, “community” is reflected as relational congruence has developed through sustained congruence in communication. TeleNGAGE has provided an opportunity, as Christianakis (2011) explains, to “come together...in order to jointly accomplish sustain[able] change” (p. 173). As explained through Wenger’s (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP), all participants in TeleNGAGE share a common goal accompanied by a passion for children and a desire to facilitate learning. TeleNGAGE supports this common desire and provides an opportunity to “learn how to do it better as [participants] interact regularly” (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, para. 4).

Shared Repertoire: Collaborative Decision Making

According to Wenger (1998), shared repertoire consists of the signs, symbols, tools, and language used as resources that have meaning to members of the CoP. The tools utilized in each TeleNGAGE session include didactic presentations and case-based discussions. The cases presented in each TeleNGAGE session include complex situations that lack an easily identified or defined solution. Participants must make sense of these situations through perceptions that have been shaped by prior training, experiences, cultural norms, and other contextual factors. Therefore, hearing both educator and parent perspectives on issues provides balance and the opportunity to learn from each other, creating a shared repertoire of meaning, enhancing the congruence of communication. Additionally, even though all cases are presented anonymously and closely adhere to confidentiality and FERPA requirements, the issues addressed are widely applicable to educators and parents in districts across the State. Many times, participants made statements such as, “I have had the same thing happen in my district!”

These anonymous discussions lead to enhanced problem-solving as educators and parents apply their learning to their own contexts. Recommendations made by both educator and family participants provide a balanced perspective as educator and family input is equally valued and as input is received from diverse contexts across the State. Because cases presented in each ECHO[®] session are real cases happening in real-time, families benefit from the ability to “analyze and change their conditions” as they “develop the capacity to utilize their own skills and expertise to address issues and concerns” (Stovall, 2016, p. 7). Recommendations from all participants are recorded and provided to the school or district represented in each case. These recommendations are also recorded and posted on the TeleNGAGE website for later reference, creating a set of tools and resources for participants to utilize when needed.

The second tool utilized in all TeleNGAGE sessions is short didactic presentations lasting approximately ten to fifteen minutes. Didactic presentations have addressed a variety of issues, including trust in schools, COVID information, online learning support, psychological needs of students, student engagement, and 21st-century learning skills. Each presentation is also posted on the TeleNGAGE website, and participants can use them as needed. Participants have indicated that they have used PowerPoint presentations during faculty/staff meetings at their schools, exemplifying a shared repertoire for continual learning.

A symbol that has been utilized in each TeleNGAGE session is that of a wagon wheel with a hub and spokes. The hub team represents the hub of the wheel, and all other participants represent the spoke sites. Participants have become well acquainted with this language, and although they recognize which participants represent the hub team and which participants represent the spokes, these lines become blurred very quickly. Participants on both the hub team and spoke sites represent a very diverse group of individuals interacting toward common goals. Educator positions range from classroom teachers to building leaders to district leaders to state leaders. Family participants vary in ethnicity, socio-economic status, educational level, location, and experience with schools. It is likely that family participants in TeleNGAGE sessions would rarely have the opportunity for dialogue with this diverse group of educators, and it is likely that many would lack the navigational capital or efficacy for active engagement on their own. Additionally, it is equally likely that these educators may be limited in the feedback they receive from such a diverse group of families. These conversations, and the resulting recordings from each TeleNGAGE session, establish a repertoire of resources available to all participants, further cultivating the relational congruence of this CoP.

Implications

Findings from this study suggest that TeleNGAGE has important implications for furthering the understanding of transformative equitable collaboration between families and schools. This understanding has been, historically, limited by deficit perspectives that educators often held of lower-income families (Christiankis, 2011; Ishimaru, 2013) and, sometimes, deficit perspectives that families may have of schools. These deficit perspectives have proliferated “fundamental, historical, cultural and social divides between families and schools” (Christiankis, 2011, p. 189). Additionally, this study has implications for the lack of educator preparedness to effectively interact with culturally diverse families (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010). TeleNGAGE has provided a platform for shared understandings and interactions so that schools and families can learn the perspectives of each other. These implications for practice are important because teachers who are underprepared to work with diverse populations often avoid interactions with families because of cultural differences that could, potentially, be difficult for them to address (Bronson & Dentith, 2014) and also because findings in the literature indicate that family-school relationships tend to be weaker in schools with high percentages of lower socio-economic families (Frew et al., 2012). Further, limited collaboration with lower-income families has, historically, been explained through the understanding that low-income families are less likely to engage in school-initiated activities because they feel that they may be inadequate or because they lack the resources for collaboration that most middle-class families possess (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010). In contrast, TeleNGAGE has provided a platform for equitable collaboration in a convenient, cost-free environment that allows educators and families to communicate and develop practices that support the needs of each other. While it is imperative to note that limitations for collaboration in TeleNGAGE do exist (e.g., access to internet, access to a compatible technological device, and/or time of day/work conflicts), the virtual nature of TeleNGAGE, as well as its “all teach, all learn” philosophy, helps to break down many of the historical barriers that remained evident in parental engagement efforts. The availability and flexibility of TeleNGAGE, as a CoP to meet family and school needs, may enhance understandings of sustainable, transformative, equitable collaboration. Further research is recommended on the influence of social learning spaces to facilitate collaborative efforts.

Implications for theory include the utility of the CoP model for explaining effective, transformative, equitable collaboration between families and schools. The findings of negotiated meaning, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire created through TeleNGAGE sessions indicate the formation of an authentic CoP. The application of CoP to collaboration efforts may address some of the challenges related to sustainability of partnerships between families and schools (Rispoli et al., 2018). Additionally, embedding relational congruence into the CoP framework provides possible insight into how CoPs may develop. Further, this study illuminates the common critique of “abstract theorizing” often present in empirical work regarding social justice issues (Stovall, 2016) by advancing understandings of how individuals can engage to enrich experiences of families that may frequently experience disinvestment, marginalization, and isolation in traditional partnership efforts (Stovall, 2016).

Concerning research, this study expanded understandings of transformative equitable collaboration, and through the lens of relational convergence, explained the shared meaning that can emerge when families and schools experience congruence in communication. This study accentuates the importance of creating belonging and identity for all families within education systems. Belonging and identity formation, in this study, enhanced family efficacy for collaboration. TeleNGAGE facilitates opportunities for two-way communication between

families/schools, enabling relational congruence and the opportunity to re-imagine schools to represent students and their families. Further, our findings suggest that through congruence in communication in TeleNGAGE sessions, a mechanism for critical discourse emerged. As the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many students into virtual learning from home, the implications of such research have never been more timely. In sum, shifting from parent involvement, when a school “leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute,” TeleNGAGE, instead, focuses on transformative equitable collaboration where both schools and families “lead with its ears—listening to what [others] think, dream, and worry about...not to serve clients but to gain partners” (Ferlazzo, 2011, p. 12). These findings have important implications and support the preponderance of evidence that suggests when schools and families work together, students thrive.

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