



Family Engagement Course: Inaugural Year

The Northeastern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (NNRPDP) Family Engagement web-based course is provided for regional educational professionals. This course may support their professional learning, licensure renewal, or removal of a provision on their license. Nevada legislative requirement for educational licensure are the primary impetus for providing this course. This approved 3-credit course is required for all teachers and other educational professionals (school nurses, counselors, psychologists, literacy strategists) applying for a “Standard” educational license in Nevada after July 1, 2015 (Nevada Revised Statutes 391.019, 2015 & NAC 391.030, 2015).

The Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (RPDP), which includes the Northwest, Southern, and Northeastern groups, was approved to provide the course as of January 1, 2019. Any licensed educational personnel within the NNRPDP region (Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Pershing, and White Pine counties) are able to register for and complete the course. NNRPDP partners with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas to facilitate the course, and provide an opportunity for course participants to earn 3-graduate level credits.

NNRPDP offered two sessions of the family engagement course for the region; once in the fall of 2019, and again in the spring of 2020. The Family Engagement web-based course was facilitated online over nine weeks, including online interactive sessions that allow course participants to engage in discussion with the course facilitator and other participants. The course instructor has thirteen years teaching experience between K-16 contexts of which four years included teaching online college courses, has a Master of Science in Equity and Diversity in Education, and is a member of the Nevada Family Engagement Birth - 12 Framework Committee. Family engagement, in theory and practice, has been an integral component of the instructor's professional work and current role as a regional coordinator for the NNRPDP.

The course content included three primary components: 1) a series of online family engagement training modules developed collaboratively by the RPDP regional groups, 2) a course text, *Powerful Partnerships* (Mapp, Carver & Lander, 2017), and 3) research-based articles and texts featuring recommended best practices for effective and meaningful family engagement across educational contexts.

Course participants completed a variety of learning tasks throughout the nine weeks in order to make connections between their learning and their educational context. These tasks included synthesizing research, analyzing current practices using self-assessment tools, critical self-reflection, discourse with other participants, locating and organizing evidenced-based

practices to be integrated into the current educational context. Course participants also completed a Family Engagement Inquiry project where learning is applied, evaluated, and used to determine “next steps” for changes in instructional and professional practice.

Initial Data and Planning

Effective family engagement has been linked to increased student achievement (HFRP, 2011; Wood & Bauman, 2017), school improvement (Wood & Bauman, 2017), and has been proven to be one of the “most powerful predictors of children’s development, educational attainment, and success in school and life” (Weiss, Lopez & Caspe, 2018, p. 1). Surprisingly, national, and global research revealed that many teacher-preparation programs did not include any focused learning or training in family engagement prior to the completion of the college/university preparatory program (Spielberg, 2011; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). As a matter of fact, training in family engagement was not required for educational professionals licensed in the state of Nevada until 2015 (Nevada Department of Education, n.d.). Thus, many educational professionals lacked the necessary knowledge, skills and training to effectively implement best-practices identified by researchers (Spielberg, 2011, Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

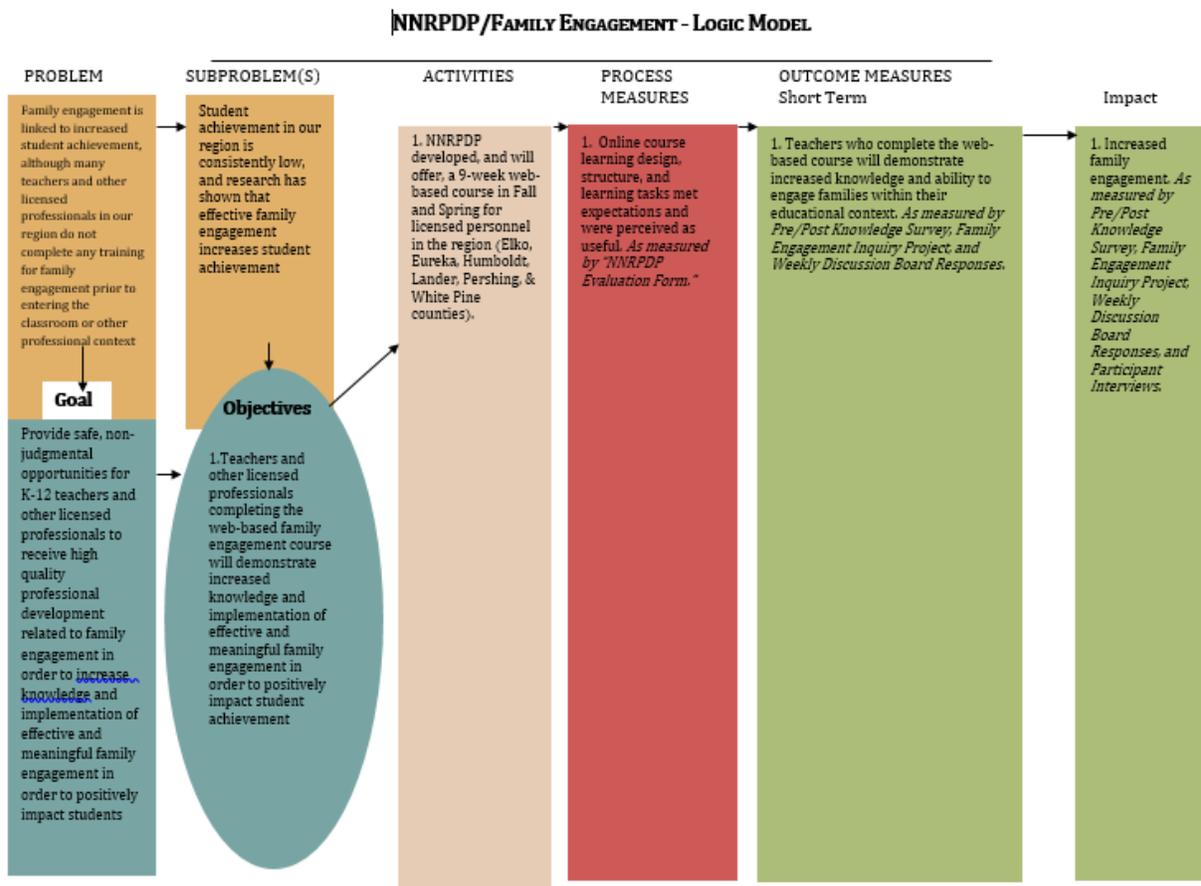
In 2015, Nevada legislators approved NRS 392.457, which outlined a family engagement policy for the state of Nevada which included six standards for Parental Involvement and Family Engagement (PIFE) (Nevada State Board of Education, 2015). These standards mirrored the National PTA (n.d.) standards. These six standards include 1) welcoming all families, 2) communicating effectively, 3) supporting students’ well-being and academic success, 4) speaking up for every child, 5) sharing power, and 6) collaborating with community (NSBE, 2015). In addition, legislators approved changes to teacher licensure, which required all new applicants for licensure to complete an approved, three-credit family engagement course in order to receive a standard license (Nevada Revised Statutes 391.019, 2015 & NAC 391.030, 2015). The Nevada Department of Education Office for Parental Involvement and Family Engagement was granted authority to approve and monitor course providers’ fidelity to the requirements outlined in the legislation (n.d.).

Therefore, the NNRPDP Family Engagement course was designed to address two primary goals: First, to meet the legislative requirements mandated in 2015 for educational licensure (Nevada Revised Statutes 391.019, 2015 & NAC 391.030, 2015); and second, to increase family participation in student learning in order to positively impact student growth and achievement (Spielberg, 2011; Flamboyan Foundation, n.d.; United States Department of Education, n.d.; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; NDE Office for PIFE, n.d.; Weiss, Lopez & Caspe, 2018; Wood & Bauman, 2017). These primary goals were addressed through effective professional learning and development (Darling-Hammond, Hylar & Gardner, 2017; Guskey,

2002; Learning Forward, 2011; Nevada Department of Education, 2017; Murray, 2014) for educational professionals in the region.

The Family Engagement course learning outcomes address seven requirements from the legislative text (Nevada Revised Statutes 391.019, 2015 & NAC 391.030, 2015). These requirements are as follows: 1) demonstrate knowledge of the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, n.d.), 2) demonstrate knowledge of the expectations of the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF) Professional Standard for Family Engagement (NDE, 2019), 3) demonstrate knowledge of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (Mapp & Bergman, 2019; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013), 4) reflect on and evaluate current family engagement efforts (PTA, n.d.), 5) research effective strategies, activities, resources, and materials to enhance their current family engagement efforts, 6) design a plan for effective family engagement, with action steps that may be taken immediately, in the near future, and in the distant future, and 7) implement methods and strategies for effective family engagement. Figure 2 provides a logic model used to guide the evaluation of the Family Engagement Course implementation.

Figure 1 Family Engagement Course Logic Model



Method

Learning Design

Darling-Hammond, Hylar and Gardner (2017) describe effective professional development “as structured learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices and improvements in student learning outcomes” (p. 2). Learning Forward (2011) argues that professional development must emphasize professional learning so that “learning for educators leads to learning for students” (p. 12). Murray (2014) adds that effective professional learning “is learning from the work teachers do” (p. xvi-xvii). With this in mind, the Family Engagement course structure was designed to include opportunities for participants to increase their knowledge of effective family engagement, thus impacting student learning. Specifically, participants had the opportunity to identify and expand their understanding of effective family engagement strategies, assess their current family engagement practices, and apply their learning through an inquiry project in their unique educational context.

The *Family Engagement Course Professional Learning Plan 2020* (Appendix L) describes the course learning outcomes and evidence of participant learning, strategic design and structure of the course learning opportunities. The learning plan also addresses the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the learning as aligned with Standards for Professional Development (Learning Forward, 2011; NDE, 2017). See Figure 3.

Figure 2 *Family Engagement Course Design, Roles and Responsibilities Aligned with the Standards for Professional Learning (NDE, 2017)*

Standard	Alignment
LEARNING COMMUNITIES: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course instructor/facilitator created a collaborative “space” for building a learning community with course participants through sharing of personal and professional experiences, guided discussions, and collective feedback through weekly video conference interactive sessions• Course participants participated in a collaborative learning community throughout the course during weekly video conference interactive sessions where participants: reflected on their learning, shared changes in practice, applied learning to specific contexts and provided feedback for all members of the learning community

Standard	Alignment
<p>LEADERSHIP: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course instructor/facilitator provided opportunities for course participants to develop their own capacity for effective family engagement, including knowledge and implementation of research-based practices and outcomes, shared approaches course participants might use to advocate for students and families to be partners in the learning process, and provided an opportunity for course participants to gather a collection of research-based practices and resources to further their professional learning and application of learning ● Course participants developed their capacity for effective family engagement through reading research-based practices and outcomes aligned with the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, identified areas for improvement within their educational context along with the advocacy approach that could be utilized to address the necessary improvement, and created a list of research-based practices and resources for professional growth beyond the course
<p>RESOURCES: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course instructor/facilitator curated additional research, resources and course materials in response to course participants progress, unique educational contexts and observed/identified barriers to practice and/or implementation of effective family engagement approaches ● Course participants shared weekly feedback about which resources were most beneficial to their unique educational context, and what questions or concerns remained, which was used by the course instructor/facilitator to provide responsive feedback, support, and curate/include additional materials within the course
<p>DATA: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course instructor/facilitator integrated multiple opportunities for self- assessment using a variety of assessment tools, including the Nevada Educator Performance Framework Professional Standards, the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, and National Standards for School-Family Partnerships aligned with professional learning within the course structure as well as beyond the course ● Course participants shared self-assessment data, alongside evaluation that designated areas of strength and areas for improvement / continued professional learning

Standard	Alignment
<p>LEARNING DESIGNS: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course instructor/facilitator integrated course participants' current educational contexts, learning goals and context-specific learning tasks in order to make the learning relevant and action-oriented, utilizing research that supported the course learning objectives in conjunction with research-based located and identified by each course participant ● Course participants shared learning goals based on their current educational contexts in order to identify their desired outcomes for their learning and student/family outcomes
<p>IMPLEMENTATION: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students; applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course instructor/facilitator provided strategic, and ongoing, opportunities for course participants to critically reflect on current family engagement practices through self-assessment, using a variety of assessment tools, alongside reading and analyzing research-based family engagement practices in order to support participants' in identifying and implementing changes in practice based on their learning and reflection ● Course participants completed weekly self-assessments of current family engagement practices in comparison to research-based, effective family engagement practices using a variety of assessment tools in order to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement, wherein course participants identified potential changes in practice that could be implemented in order to increase meaningful and effective engagement of all families in the learning process
<p>OUTCOMES: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students focuses on equitable access, opportunities and outcomes with an emphasis on achievement and opportunity disparities between student groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course instructor/facilitator integrated research that demonstrated links between effective family engagement practices and increased positive academic, social, emotional and development outcomes in conjunction with critical reflection tasks that provided opportunities for course participants to reflect on the current, or future, integration of effective family engagement practices by evaluating current outcomes against desired outcomes ● Course participants read and analyzed research that demonstrated links between effective family engagement practices and increased positive academic, social, emotional and development outcomes and completed critical reflection tasks that helped participants identify current, or future, integration of effective family engagement practices through evaluation of current outcomes against

Standard	Alignment
	<p>desired outcomes, leading to identification of changes in practice with potential to achieve the desired outcomes</p>
<p>EQUITY: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students focuses on equitable access, opportunities and outcomes with an emphasis on achievement and opportunity disparities between student groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course instructor/facilitator guided discussion, both synchronous and asynchronous, designed to support course participants’ identification of inequities within school systems that impact families’ inclusion in the learning process, as well as students’ academic growth in conjunction to evidence on practices that address and reduce inequity across educational/school systems ● Course participants individually and collectively identified inequities within school systems that impact families’ inclusion in the learning process, as well as students’ academic growth, through self-assessment and case study examples, and in response, identifying evidence-based practices that could be integrated to address and reduce inequity across educational/school systems
<p>CULTURAL COMPETENCY: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students facilitates educator’s self-examination of their awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions that pertain to culture and how they can develop culturally-responsive strategies to enrich educational experiences for all students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course instructor/facilitator implemented and facilitated course learning tasks that: allowed course participants to examine explicit and implicit bias of students and families, provided research on existing disparities in effective engagement of all families in the learning process, and outlined potential action steps participants could take to eliminate barriers to effective family engagement ● Course participants examined bias, both explicit and implicit, in their beliefs about families’ strengths and capacities, their beliefs about families’ involvement in the learning process, and their beliefs about their role in reaching out to and including all families in the learning process as partners in order identify specific action steps that they could take to address their bias, and thus, the barriers to effective family engagement

Participants and Procedure

The Family Engagement course was open to any educational professional in the NNRPDP region during the fall of 2019 and the spring of 2020. The NNRPDP region encompasses six districts across six counties, and covers a large rural geographic area in northeastern Nevada. NNRPDP is an approved provider for the family engagement course that applies toward removal of the PIFE provision on educational licenses issued after 2015 (NRS

391.019, 2015 & NAC 391.030, 2015). Course information was distributed to the entire region through an email sent four weeks prior to the start date of each session, both in the fall and the spring. Participants could register to complete the course for three graduate-level credits in partnership with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), or, for a 45-hour Certificate of Professional Learning (COPL) from NNRPDP. Participants choosing to complete the course for graduate-level credit submitted the initial registration form online as well as an additional registration process through UNLV; those choosing to complete the course for a COPL from NNRPDP completed only the initial online registration step. Participants earning credit through UNLV paid \$165.00 while those earning a Certificate of Professional Learning did not have to pay a fee. The course text, *Powerful Partnerships* (Mapp et al., 2017), had to be purchased by each participant and cost approximately \$30.00. The overall cost of the course ranged between \$30.00 and \$195.00. This is a significant attractant for participants as approved courses range in cost from \$63.00 to \$1,700.00 dollars (J. Briske, personal communication, May 4, 2020).

Twenty-seven participants altogether enrolled in the fall and spring courses; four participants withdrew, one participant failed the fall course and re-enrolled in the spring course, and 22 participants successfully completed the course earning either the graduate-level credits or COPL. Participants elected to enroll in the family engagement course for a variety of reasons. Of the 22 participants enrolled, 19 completed the course in order to remove the PIFE provision on their educational license (NRS 391.019, 2015 & NAC 391.030, 2015). Two completed the course in order to earn credits that could be applied toward renewal of their educational license. One participant completed the course for their own professional learning. Course participants came from a variety of educational backgrounds beyond elementary, middle, and secondary educators. Professional roles included administrator, counselor, specialist (Physical Education, Music, & Art), career and technical educator (Health), special education instructor, school social worker, school nurse, and school psychologist.

In order to maximize accessibility for the geographic distance of the region and best meet the needs of educational professionals the course was facilitated using online tools. The online tools and technology included CANVAS learning management system, Google documents, and Google Meet interactive video conferencing. The nine-week family engagement course included both asynchronous learning tasks and synchronous interactive discussions. The Nevada Parental Involvement and Family Engagement Training Modules (RPDP, n.d.) was a primary component for accessing evidence-based research and best practices for effective family engagement.

Measurement

The overarching goals of the family engagement course were to increase participants' knowledge of effective, research-based family engagement, and to increase family engagement through implementation of research-based strategies through effective professional learning.

These goals were measured through evidence collected using basic descriptive statistical analysis of pre- and post- questionnaire responses, NNRPDP evaluation form, and participant demographic information. Goals were also measured using qualitative textual analysis of final discussion responses, open-ended textual responses within the questionnaire, evaluation form and Family Engagement Inquiry Project document. Goals were also measured using a basic, paired t-test to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the means of two groups of data, in this case, between participants' responses on the pre- and post-questionnaire (Appendix A).

Firstly, evidence for increased participant knowledge was measured through a pre- and post- knowledge questionnaire developed within the RPDP using Likert-scale response options (Appendix B) alongside textual analysis of the course learning tasks in relation to the participant learning outcomes (Family Engagement Course Professional Learning Plan, 2020: Appendix L). The pre- and post- questionnaire was developed for use collaboratively amongst the RPDP groups. The small sample size ($n = 22$) in the first year of implementation does not allow for an assessment of the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. However, the questionnaire does provide evidence of participants' perceptions of their growth, learning, and application of their learning.

Secondly, evidence for implementation of effective family engagement strategies was gathered through analysis of the Family Engagement Inquiry project. This project was three-fold. First, participants integrated an evidenced-based change in practice in their unique context. Second, participants collected data and evidence to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the change in practice. Third, participants analyzed the data and evidence in order to determine changes in practice to implement in the future (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2002; Murray, 2014). Finally, evidence for participant satisfaction along with perception of the course impact on student learning were measured through the end-of-course evaluation form and final discussion responses (Guskey, 2002).

Overarching participant perceptions of the course, learning, and implementation were also gathered by a third-party, independent evaluator who conducted verbal interviews with randomly selected participants and shared textual analysis from the interviews while maintaining anonymity (M. Teague, personal communication, May 6, 2020). Figure 4 outlines the five levels of professional development evaluation alongside corresponding measurement tools, in conjunction with a brief description of how the evidence will be used in relation to evaluation of the effectiveness of the Family Engagement course.

Figure 3 *Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation (Guskey, 2002)*

Evaluation Level	What Questions Are Addressed?	How Will Information Be Gathered?	What Is Measured or Assessed?	How Will Information Be Used?
1. Participants' Reactions	<p><i>Did this course meet my needs?</i></p> <p><i>Did the course instructor's expertise and experience impact the learning process?</i></p>	<p><i>NNRPDP Evaluation Form, Pre-/Post- Knowledge Questionnaire, Third-party independent evaluator interviews of participants</i></p>	<p><i>Participants' initial satisfaction with the experience and perceived benefit</i></p>	<p><i>To improve program design and delivery</i></p>
2. Participants' Learning	<p><i>Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills?</i></p>	<p><i>NNRPDP Evaluation Form, Pre-/Post- Knowledge Questionnaire, Family Engagement Inquiry Project, Final Discussion Board Responses, Third-party independent evaluator interviews of participants</i></p>	<p><i>Knowledge of 6 Standards for Family-School Partnership and research-based practices for effective and meaningful family engagement</i></p>	<p><i>To improve program content, format, and organization</i></p>
3. Organization Support & Change	<p><i>Was implementation advocated, facilitated, and supported?</i></p> <p><i>What was the impact on the organization?</i></p> <p><i>Did it affect the organization's climate and procedures?</i></p>	<p><i>Family Engagement Inquiry Project, NNRPDP Evaluation Form, Final Discussion Board Responses</i></p>	<p><i>The organization's advocacy, support, accommodation, facilitation, and recognition of participants' implementation of family engagement</i></p>	<p><i>To document and improve organization support</i></p> <p><i>To inform future change efforts</i></p>
4. Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills	<p><i>Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills?</i></p>	<p><i>Family Engagement Inquiry Project, Pre- and Post - Knowledge Questionnaire, Final Discussion Board Responses, NNRPDP Evaluation Form, Third-party independent evaluator interviews of participants</i></p>	<p><i>Degree and quality of participants' implementation of family engagement in their educational context</i></p>	<p><i>To document and improve the implementation of program content</i></p>

Evaluation Level	What Questions Are Addressed?	How Will Information Be Gathered?	What Is Measured or Assessed?	How Will Information Be Used?
5. Student Learning Outcomes	<p><i>What was the perceived impact on students?</i></p> <p><i>Did it affect student performance or achievement?</i></p>	<p><i>Pre-/Post- Knowledge Questionnaire, Family Engagement Inquiry Project, Final Discussion Board Responses</i></p>	<p><i>Perception of impact on students related to increased knowledge and implementation of family engagement</i></p>	<p><i>To document increased ability to effectively and meaningfully engage families in the learning process</i></p>

Note: Bold text is taken directly from Guskey’s framework outlining the five levels of professional development (2002). Italicized text is the description of evidence collected by the instructor.

Results

The mixed methods evaluation process included both quantitative and qualitative analysis utilizing various data sources, including pre- and post- questionnaire responses (Appendix C), NNRPDP evaluation form (Appendix B), discussion responses, Family Engagement Inquiry Projects, and third-party independent anonymous interviews with randomly selected participants (M. Teague, personal communication, May 6, 2020). Statistical analysis was completed by the course instructor. Textual analysis was conducted by the course instructor and third-party evaluator in collaboration. Results were sorted into four thematic categories based on the analysis: 1) general course outcomes, 2) increased knowledge, 3) increased implementation, and 4) perceived impact on student learning.

General Course Outcomes

Twenty-seven participants enrolled in and started the course; four participants withdrew, one participant failed the fall section of the course, and 22 participants completed the course. Of participants who completed the course, 19 earned a final course grade of “A,” one earned a final course grade of “B,” one earned a final course grade of “D,” and one earned a final course grade of “F.”

Twenty of the 22 course participants completed the NNRPDP evaluation form upon completion of the course. Ninety percent of participants reported that the course matched their needs (NNRPDP Evaluation Form, Appendix C) “to a great extent,” while ten percent of participants reported that the course matched their needs “to some extent” (NNRPDP Evaluation Form, Appendix C). One hundred percent of respondents reported that the course instructor’s experience and expertise enhanced the quality of the course (Appendix C). Textual analysis of

the NNRPDP Evaluation Form (Appendix C) responses revealed that 80 percent of participants enjoyed the course, perceived it to be beneficial, and identified specific strategies that were already being implemented or would be implemented in the near future in their educational contexts (Appendix A).

Increased Knowledge

Twenty of the 22 course participants completed the NNRPDP evaluation form (Appendix C) upon completion of the course. Ninety percent of participants reported they could use knowledge and skills obtained in their educational context (Family Engagement Course Data, Appendix A) “to a great extent,” while ten percent of participants reported they could use knowledge and skills obtained in their educational context “to some extent” (Appendix A). Eighty percent of participants reported that the course added to their knowledge of the standards and skills for family engagement “to a great extent” while 20 percent of participants reported that the course added to their knowledge of the standards and skills for family engagement to “some extent” (Appendix A).

Textual analysis of the pre- and post-questionnaire responses (Appendix B), the NNRPDP Evaluation Form (Appendix B), Family Engagement Project Inquiry (Appendix D), and interview responses (M. Teague, personal communication, May 6, 2020) provided evidence of participant increased knowledge in multiple areas. For example, participants increased knowledge in components of effective family engagement (PTA, n.d.) related to the Family-School Partnership Standards adopted by Nevada (NSBE, 2015; PTA, n.d.). They also learned about research pertaining to family engagement, specific family engagement strategies, cultural aspects of families, and an expanded understanding of “who” is included in the “family” partnership and collaboration.

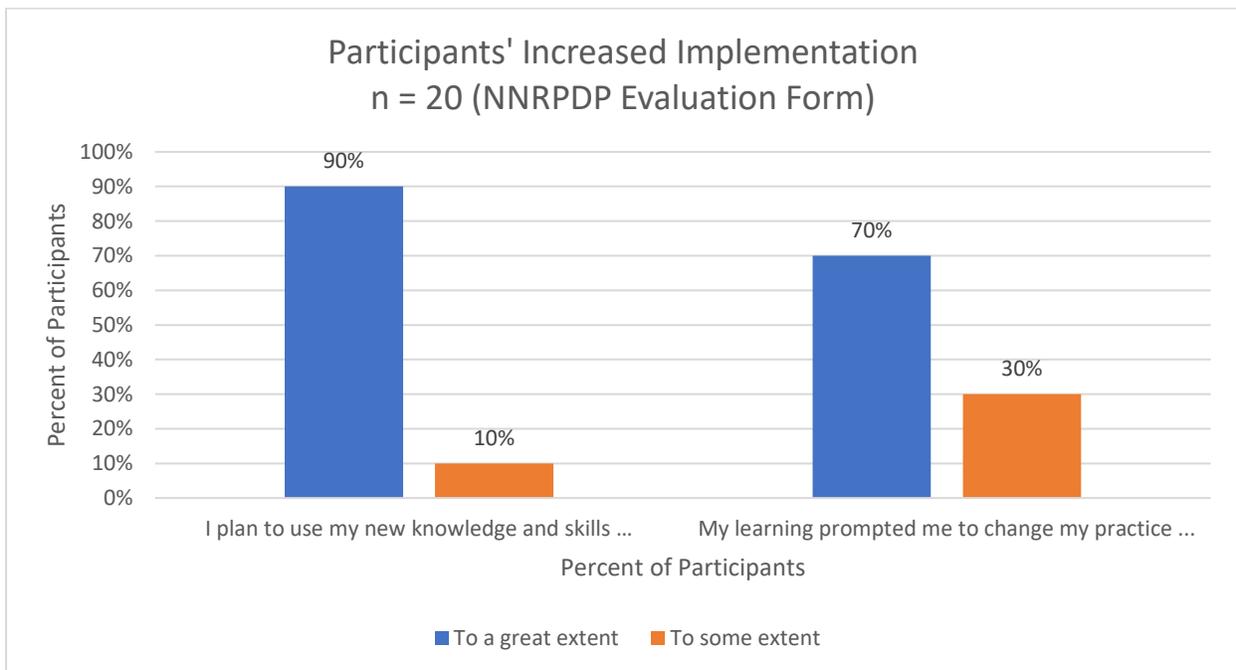
Textual analysis of the same items also uncovered shifts in participants’ beliefs from the beginning of the course, to the end of the course (M. Teague, personal communication, May 6, 2020). Participants shifted from deficit-based views of families’ capacities to asset-based views of families’ capacities. They also shifted from one-sided perspectives to collaborative perspectives with all stakeholders (school staff, students, families, community). Participants shifted their thinking of family engagement as an “add on” to family engagement that is embedded within the learning process. They also shifted from a sense of isolation to a shared belief that all stakeholders are working towards the same goal of student success. The change in beliefs also related to participants’ perception of barriers. Perceptions shifted from a substantial list of valid and misperceived barriers related to family engagement at the beginning of the course, to a similar list of valid barriers with a lens of possibility in addressing or removing the barriers. They also adopted an equity lens, in acknowledging that the barriers result in inequitable opportunities for students and families, and that the school must work to address

those barriers systemically in order to realize the full potential of every child. One participant interviewee succinctly captured this shift in belief, stating “I didn’t realize what a resource the parents can be to tap into. I just wanted them to show up before. Now I see they can actually help me teach” (M. Teague, personal communication, May 6, 2020).

Increased Implementation

Analysis of the NNRPDP Evaluation Form (Appendix B) showed that of the 20 respondents, 90 percent of participants plan to use their new knowledge and skills from the Family Engagement course in their educational context “to a great extent” and ten percent of participants plan to use their new knowledge and skills from the Family Engagement course in their educational context to “some extent” (Family Engagement Course Data, Appendix A). Seventy percent of participants acknowledged that their learning prompted them to change their practice “to a great extent” while 30 percent of participants acknowledged that their learning prompted them to change their practice to “some extent” (Appendix A). See Figure 5.

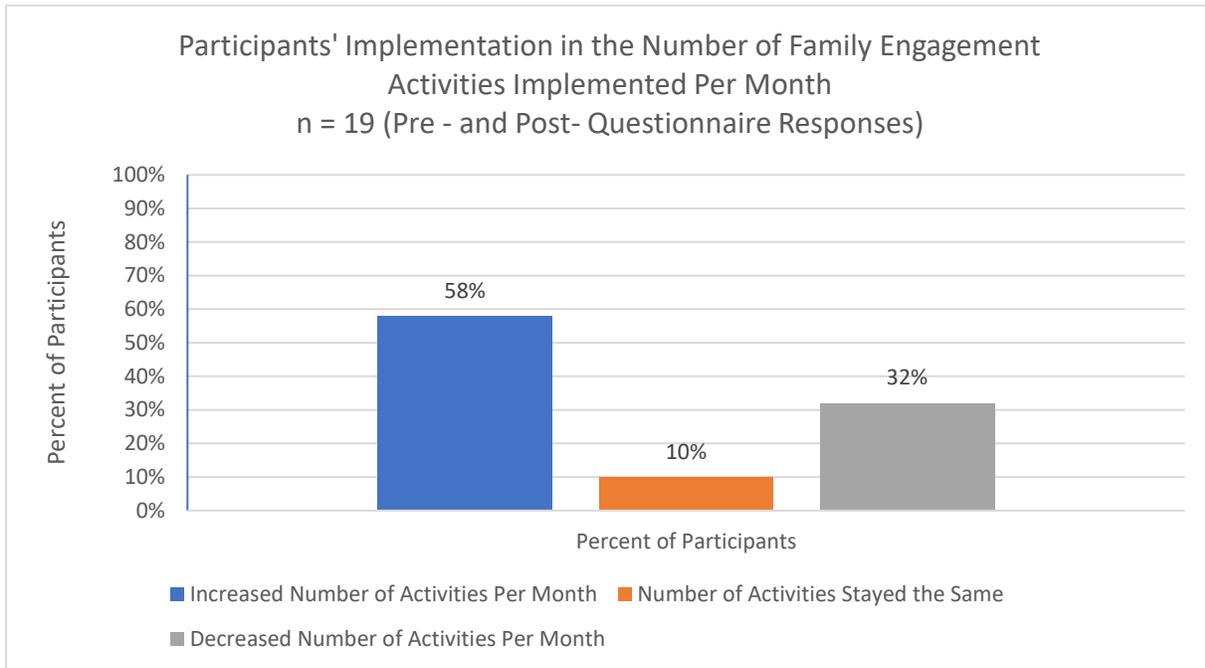
Figure 4 *Participants’ Plans for Increased Implementation*



Analysis of the pre- and post-questionnaire (Appendix B) responses showed that of 19 respondents, 58 percent of participants increased the number of family engagement activities implemented each month, while ten percent of participants continued to implement the same number of family engagement activities after completing the course as they did prior to the course, and 32 percent of participants reported a decrease in the number of family engagement activities implemented each month after completing the course (Appendix A). The average

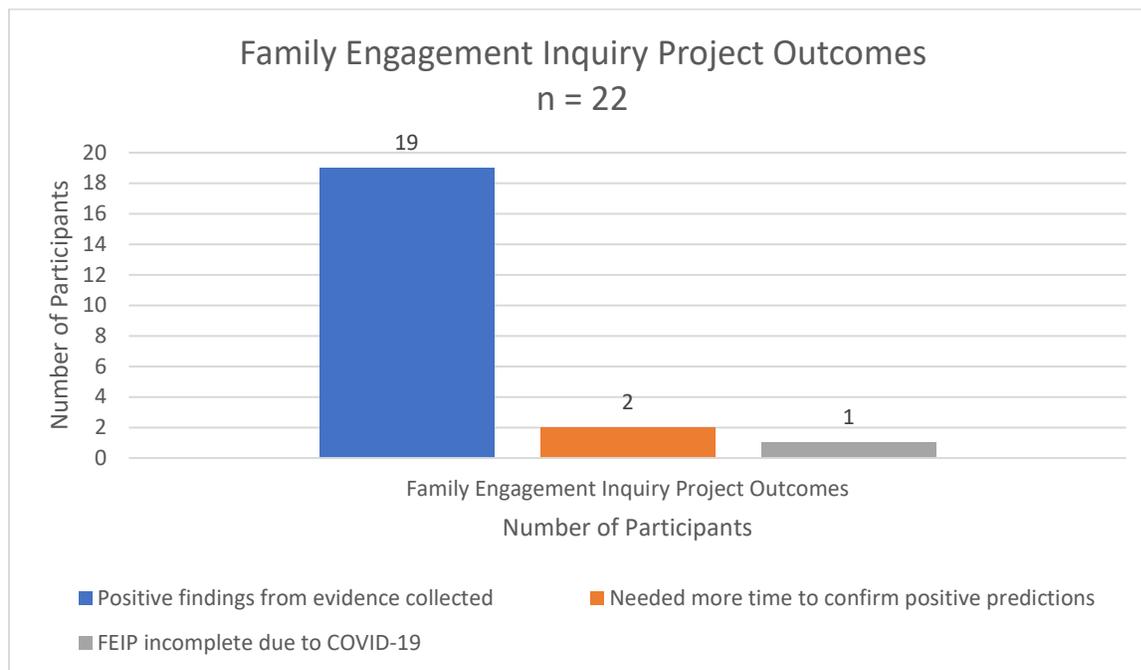
number of family engagement activities initiated and implemented by respondents prior to the course was 2.5, whereas the average number of family engagement activities initiated and implemented by respondents after completing the course was 2.6 (Appendix A). See Figure 6.

Figure 5 *Participants' Implementation of Family Engagement Activities Per Month*



Analysis of the Family Engagement Inquiry Projects (Appendix D) demonstrated increased implementation of evidence-based strategies within all 22 participants' educational contexts. Of the 22 participants, ten implemented a strategy intended to address Family-School Partnerships Standard (FSPS) 2: *Communicating Effectively* (NSBE, 2015; PTA, n.d.). Nine implemented a strategy intended to address FSPS 3: *Supporting Student Success* (NSBE, 2015; PTA, n.d.). One participant implemented a strategy intended to address FSPS 1: *Welcoming All Families* (NSBE, 2015; PTA, n.d.). One participant implemented a strategy intended to address FSPS 6: *Collaborating With Community* (NSBE, 2015; PTA, n.d.). And, one participant implemented two strategies intended to address both FSPS 2 and FSPS 3 (NSBE, 2015; PTA, n.d.). Of the 22 participants completing the Family Engagement Inquiry Projects, 19 collected evidence that showed a positive impact on students and family's engagement in the learning process. Two participants collected evidence that demonstrated a need for additional time to collect evidence before making a determination about the effect of the implemented strategy. One participant's Family Engagement Inquiry Project was abruptly ended due to the COVID-19 school closures (Elko County School District, communication, March 15, 2020) and the participant was unable to implement the selected strategy altogether. See Figure 7.

Figure 6 Participants' Family Engagement Inquiry Project Outcomes



Textual analysis of the NNRPDP Evaluation Form (Appendix B), Family Engagement Inquiry Projects (Appendix D), discussion responses, and participant interviews (M. Teague, personal communication, 2020) also highlighted participants' plans for future implementation of family engagement practices. All participants described their plan to continue implementing, modify, or add to the initial strategy selected for the Family Engagement Inquiry Projects. Participants also described their intention to apply their new knowledge through implementation in multiple ways. Positive two-way communication, relationship-building strategies, shared decision-making, and surveys to elicit feedback from families related to the learning were listed. Participants also mentioned implementing a partnership approach to supporting student success through shared knowledge and goal-setting, collaborative connections with the community, and family training events (NNRPDP Evaluation Form, responses, Appendix B). Several participants also noted that they plan to expand implementation from their educational context into the broader school-wide context through invitations to colleagues. These invitations included options to partner, welcome, and invite families into the school and learning community. Participants also expressed intentions of sharing their new knowledge by presenting to colleagues and administrators during staff training days, and collaborating together with colleagues to provide resources and support to families. The implementation of learning, both in knowledge and skills, was revealed in a snapshot from a participant interview:

Interviewer: I guess you didn't have much time from the time you took the class until the COVID-19 closures happened. Were you able to implement anything with families before that time?

Participant: I've actually spent more time communicating with parents since the closures than I did before.

Interviewer: What have you been doing?

Participant: I've used a lot of the techniques to help families problem solve different situations until we get back to school next fall. I'm actually thinking that this virus and closures may create a lot more opportunities for family engagement. (M. Teague, personal communication, May 6, 2020)

Successful implementation of family engagement requires educational professionals to be able to execute their plan, and to identify potential barriers and then remove those barriers. Nineteen of the 22 course participants completed the pre- and post-questionnaire (Appendix B). Analysis of the pre- and post-questionnaire responses revealed that 90 percent of participants felt more confident increasing family engagement in their educational context after completing the course. Five percent of participants reported maintaining the same confidence level both prior to and after the course, and five percent of participants reported decreased confidence increasing family engagement after completing the course (Family Engagement Course Data, Appendix A). This initial finding was confirmed to be statistically significant (p -value < 0.0001) using a paired t-test to analyze participants' increased confidence for increasing family engagement, wherein 19 participants' initial confidence levels ($M = 3.37$ $SD = 0.68$) increased after completing the course ($M = 4.47$ $SD 0.61$). See Table 9.

Table 1 *Participants' Increased Confidence for Increasing Family Engagement*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Pre -	3.37	0.68
Post -	4.47	0.68

p -value < 0.0001 (Using conventional criteria, this indicates extreme statistical significance)

Fifty-eight percent of participants reported increased confidence removing barriers to family engagement. Thirty-seven percent of participants reported decreased confidence removing barriers to family engagement, and five percent of participants reported their confidence level remained the same prior to and upon completion of the course (Appendix A).

Perceived Impact on Student Learning

Analyzing student learning, student progress, or other measures of student success were not a specific goal measured or evaluated in relation to the Family Engagement course. However, analysis of several data sources uncovered participants' perceptions of how their increased knowledge and implementation of family engagement will positively impact student learning.

Analysis of the NNRPDP Evaluation Form (Appendix C) responses revealed several important connections between participants' learning and perceived impact on student learning. Firstly, 100 percent of respondents reported that the course would help them meet the needs of diverse student populations "to a great extent" (Appendix A). Secondly, participants also ranked their belief that their learning will affect student learning; 80 percent of participants believe their learning will affect student learning to "a great extent" while 20 percent of participants believe their learning will affect student learning to "some extent" (Appendix A). Thirdly, participants described how implementation of their learning would affect student learning. Textual analysis highlighted participants' perceptions that student success would increase, that improved relationships would positively affect student learning, that student academic achievement would increase because families would know how best to help at home. Further, student learning will be positively impacted because research links higher levels of family engagement to higher levels of student success and achievement.

Analysis of the Family Engagement Inquiry Projects (Appendix D) unveiled one participant's collection of evidence that showed a positive impact of family training nights on students' math achievement scores using pre- and post- assessments. Two participants implemented a strategy, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (Paredes, 2010), that research links to increased student academic achievement. Although, neither collected evidence of student learning in relation to the implementation of the strategy during the course.

Textual analysis of the discussion responses corroborated participants' perceptions that their increased learning about, and implementation of, family engagement would increase student learning and success. These perceptions were linked to specific actions or strategies that would be required in order for the positive impact to be realized. These actions included increased support for families linked to student learning standards and benchmarks, increased collaboration with families linked to learning objectives and goals, and increased student participation and engagement when families are included in learning.

Textual analysis of the pre- and post- questionnaire (Appendix C) responses show that participants believe family engagement ensures student success, is integral for student learning, improves outcomes for students now and in the future, and a catalyst for improving schools. One participant interview confirmed the perception that increased learning and implementation positively impacts student learning:

Interviewer: It seems as though these Family Engagement techniques you're telling me about all take a lot of time.

Participant: They do. A little extra time every day.

Interviewer: So is it worth it?

Participant: Yes! I'm seeing a direct correlation between me sending families these little, bite-size ideas tailored to how they can help their child at home and student achievement. I'm not spending as much time going back over things, those things are being reinforced at home. I'm introducing new concepts. (M. Teague, personal communication, May 6, 2020)

Discussion

Guskey (2002) suggested that “through evaluation, you can determine whether these [professional development] activities are achieving their purpose” (p. 46). The purpose of the Family Engagement course was to increase participants’ knowledge and implementation of family engagement using evidence- and research-based sources and strategies.

The primary findings from analysis of the evidence collected prior to, during, and after the course suggest that for the first year of implementation, the Family Engagement course succeeded in increasing participants’ knowledge and implementation of family engagement. The primary findings also revealed areas for improvement that could be used to guide revisions for course improvement. The small sample size ($n = 22$) allowed for basic data analysis, while a larger sample size in the future would allow for the integration of correlational analysis. Next is a detailed description of both positive and negative preliminary findings alongside Guskey’s (2002) framework for evaluation of effective professional development.

Guskey (2002) proposed five levels of critical information that must be collected and analyzed in order to assess the professional development’s effectiveness in achieving its intended purpose or goal. Each level increases in complexity and sophistication in relation to the type of evidence gathered, what the goal is for that particular professional development participant outcome, and how the evidence is used to measure effectiveness of the professional development.

Level One analyzes participants’ “reactions to the professional development” (Guskey, 2002, p. 46). To address this level, the Family Engagement course focused on participants’ perceived learning, perceived benefit or value, and perceived learning experience in relation to the instructor’s experience and expertise. Ninety percent of participants reported that the course matched their needs “to a great extent” while ten percent of participants reported that the course matched their needs to “some extent” (NNRPDP Evaluation Form, Appendix B). Also, 80 percent of participants reported that they enjoyed the course and found it to be beneficial (Appendix A). These findings suggest that the course design and facilitation satisfied the majority of participants. In addition, 81 percent of participants enrolled in the course, completed the course, wherein completion was concluded to be those participants who completed the course with a passing grade and those who did not withdraw. Only 19 percent of participants did not complete the course with a passing grade or opted to withdraw. The low attrition rate adds

support for participants' satisfaction with the course as Bawa (2016) notes that online courses typically have an attrition rate of 40 to 80 percent. Additionally, while 86 percent of participants earned a final course grade of "A" which may seem to imply participants' satisfaction, this finding might also suggest that participants' satisfaction with their final course grade influenced their evaluation of the course more than other factors (VanMaaren, Jaquett & Williams, 2016). Therefore, any correlation between final course grades and course satisfaction must be undertaken with the knowledge that other factors might influence the positive correlation.

Evidence and analysis that measures participants' increased knowledge and skills gained from professional development is the second level according to Guskey (2002). The majority of Family Engagement course participants reported that the course increased their knowledge of the standards and skills for family engagement "to a great extent." They also reported the ability to use knowledge and skills obtained through the course in their educational contexts, and that their confidence to increasing family engagement grew after completing the course. These findings were statistically significant (Appendix A). These findings also show that course participants' overall self-efficacy increased, which is an important aspect of effective implementation of family engagement. According to the American Psychological Association (2020) "self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment." Thus, increased confidence has positive implications for participants' increased implementation of family engagement.

Participants also demonstrated increased knowledge of components of effective family engagement related to the National School-Family Partnership Standards/Nevada Standards for Family-School Partnerships (NDE, 2015; PTA, n.d.), research pertaining to family engagement, specific family engagement strategies related to the standards, the importance of honoring families' cultural identities, and an expanded perspective of "who" is included within the family partnership and collaboration efforts (Appendix A). For example, one participant, when asked to reflect on their learning in the course, wrote "Implementing more family engagement strategies will hopefully lead to a higher level of family engagement overall. Research shows that higher levels of family engagement lead to higher levels of student success and achievement" (2019).

Participants' also revealed positive shifts in their beliefs about families' capacities for supporting their student(s), the need for two-way collaboration and communication, and the necessity for embedding family engagement within the learning process so that every stakeholder is working towards the same goal -- student achievement (Appendix A). Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) argue that beliefs determine actions, which underscores the importance of teachers and other educational professionals believing that families are capable, and an important part of the learning process if they are to take action to successfully engage families in the learning process. Mapp et al. (2017) also notes that teachers must hold positive beliefs about families in order to effectively develop mutually trusting and collaborative partnerships with them focused on

student learning. These findings suggest that the Family Engagement course was designed and facilitated in such a way as to positively increase participants' knowledge and skills for family engagement, including changed beliefs that will positively influence future actions for family engagement.

Participants reported greater awareness of the importance of removing barriers. Fifty-eight percent of participants reported increased confidence removing barriers to family engagement after completing the course, five percent maintained the same level of confidence before and after the course, and 37 percent of participants reported decreased confidence removing barriers to family engagement after completing the course (Appendix A), suggesting that participants' increased knowledge and skills did not always correlate with their confidence to remove barriers, which has implications for implementation of family engagement in participants' educational contexts as well as future iterations of the course. While it is crucial that educational professionals be able to identify potential barriers to effective family engagement, it is also imperative that educational professionals feel confident removing those barriers, which requires having both self-efficacy and skills that allow them to do so. This finding also has important implications for participants' abilities to increase implementation of family engagement.

Guskey (2002) argues that participants' increased knowledge and skills must integrate, or be aligned, with organizational support and change in order for the benefits of professional development to be successful [Level 3]. Organizational support for change is crucial if the professional development is to be successfully implemented into participants' classrooms or educational contexts. Resistance to change from the organization, systemically, essentially nullifies any positive changes initially correlated to the professional development (Guskey, 2002).

While the Family Engagement course design and facilitation did not include specific collection of evidence related to organizational support and change, some unintended evidence emerged through participants' discussions, Family Engagement Inquiry projects, and written responses in the evaluation form and questionnaires. These findings suggest participants were aware of this critical connection. For example, every participant identified steps they could take to extend their learning and implementation from their individual context out into the broader school context. One example from a participant's reflection on their learning illustrates this finding: "I plan on using the strategies I learned in this course to enhance my own and my school's family engagement practices" (2020). Some participants described their intention to invite their colleagues to collaborate with them in family engagement efforts, while others explained their plan to share their new knowledge and skills with colleagues and administrators through presentations given during staff training days. Several participants noted actions they could take to better include their administrator in their future family engagement efforts and

activities (Appendix A; M. Teague, personal communication, May 6, 2020). For example, one participant reported “I will try to involve families more. I know there are things we need to help families become more aware of what is available for them. Sharing those resources is part of our responsibility” (2020). These implicit connections suggest that explicit attention to this aspect of professional development in future Family Engagement courses could prove to be an important area for improvement in order to develop participants’ capacity to implement their learning strategically, within organizations open to change and those resistant to change.

In the fourth level of professional development evaluation, Guskey posits that participants’ must apply their learning within their educational contexts in order to provide participants’ opportunities to use their new knowledge and adapt new skills for the unique aspects of their setting (2002). The Family Engagement Inquiry Project (Appendix D) provided participants’ a structured learning opportunity to implement, modify, and evaluate the effectiveness of a specific family engagement strategy within their educational context. During the inquiry process, participants received feedback from peers, and coaching from the instructor.

All but one participant was able to complete the inquiry process, which revealed that many of the strategies required modification in order to meet the unique needs of the context. Overall, all but two participants collected evidence that suggested a positive impact on students and families directly related to implementation of the selected strategy. One participant was not able to complete the inquiry process due to the sudden school closures necessitated by the COVID-19 crisis. However, it is important to add that this participant described a specific plan of action to follow through with the inquiry during the next school year. This intention suggests that they perceived value in the Family Engagement Inquiry Project process for their own learning, even though they have no obligation to do so in respect with the course. One participant wrote “The Inquiry Process was the most effective part of this class since I was able to use it within my daily teaching. I saw the immediate effects of utilizing family engagement on a large scale” (2019). These findings suggest that the Family Engagement Inquiry Project was an effective component of the course as it provided participants hands-on experience “trying out” a new family engagement strategy with support and coaching thereby enhancing the possibility for a positive implementation experience.

Increased implementation of family engagement was also evident in other measures. After completing the course, 58 percent of participants increased the number of family engagement activities each month they facilitated. Seventy percent of participants reported that their learning prompted them to change their practice to “a great extent”, and 100 percent shared that they planned to use their new knowledge and skills in their context to “some extent” or to a “great extent” (Appendix A). One participant noted “I can connect to parents and families in so many ways. The tools and ideas shared in class were hands on [sic] for immediate use” (2019). These findings suggest that participants increased implementation during the class and intend to

continue those efforts beyond the class. Although, the degree and quality of implementation was not specifically measured for this report which provides an area for improvement for future courses.

The ultimate goal of professional development is to positively impact student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2002; Murray, 2014). Guskey states that the fifth, and final level of professional development evaluation measures student learning outcomes related to the goals of the specific professional development (2002). For the purposes of this report goals were increased knowledge and implementation of family engagement. These goals were not evaluated in relation to student learning outcomes within each participant's educational context. However, participants did provide evidence of perceived, or potential, impact on student learning, providing valuable information for the course instructor to use for future course revisions and modifications. One participant did collect evidence that the implemented family engagement strategy positively affected students' performance on a math assessment. All other perceptions of impact on student learning were based on participants' reflection, observations and presumption of impact based on specific research that linked certain actions for family engagement to increased student achievement. One participant stated "It will greatly affect student learning when families are more involved!" (2020). Although this anecdotal evidence does not meet Guskey's (2002) guidelines for Level five evaluation, this evidence does suggest that future revisions to the course, with these guidelines in mind, could yield significant evidence for the overall impact of the Family Engagement course.

Conclusion

Family Engagement is linked to increased student achievement (HFRP, 2011; Wood & Bauman, 2017), however, many teachers and other educational professionals receive little or no formal training in effective family engagement prior to entering their professional field (Spielberg, 2011; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Thus, the NNRPDP Family Engagement Course is intended to build educational professionals' capacity for effective family engagement through increased knowledge and implementation of family engagement within their unique educational contexts (Figure 2. NNRPDP Family Engagement Logic Model).

Evaluation of the first year of the course revealed positive outcomes for participants, including increased knowledge and increased implementation of family engagement. These findings suggest that the initial course structure, design and facilitation were effective. The primary component of the course is the Nevada Parental Involvement and Family Engagement Training Program (n.d.). Initial evidence from this evaluation seems to indicate that using this program leads to increased knowledge of family engagement as participants work through the modules. The course instructor, while designing the course noted that the modules did not

include specific activities for implementation. Therefore, the Family Engagement Inquiry Project component was added in order to address that gap in course design.

The course also included synchronous and asynchronous discussions, reflection tasks, and a small research component where participants located five evidence-based practices or strategies for family engagement aligned with each of the six Standards for Family-School Partnership (NSBE, 2015; PTA, n.d.). Based on the evidence for increased learning and implementation of family engagement, these course components might be carried over for future Family Engagement courses.

Overall, participants' satisfaction with, and perceived benefit of the Family Engagement course indicate that the professional development was effective in meeting participants' needs, and increasing knowledge and implementation of family engagement. Several participants' statements captured their overall perception of the course. One participant shared "I can connect to parents and families in so many ways. The tools and ideas shared in class were hands on for immediate use." (2019). Another stated "Implementing what I have learned will have a positive affect [sic]" (2019). A third participant said "This class was very helpful in presenting and stressing the importance of family engagement within the educational setting. Furthermore, it helps to generalize learning by providing us with strategies that we can implement at our schools" (2020).

However, the lack of evidence and findings related to organizational support for change and student learning illuminate critical areas for improvement if the course is to continue to be offered next year. In addition, the findings that revealed participants' lack of confidence removing barriers to family engagement also highlight another vital area for improvement. Thus, the course instructor might carefully consider adding measurement tools to determine the organizational support for change in relation to each participant prior to starting the course. Such information may better support the integration of potential interventions or approaches into the course learning opportunities. With regard to organizational support for change, it is imperative to add that this aspect of professional development poses the greatest challenge to the facilitator as it is the factor of professional development over which the facilitator potentially has the least amount of influence (Guskey, 2002). The course instructor might explore ways to support participants' development of necessary skills to identify and remove barriers to more effectively implement family engagement.

It would also be extremely important for the course instructor to determine, what if any, evidence should be collected by participants related to student learning outcomes as the goal of all professional development should be to positively impact student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2002; Learning Forward, 2011; NDE, 2017). There are many factors that influence student learning, and family engagement is but one of the factors. This poses

challenges for evaluation related to student learning as evaluating student learning in relation to the Family Engagement course would require significant planning in order to reduce external variables, along with integration of control or comparison groups. However, the benefit of evaluating the effectiveness of the Family Engagement course through its impact on student learning would certainly be worthwhile for demonstrating to participants and other essential stakeholders the value for the course, and ultimately, for family engagement training that expands out beyond the course.

The evaluation process also revealed the critical need for identification and integration of a valid and reliable instrument for measuring participants' increased knowledge, implementation, and change in beliefs or practices related to family engagement. The integration of a valid and reliable instrument would increase the significance of future findings about the effectiveness of the Family Engagement course.

Barriers and possibilities for future Family Engagement courses must also be considered. Potential barriers are many. For example, the addition of other approved courses promoted within the region by district leaders, the unknown number of educational professionals still needing to remove the PIFE provision from their educational license, and the COVID-19 crisis which has required educational professionals to significantly alter their current practices. Amidst these challenges, there are potential possibilities for future Family Engagement courses. Examples include the possible adoption of a regulation by the state that would remove the credit-requirement for the PIFE provision and allow participants to complete the course for a Certificate of Professional Learning instead. This would reduce the cost of the course significantly as participants would only need to purchase the course text (approximately \$25.00). Additional examples include course promotion by past satisfied participants, and increased knowledge and experience for the course instructor.

Overall findings reveal that educational professionals in the NNRPDP region benefited from completing the new Family Engagement course offering. This claim is evidenced through increased knowledge and implementation of family engagement, during the initial year of implementation of the course. Findings also provided valuable insight for the course instructor to consider during the revision process for future course offerings that could increase the effectiveness of the professional development course (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2002). The link between effective family engagement and student success is clear (Flamboyan Foundation, n.d.; Mapp et al., 2017; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Paredes, 2010). Therefore, it is imperative that all educational professionals in the region have access to a quality, and contextualized, professional learning opportunity (Spielberg, 2011; Weiss et al., 2018; Wood & Bauman, 2017) such as this course. Thus, capitalizing on the positive relationship between increased family engagement and increased student achievement.

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