

Family Involvement and Engagement Program at Hardy Elementary School

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Abstract

Students living in lower socioeconomic status neighborhoods are often behind their peers in academic achievement, including slow growth from the previous year (Mangrum, 2018). These same students often lack the family involvement in their education and are missing out on a positive relationship between their family and school, one contributor to their lower academic performance. Hardy Elementary School is located in a low socioeconomic area in Chattanooga, Tennessee and the students who attend grades Pre-K through fifth grade experience both low academic performance and minimal family involvement. The focus of this program proposal is to identify and overcome barriers of the students' families that hamper involvement and engagement in their child's education, specifically at Hardy Elementary. Surveys will be completed by caregivers and school faculty to identify reasons for current level of involvement, availability, topics of interest and other relevant information. The data generated from the surveys will be analyzed and the Family Involvement and Engagement Program at Hardy Elementary School will be designed and implemented based on the data received. The key components of the program include monthly theme nights and take-home activities, two opportunities for the family to be involved and engaged with their child and their child's school, while receiving helpful and relevant information. Caregiver involvement will be measured by the number of attendees and participants at school activities and events. The increased involvement will then be compared to the rate of academic improvement for the students at Hardy Elementary

and this will be evaluated in May 2021, after state standardized testing and school reading benchmarks are completed and the results are received.

Key words: family involvement, engagement, academic achievement, elementary school, survey

Background of the Problem

Living in poverty often leads to low academic achievement, identified by low standardized test scores, less completion of post-secondary school, and increased high school drop-out rates (Hair, Hanson, Wolfe & Pollak, 2015). Research has identified three main contributors for low academic performance including institutional resources, relationships, and physical risk (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). One example of how institutional resources affect students living in low SES neighborhoods is the prevalence of poor- quality child-care facilities that do not adequately prepare children for formal education (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Physical risk contributes to low academic achievement and is indicated by poor prenatal care, drug and alcohol abuse, higher rate of mental illness, and poor nutrition (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Adversely, positive, healthy relationships are linked to increased academic achievement, and furthermore, family structure plays an important role (Oulhote & Grandjean, 2016). Thomson and McLanahan (2012) stated that children living with single parent mothers had less support, worse health, and fewer resources than those children who live with two parents and these outcomes contribute to the low academic results.

The broad issue of low academic achievement of children who attend schools in low SES neighborhoods in Hamilton County, Tennessee is the initial problem that this program proposal

seeks to study. Many of the schools in the Chattanooga SES neighborhoods are located in a geographic area called the Opportunity Zone, and they are behind their peers in expected student growth from the previous year (Mangrum, 2018). There are many factors that contribute to this issue such as instability of households, drug use, high rate of single parents, poor nutrition, high rate of teacher and administration turnover, parents working multiple jobs causing them to be absent from the home and low rate of parental involvement in the schools. From this list of factors that contribute to low academic achievement, the research team targeted the low parental involvement and designed a program that aims at increasing that involvement, specifically at Hardy Elementary School. As a result, the academic achievement of the students is expected to improve.

Targeted Need

Existing research has shown that parental school involvement is related to a student's academic success (Benner, Boyle & Sadler, 2016). Studies show that parental involvement positively affects the learning outcomes of children (McQuiggan, 2017; Sheldon, 2015). According to Robin Bambrey, the principal of Hardy Elementary, an elementary school in Hamilton County's Opportunity Zone, the student body consists of 440 students enrolled in 2019, with approximately 210 families (personal communication, September 2, 2019). At the last parent night held by Hardy, a record attendance of 50 families were present (R. Bambrey, personal communication, September 2, 2019). Parent teacher conferences see an average of five parents for each class and the classes range from 17-21 students (R. Bambrey, personal communication, September 2, 2019). While attempting to form a PTA last year, three families joined and this year, the number of families increased to nine (R. Bambrey, personal

communication, September 2, 2019). As a result of the low number of families getting involved at Hardy Elementary, the goal of this program proposal is to increase caregiver involvement in an effort to improve academic achievement of the students.

Targeted Population

The target population are the caregivers of students attending Hardy Elementary School in Chattanooga, TN. Caregivers include parents, grandparents, foster parents, relatives, or other legal guardians who have at least one child enrolled at Hardy Elementary School in Chattanooga, TN. These caregivers are part of the local community who live within the Hardy Elementary school zone. Within the entire community of Chattanooga, the ethnic demographic is 61% Caucasian and the remaining 39% are from an ethnic minority (United States Census Bureau, 2018). The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) recorded 509 as the total number of students enrolled at Hardy Elementary, 29, or .05% who were White, 475, or 93% who were Black and five students from other or mixed ethnic backgrounds. These statistics demonstrate that the demographics for the city of Chattanooga do not reflect the demographics of this one elementary school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). English is the primary language within this population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Existing Service Programs

Currently there are several opportunities that Hardy Elementary offers to gain family support, including forming a Parent/Teacher Association (PTA), literacy and math nights, parent/teacher conferences, and a Back to School Bash (Hardy Elementary, 2019). Literacy and Math nights are held once a year to provide opportunities for students to display and explain their work in these subjects to their families. Families were invited to the school to share in their child's

accomplishments while also engaging in fun, subject related activities. Parent-teacher conferences are held at the school during morning, afternoon, and evening hours in order to meet with those parents that wanted to speak to teachers in a private setting to discuss the progress and needs of their child. The Back to School Bash is usually held within the first thirty days of school and is a night that the families are invited to the school to meet their child's teacher, see the classroom and review the expectations the teacher has for the students. There are no programs in the community that focus on helping caregivers become more involved in their child's education, however online resources such as ptotoday.com allow caregivers to explore ways to connect with their child to create a positive academic relationship. Tips on parenting can also be found at this website.

Uniqueness of the Program

The name of the program that will be implemented at Hardy Elementary School is the "Family Involvement and Engagement Program". The program goal is to improve the students' academic achievement at this Hamilton County low SES school. The focus is to strengthen the connection between Hardy Elementary and its families by eliciting involvement in school activities. It will also foster a positive learning environment in the students' homes by encouraging family engagement. By offering these methods simultaneously more families can participate, regardless of their schedule or resources (Larson, 2017). After collaboration with the principal of Hardy Elementary, Robin Bambrey, a needs assessment will be conducted to determine how the students would most benefit from involving families in their education. In the meantime, existing research shows that providing opportunities for parents to engage at the school during both day and evening hours, to collaborate with faculty on identifying a need they

see as important, and to entice them with an incentive to participate are effective strategies to increase involvement (Poza, Brooks, & Valdés, 2014).

Program Description

The foundation of the program is built on monthly theme nights, which will include a topic of interest, food, and an explanation of activities that students can engage in with their families at home throughout the month. While we have ideas for some of the themes, cooking or money for example, we agree with Emerson, Fear, Fox and Sanders (2012) that participation will be maximized if we encourage the collaboration of the families to determine their needs and interests regarding the topics. This will best be determined from a survey that would be available online and in paper form, distributed at the school and on school websites and social media pages. The program will operate on a reward system for families and credit would be earned by attending school events and engaging in the learning opportunities that are sent home.

Families will be invited to the theme nights by either printed or mailed invitations sent home with students, phone calls or in-person home visits. Home visits are time consuming and would therefore, be used in circumstances when a family is going through a difficult time or has not been engaging with the school. This determination will be made by the teachers with approval from administration.

Each theme night will include a speaker discussing the particular topic, choosing a speaker from the community or Hardy family when appropriate. Food will be part of each theme night as well, utilizing the cafeteria as needed and calling upon the existing volunteer base of RockPoint church and local high school students. More volunteers will be sought out as the need arises.

One part of the program includes the theme related design and implementation of activities that can be done with ease at home, engaging in fun, positive learning opportunities. These activities will not be required homework assignments but will instead be optional opportunities for parents and students to earn credit. Activities will be created by grade level teachers, with the assistance of volunteers if requested, and will be explained at the monthly meetings. Families will have opportunities to receive the needed supplies for the activities that correspond to their child's grade level. These family activities may be worked on at any time throughout that month, increasing the likelihood of participation.

The final component of Family Involvement and Engagement at Hardy Elementary includes the reward system. Credit will be earned at the various events and opportunities throughout the year in the form of points. The points can then be spent by the family after each quarter, which is equivalent to eight-week increments. The community will be called upon to donate services, gifts, and gift cards for fun or useful activities for the families, such as local restaurants, bowling, movie tickets or rock climbing. This reward system has the potential to be automated with a computer application which would be used to give credit to families and allow them to use the application to request their reward. There would also be a printed system that would be available to families that are unable to access the technology.

An example of a theme night planned around the topic of money:

- The printed invitations will be on a dollar bill template.
- The speaker could discuss budgeting or tips on how Hardy families can save money.
- The food could be made from low cost recipes, with recipes made available to the families.

- The home activities would be money related, for example: Kindergarten: naming and sorting coins; 2nd Grade: counting money and operating a 'store' at home where money will be exchanged; 5th Grade: Write and act out a play in which money is the main topic.

Other Programs

There are many initiatives and programs that seek to increase student achievement by focusing on the curriculum, teaching strategies, or administrative policies. For example, Hirn, Hollo, and Scott (2018) studied teaching styles and their effect on academic achievement. Hamilton County, TN reached improvement goals set by new superintendent Dr. Bryan Johnson after he grouped twelve low performing schools into the newly formed Opportunity Zone and provided intensive coaching, recruitment of high-quality teachers and increased learning opportunities (HCDE, 2018).

Hardy Elementary is located at 2100 Glass St in Chattanooga, TN on the city's east side. Also located on or near this side of town are several agencies that provide some form of support to the students and faculty, including some that seek to improve academic achievement. Centerstone Counseling has an office at Hardy Elementary and staffs it with a full-time counselor. Big Brothers Big Sisters matches volunteers with individual students to provide a supportive, caring person that meets regularly with a selected student at the school. Love Fellowship offers after-school tutoring four days a week in the classrooms at Hardy Elementary. There is also an after-school club that offers students the opportunity to learn karate, technology, drums and varying other interests. RockPoint Church provides a unique service to Hardy Elementary in that their members care for the faculty by showering them with gifts, sending volunteers to help in the classroom, participating in facility improvement projects, providing

needed supplies, and bringing food to the faculty. All of these services seek to enrich the lives of the students attending Hardy Elementary and some of them specifically target improving academic achievement.

The administration leads the faculty in offering activities at the school to engage the families, such as Literacy and Math nights, Parent-Teacher Association meetings, parent conferences, and a Back to School night in the fall. The Family Involvement and Engagement Program is different than any program that is operating in or near Hardy Elementary because it will focus on connecting families to the school, while also nurturing the relationship between the students and their families through engaging learning activities. Parents and guardians will be rewarded for making school engagement a priority, while seeking to encourage collaboration in education and improving lines of communication.

Unique Approach

The Family Involvement and Engagement Program seeks to increase academic achievement, but it offers a unique focus by encouraging families to become more connected to the school. Additionally, the program includes efforts to increase caregiver engagement, not only caregiver involvement. Another unique feature of the program is that it will promote communication between faculty and families with in-home visits, phone calls, special events at the school and post cards, all elements that were included in the efforts of three Lincoln Heights Middle School seventh grade teachers as they engaged parents in positive ways (Greene & Voiles, 2016). Lastly, the program encourages family involvement by rewarding families for spending time on the activities and events that will potentially lead to increased academic achievement of their children.

Literature Review and Evidence-Based Practices

Problem Statement

From the information available about the student population at Hardy Elementary, their standardized academic scores and reading benchmarks are lower than other students in the Hamilton County (TN Department of Education, 2018). Existing research also shows that parental involvement within the school context, family support and availability to their child contributes to increased academic achievement. Since it is not possible to assume the needs of all caregivers and the circumstances that prevent them from engaging with their child, it is important for this proposal to explore the unique needs of the family environment when implementing the Family Involvement and Engagement Program at Hardy Elementary. Some considerations will be varying the day of the week that the monthly theme nights are held to allow for busy schedules and putting all printed materials at or below a fifth-grade reading level to account for families who are literacy challenged. Other considerations will be added as becomes necessary.

Needs Assessment Research Plan

The data from last year's family involvement at events and activities will serve as a benchmark to indicate if there is a correlation between the Family Involvement and Engagement Program and the level of family involvement this year at Hardy Elementary. According to Robin Bambrey, the principal of Hardy Elementary School, the information below indicates parental involvement in activities and events held during the 2018-19 school year:

- 50 families attended a school-wide parent night

- 33 families attended the school-wide literacy night
- Classrooms averaged five families at parent-teacher conferences with class sizes ranging from 17-21 students each
- Staff attempted to form a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and three families joined. This school year currently has nine families signed up as members of the PTA. (R. Bambrey, personal communication, September 2, 2019)

Article 4, Section 8 of the Hamilton County PTA Council bylaws require a new local PTA unit to have a minimum of eight members and that the membership must maintain at least twenty members in subsequent years (Hamilton County Council of PTAs, 2019). In order for Hardy Elementary to maintain a local PTA unit under Hamilton County's PTA next year, it will be required to increase membership from nine to twenty.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this need's assessment is to find out which activities and events should be incorporated into the family involvement and engagement program. Careful attention will be given to ensuring that the program activities do not pose significant barriers which would prevent family involvement, including financial obligation, scheduling, or a need for childcare. Collaboration with the families on planning the activities and events will likely increase the level of involvement by the families (Larson, 2017). For example, when choosing the topic and guest speaker for a particular theme night, a needs assessment will be used to provide insight and guidance in finding one that is of interest and benefit to the families. An important goal of the planning process is to allow families to see the value of their involvement and engagement in their child's education. The ultimate goal of gaining family involvement in school activities is to

develop a positive relationship between families and school staff. Research has demonstrated that a positive relationship and increased involvement by families helps to increase academic achievement of students at the school (Rogers, Maxwell, & Robinson, 2018).

After surveying the caregivers and staff, the results of this research will show the topics that are of interest to families who have students at Hardy Elementary School. The results of this survey will also identify the best times to hold school events in order to gain increased participation. Lastly, this survey expects to identify volunteers that will join in the planning and implementation of The Family Involvement and Engagement Program at Hardy Elementary, a new program to increase family participation at the school.

Research Question

What activities and events, including the implementation methods of such activities and events, would cause an increase in involvement and engagement by families of students at Hardy Elementary School for the 2019-2020 school year?

Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no relationship between the design and implementation of family activities and events at Hardy Elementary and the amount of family involvement in those activities

H₁: There is a relationship between the design and implementation of family activities and events at Hardy Elementary and the amount of family involvement in those activities.

Research Variables

Independent variable/s (IV). The activities and events that are part of the family involvement and engagement program including:

- Themed nights once a month (food and activity included for free)

- Professional speakers to present material at each event
- Take-home family activities
- Rewards used as incentives for participation

Dependent variable/s (DV). The level of participation of families in the activities and events that are part of the family involvement and engagement program including:

- Parent/Teacher conferences
- Literacy and Math nights
- Monthly Themed nights
- Completion of take-home activities
- Chaperones for field trips
- Volunteers at individual class events (parties, special projects, etc.).

Controlled variable/s (CV). Variables that can be controlled by the study:

- Welcoming atmosphere of school
- Grade level of student

Extraneous variable/s (EV). Variables outside of the study's control including:

- family schedules
- access to transportation
- number of children in a family unit
- parent/guardian's level of education
- low socioeconomic status
- disabilities

Methodology

A mixed methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative designs will be used to determine the activities and events that will generate increased involvement by the families of students at Hardy Elementary School. Quantitative data, such as the number of times a family member has been to the school, attended a parent-teacher conference, received a phone call from a teacher and questions that seek to identify the reasons for not attending school events will be helpful to determine the existing culture of family involvement at Hardy Elementary. But it will require qualitative data, such as ideas for future activities, further explanation of the questions, and especially an opportunity to demonstrate the desire and need for involvement by the families to improve family engagement at Hardy Elementary. This data will be gathered primarily through survey (See Appendix A).

Population and Sampling

This program proposal seeks to survey two groups of people, the caregivers of students at Hardy Elementary School and the faculty. The group of caregivers might include parents, grandparents, foster parents, guardians, and any other adults who are stakeholders in the lives of children who attend Hardy Elementary. The faculty might include teachers, administration, support personnel and any other faculty member who chooses to share her/his opinion on family involvement at Hardy Elementary. It is important to gain experiences and viewpoints from both faculty and families in order to design activities and events that benefit the families as well as the students. The survey is open to participants aged 18 or older, so any caregivers who are under age 18 will be excluded. Participants under age 18 are minors and would therefore, need parental consent to participate. Since the number of participants would be minimal, parental consent is not being offered.

The surveys will be made available to the families and staff at Hardy Elementary in several ways, including a printed copy sent home with students and placed in the school's front office. There will also be an online version of the survey that will be advertised and easily accessed on the school's website and Facebook page. Posters advertising the survey will be placed in the front office and signs will be posted outside during carline with a large QR code printed on them. The QR code will link users to the electronic survey on the school's website.

Data Collection and Analysis Plan

Data Collection

Following authorization of this program proposal, participants will have the opportunity to complete the survey by utilizing a printed copy or an online version which can be accessed via the school website, the school Facebook page or by using the QR code linked to the survey. Before the online survey can be accessed, the participant must acknowledge that the informed consent has been read and agreed to. Completed online surveys will be electronically sent to the researcher's email without any identifiers, keeping responses anonymous.

Once the online survey has been completed and submitted, an option to request an interview from a member of the research team will be asked, explaining that the purpose of the interview is to gather further details of their responses and ideas. If the participant chooses to proceed to the interview, there will be an opportunity for contact information and best available times to be given. A researcher will then contact the participant to gather any additional information the participant wishes to share. During the interview, notes will be taken by the researcher and will be stored on a Google document shared with the research team only.

Participants who choose to use the paper survey will have the Informed Consent attached

to the survey. There is a statement on the top of the survey that reads, "Completion of this survey acknowledges receipt and agreement of the Informed Consent." Completed printed survey copies can either be mailed to a PO Box monitored by the Research team, dropped in a locked box located in the front entryway at Hardy Elementary, returned to the office by the student or scanned and emailed to a member of the research team. The box will be emptied by members of the research team two times a week.

Data Analysis

This proposal will utilize a mixed methods approach to identify the elements that will make up the Family Involvement and Engagement Program at Hardy Elementary, engaging in surveys and interviews. Three types of questions will be utilized on the survey, grouping them by type including fill in the blank, Likert scaled responses and an option to circle all answers that apply.

The information that is gathered by utilizing fill in the blanks will be analyzed by counting the characteristics for each variable, also known as frequency. The responses that are provided by utilizing the Likert scale will be summarized with descriptive statistics to detail the observations noted from those responses. The final data to be analyzed is the qualitative responses provided from interviews and questions that require the participant to circle all that apply. This data will be coded by identifying common themes and further breaking those themes into categories.

Ethical Considerations

By participating, researchers are aware of the possibility that negative viewpoints and sentiments toward the school and families may be discussed and participants could become

disenchanted with each other. These sentiments will be minimized by protecting the identity of all participants, both families and faculty and properly training the research team (Appendix E). Demonstrating the value of each participant by giving them a voice to explain their experiences and share their ideas should also minimize negative sentiments. Since the survey is anonymous, no personal risks to the relationship between students, families and faculty are expected.

All survey submissions will remain anonymous as participants are instructed to exclude their names from the completed survey. If any names are included on the surveys, they will be immediately removed by a member of the research team. Printed surveys will either be mailed to a PO Box monitored by the Research team, dropped in a locked box located in the front entryway at Hardy Elementary or scanned and emailed to a member of the research team. The box will be emptied by members of the research team two times a week. Completed online surveys will be electronically sent to the researcher's email without any identifiers, keeping responses anonymous.

If a participant chooses to meet with a member of the research team to discuss viewpoints and ideas further, a referral portion will be torn off, completed, and returned to the research team using the options detailed above. Contact information will only be utilized by a member of the research team to coordinate the interview. If the participant chooses to be considered as a volunteer for the program, their contact information will be put in a file for future use. All participant contact information will be stored separately from the interview notes and there will be no connection between the two.

While names will not be used during the collection of data, the information provided however, could be used for future research studies, or distributed to another investigator for

further study without additional informed consent. Any data provided for future research will not include names or other identifiers.

Program Goals and Objectives

By the end of The Family Involvement and Engagement Program, family involvement will increase by 50% as measured by the number of families that join the PTA and attend family/teacher conferences, as compared to the 2018-19 school year, and participate in the monthly Theme Nights compared to the first month. By the end of The Family Involvement and Engagement Program, 41% of students will be reading on grade level as assessed by the TNReady exam and Fountas & Pinnell reading benchmark given in May 2021.

Stakeholder Analysis

In order to have a successful program it is important to identify those people who will have an influence on the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of the program. Stakeholders were carefully considered to include each group or individual which will have an influence on the program. Each stakeholder is listed in the section that follows and includes a description of the stakeholder, access, and method of contact, as well as engagement strategy. For the complete stakeholder analysis matrix see Appendix B.

Caregivers

The first stakeholder group is the caregivers. These are the parents, grandparents, guardians, and foster parents who have vested control and interest in the student. The access and method in which they will be contacted for this program is via the survey which can be accessed electronically or in print. Optional interviews are available for caregivers who would like to discuss detailed information and these interviews will be conducted either in person or over the

phone.

The engagement strategy for caregivers will be a high level of involvement in the planning of the program, beginning with the surveys and interviews. Once the program is ready to be implemented, caregivers will be invited to attend the monthly theme nights and will be engaging in the take-home activities with their students. By having a voice in the planning of the Family Involvement and Engagement Program, caregivers are expected to be more involved in the student's learning.

Faculty

Faculty is the second group of stakeholders and includes teachers and non-academic staff, including office staff, counselors, classroom aides, cafeteria workers, and the janitor. This group will be contacted via email and school meetings. In order to engage the faculty each individual will be invited to complete the survey at the Needs Assessment phase. They will then have a role in the Family Nights that will be held at the school each month. Teachers will be involved in designing the take-home activities that will be tailored to students in each grade.

Administration

The third group of stakeholders is the administration at Hardy Elementary School. This includes the principal and assistant principal. The access and method for relaying information about this program to them will be direct through emails and meetings. The administration will also be copied on emails that are distributed regarding the program.

The engagement strategy for this administration will be to involve them in developing the program and they will have the authority to make final decisions as to the content of program materials and activities. They will take responsibility for holding faculty accountable to

participating and completing assigned tasks. The administration will initiate communication with Saunya Goss and explain the program to the leaders of the Opportunity Zone.

Students

The fourth group of stakeholders are the students who attend Hardy Elementary from grades Pre-K - 5. The access and method for these students is to give surveys to their caregivers as well as return completed surveys from their caregivers as requested. The students will participate with their families in the take-home activities assigned as well as accompany their families to the Parent Night. The students will be fully engaged in this program through attendance at every event with their family as well as participating in take-home activities.

Hamilton County School Board (HCSB)

The fifth group of stakeholders are the nine elected members of the board including, Tiffanie Robinson who is Hardy Elementary School's representative and the primary focus for access, method, and engagement with this stakeholder group. Access and method of contact for Ms. Robinson will be via email. She will be informed of the Family Involvement and Engagement Program after the planning process is complete and the implementation has begun.

Ms. Robinson will be engaged at a low level as she will be made aware of the new program for the purpose of securing financial resources from the HCSB to help with the implementation during the next school year. There may come a time in the future when the local media will be invited to write a story about the positive relationship between Hardy Elementary School's faculty and families. At this juncture, it would be beneficial and wise for Ms. Robinson to be prepared to respond to questions about the new program in her district.

Hamilton County School Superintendent

The current Hamilton County School Superintendent is Dr. Bryan Johnson. Dr. Johnson will be informed of the Family Involvement and Engagement Program via email after the planning and implementation of the program is complete. Dr. Johnson's engagement with the program is at a low level. He will be made aware of the program once it has proven to be successful. At that point, it would be beneficial for Dr. Johnson to know the details of the program for the purpose of replicating it in other schools that experience low family involvement.

Community Resources

The community resources are a group of stakeholders which includes volunteers and local agencies that will present and speak at school events, donate to school needs, and provide childcare during events. These agencies and volunteers include Rockpoint Church, Big Sisters & Big Brothers, Hope Fellowship Tutors, and Baylor School students. Other resources will be identified once the survey data is analyzed. The method of communication with these agencies and volunteers will be determined by best means of communication with that particular group. This will include telephone, email, and in person meetings to help establish new relationships and nurture existing relationships.

The people affiliated with the community resources will be very involved in the planning and implementation of the actual program. They will be crucial to the success of the Parent Nights and their partnership will be a high priority. However, these resources will not be utilized during the needs assessment phase of conducting the surveys and interviews.

Opportunity Zone Leadership

The stakeholder in the opportunity zone leadership is Saunya Goss, Director of

Elementary Schools for the Opportunity Zone. She will be notified about the Family Involvement and Engagement Program by Mrs. Bambrey, Hardy's principal. Since the Opportunity Zone oversees many activities and programs at Hardy Elementary, Ms. Goss will be notified by email periodically with updates as to the progress of the program. As far as the engagement strategy, Ms. Goss will not be asked to be actively involved in the development or implementation of the program, but any suggestions and ideas she offers will be considered.

Possible Opposition

It is possible that the Opportunity Zone's leadership might pose some opposition to the design and implementation of the program, as they tend to micromanage the schools in their zone. To address this possibility, Mrs. Bambrey, who already has a relationship with them, will initiate discussion about the program. From that point, the research team will keep Ms. Goss updated on the progress of the program. If Ms. Goss makes suggestions, they will be considered and if productive, they will be implemented.

There is likely to be some opposition to the program from some of the families who have a negative impression of Hardy, which may be based on past experiences. The research team will demonstrate understanding for their feelings and explain the important role they will be able to play in the new program. By doing this, the research team is hopeful that some of these families will choose to get involved.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

The people who are a strength to this program are the volunteers who are established at Hardy Elementary and they will be utilized by the research team in the implementation of this

program. These include volunteers from the following locations, Rockpoint Church, Big Sisters & Big Brothers, Hope Fellowship Tutors, and Baylor School students. In addition, all program activities will take place at the existing school facility. Volunteers who have special skills will be utilized to provide those things during each meeting.

Resources which are already in place for this program and are considered areas of strength include the program's implementation at the school facility at Hardy Elementary which is within the community this program will serve. The research team will also have access to communication with parents through existing school networks.

Weaknesses

Although the desire to participate in building an engaging environment for families at Hardy Elementary may be strong, a problem of limited volunteers exists. Considering that volunteers are individuals with busy schedules, another challenge faced is their availability during events. For families who face the challenge of taking care of more than one child, it would be appropriate for the Family Involvement and Engagement Program to have childcare opportunities. However, funding for childcare is missing as is funding for transportation, as families may be unable to find reliable transportation to and from the event. The research team will look into a grant provided by the U.S. Department of Education (2019) which includes a requirement to develop and implement a program with the parents at the school that engages parental involvement. Another weakness within the program is the number of volunteers. The research team plans to stop this weakness by advertising and calling additional sources of volunteers throughout the community in addition to people who may be interested in volunteering from other local organizations. Lastly, obtaining guest speakers may present a

challenge since they may not be compensated for their material or time.

Opportunities

The research team expects that the more engaged the parents become, the more support they will provide through advocating for the students' needs. If this program is successful, it could be replicated and implemented across the county which would in turn give Hardy Elementary recognition as well as potential sources for more funding. The research team will focus on publicizing the success of the program in order to secure additional funding for Hardy Elementary, as well as draw the attention of parents and teachers outside the community who may become interested in involvement at Hardy Elementary.

There is the potential that if the program is successful, it could attract more teachers who want to teach at Hardy. This would present the administration with more applicants, allowing them the ability to choose the most qualified teachers, contributing to a more constant teacher hire rate and less turnover.

Threats

The threats to the program include transportation for parents, and childcare for additional siblings of students. These will be defended against by asking volunteers to be available for childcare and requesting that local organizations become involved by donating time and resources to ensure transportation can either be paid for by the program or provided.

Since the topics for each meeting will not be decided until after the initial survey is complete, a threat to the program will be finding appropriate speakers who are willing to volunteer and have availability to be involved with implementation of "Theme Nights." Caregivers may not have reliable sources of transportation so this could threaten program

attendance and involvement. To combat this, funds are being sought to provide a bus to bring families to the school for theme nights and return them home at the completion. Another possible threat could come from the caregivers themselves. Some caregivers have a negative view of Hardy Elementary School and this attitude could potentially deter them from choosing to get involved in the planned activities and events and possibly spread to other families. In addition to this, caregivers may feel they do not have the time to attend any theme nights or school activities due to their many other obligations.

Work with local companies to help fund activities, freebees, and food. Consider that meals do not have to be donated from the same source: get a side at one restaurant and desert from another. Consider partners in education. Chattanooga's local power company has the capacity to provide burgers or write a check for a large amount of money. Often large companies need to make community connections and smaller companies are happy to get their name known in the community. Even if businesses cannot offer funding at a specific time, invite them to scheduled events. Solicit community leaders in school to show the impact of their donations on the day to day experience of students.

Evaluation Plan

The students who attend Hardy Elementary School and their families are the direct recipients of the program. The students include those who are enrolled in grades Pre-K through fifth grade. The families of these students include the caregivers and other supportive relatives who may live in the home or have a vested interest in the student. The inputs and outcomes of the program are described below and pictured in the Logic Model (Appendix D).

Activity 1: Completed Surveys

Surveys were completed by caregivers and teachers of some of the students at Hardy Elementary School. The purpose of the survey was to assess the current relationships between the school and families, and to gain insight on family interests and availability with the plan to increase involvement and engagement with the school. These surveys will be used to create lessons for students to complete with their family as take-home activities and design the monthly theme nights that will be held at the school. By creating theme nights that are beneficial and of interest, a significant number of caregivers, estimated at 10% of the 195 families, will attend events at the school with their child. In addition to the theme nights, events that are expected to see a rise in attendance include teacher conferences, student celebrations, workdays, and class trips. When families feel positively connected to their child's school, their involvement positively affects their child's academic performance.

Activity 2: Community Resources

Community resources will involve local organizations and volunteers, many who are already working with Hardy Elementary, such as Big Brothers and Sisters, Rockpoint Church, Boys and Girls Club of Chattanooga and others. These community resources are invaluable to the theme nights within the program, as they will contribute to and staff the refreshment tables and provide childcare. Additionally, volunteers who are experts in the field will speak on topics related to the monthly theme nights. By utilizing existing community resources and bridging new relationships, the program will be staffed by people committed to the success of the program, resulting in positive and successful events. As word spreads about the fun and informative monthly theme nights, families will return and new families will join, resulting in a positive connection and increased attendance at school events. This increased attendance will contribute

to the increased academic achievement by the students.

Activity 3: Teacher Planning

During professional development, the week before school begins, teachers will draft learning activities for students and take-home activities for students and their families that correspond with the theme for the monthly event. By involving the family in a learning activity with the student, an opportunity for positive learning will be available. Creative, engaging, low-maintenance and relevant lessons will excite students and families about learning and likely increase participation. Increased participation by families in their child's learning will contribute to an increased academic achievement.

Activity 4: Training

Training will be given to faculty and staff of Hardy Elementary during the week of professional development. By providing the training prior to the start of school, teachers are given the opportunity to create appropriate learning activities and take-home activities for their students that correlate with the topic of the theme night and are not burdened by this task during the school year. The training provided will give the teachers the time and tools needed to competently and effectively plan these lessons. Quality lessons will enrich the students' education, generate increased participation by families and lead to an overall increase in academic achievement of the students.

Activity 5: Refreshments

In order to increase attendance at the monthly theme nights, refreshments will be offered. Since the families have busy schedules and many will be coming from work, nutritious food will be provided by community donors. An option will be available for families who have nut

allergies, dairy and gluten intolerance, and vegetarian diets. By increasing inclusivity, families will be aware of the school's effort to meet the needs of their families toward dietary needs and will be more likely to attend. An increase in involvement and engagement at Hardy Elementary's events will contribute to an increase in the students' academic achievement.

Activity 6: Facility

Using Hardy Elementary School as the location for the monthly theme nights and grade level activities, families have opportunities to feel comfortable entering the building and interacting with the staff, other families, and community volunteers. It also provides a space which can house large groups and is central to the family's homes. The gymnasium provides the opportunity for the guest speaker to reach a large audience, accommodating all families that attend. The classrooms will provide a location for the students to complete their grade level activities and space for the younger children to be cared for by the volunteers. By using the central location of the school and creating a welcoming atmosphere, caregivers are more likely to attend future monthly theme nights. The increased involvement and engagement of families at school events will ultimately lead to an increase in academic achievement.

Activity 7: Setup, Breakdown and Clean-up

The janitor at Hardy Elementary will be responsible for setting up the gymnasium, as he is already on site and paid for the time it will take to do so. Two employees from the custodial company will be hired to clean up after the event to provide a welcoming atmosphere for the families. The volunteers will be utilized to break down the event by putting tables and chairs away. A faculty member will be responsible for setting up and putting away the audio equipment that will be used to provide sound so the audience can hear the welcome address,

announcements, and guest speaker throughout the gym. By providing a clean, welcoming atmosphere, families will have a more positive experience and will be more likely to return the next month. An increase in involvement and engagement at Hardy Elementary's events will contribute to an increase in the students' academic achievement.

Activity 8: Grants / Private Funding

In order to have Theme Night run smoothly, money from the private sources and grant funding is needed to supplement the cost. The money is needed to pay teachers and staff for staying an additional amount of time, paying for janitorial staff to clean up after the event, and compensate guest speakers. The survey will indicate transportation needs and those needs will be addressed with a bus or other transportation options and paid for with this funding.

There will be ten theme nights being hosted at Hardy Elementary throughout the academic school year. Each grade level will prepare ten learning activities for the theme nights, and an additional ten take-home assignments to be given at the conclusion of each event. Community partners such as Subway or Dos Bros will donate refreshments which will provide families with dinner and options for family members with dietary restrictions. Success of the theme nights will be measured by: (1.) the short surveys collected after each theme night, (2.) an increase in the number of families who attend each theme night, and (3.) with a goal of 10% of Hardy families attending on average throughout the school year. The funding will be measured by the amount of money that is secured compared to the amount that was requested.

The most direct data source to measure intervention outcomes will come from the caregivers and staff who attend the monthly theme nights. Short surveys will be distributed to caregivers and staff and they will be collected before they exit the school. The surveys will

contribute to obtaining a count of the number of families in attendance, as well as valuable feedback about the evening and input into the design and restructure of future theme nights.

The sign-in sheet, number of students participating in grade level activities, and the surveys will provide an accurate measure of attendance for the evening and this number will be compared to previous events to assess whether attendance has increased. By the end of The Family Involvement and Engagement Program, overall family involvement will be measured by the number of families that join the PTA and attend family/teacher conferences. Participate in take-home activities and attend the monthly theme nights. Similar events will be compared to the 2018-19 school year, and the new programming will be compared to the weeks prior. The results of the attendance and engagement by caregivers is expected to correlate to the overall goal of achieving academic improvement of the students.

Among the 195 families who have students attending Hardy Elementary School in the 2019-2020 school year, a total of 10% of families will participate in school activities designed to increase involvement and engagement at Hardy Elementary School. This involvement will strengthen the relationship between faculty and families and lead to increased academic achievement by the students.

The predicted number of staff and volunteers needed to facilitate one monthly Theme Night is 35, comprised of Hardy faculty and staff, volunteers for childcare and refreshments, the guest speaker and cleaning crew. Each Theme Night will last approximately 1 ½ hours, allowing time for refreshments for the students and families and the activities for the evening, including the grade-level activities for the students and guest speaker for the caregivers.

The week before school begins in August is set aside for classroom setup and

professional development, and it is during this week that the faculty and staff of Hardy Elementary will receive training to explain the program and discuss their roles. This training will include creation of the lesson plans for the semester and ways to promote the program to encourage families and students to attend events. Before Christmas Break, the second part of the training will be done, discussing the results of the prior semester and make adjustments as necessary.

Proposed Program Resources

To effectively conduct the monthly theme nights, material resources are a necessity. In preparation, the survey results will be used to secure guest speakers that will discuss topics that are beneficial and of interest to the families of Hardy Elementary. Lesson plans and take-home activities will be prepared by teachers for students from each grade level during professional development in August. Set-up of the event each month will require a clean school building, tables and chairs arranged as needed and an audio system so that the guest speaker will be heard. Community resources will be utilized to donate refreshments and paper products for the monthly theme nights and volunteers from the community will serve them to the families. Volunteers will also provide childcare so that caregivers can listen to the guest speaker while the children are engaged in learning activities and having fun. Funding for materials that are not donated will come from private donors who support Hardy Elementary School and grant opportunities.

Proposed Sustainability Plan

Because 70% of all assistance given to non-profits is given by individuals, the main focus of this program will be engaging individuals within the community. The relationships that are developed will continue to sustain the program regardless of changes in school administration or

local education agency budgeting. Monthly theme nights will be sustainable through the intentional relationships forged with community partners such as the Boys and Girls Club of Chattanooga, Big Brothers and Sisters, Rockpoint Church, among others. Other community resources will be utilized to provide food for the families and guest speakers who are experts in the topics presented.

Limitations

There are limitations that must be addressed when considering the projected success of the program. The limitations are as follows: the times in which theme nights are implemented may conflict with the availability of caregivers, few volunteers available due to scheduling and personal barriers, unreliable transportation for families, and the speakers chosen to lead out in theme nights are chosen after feedback is received from caregiver survey. There is also the variable that caregivers who do not have a positive view of Hardy Elementary may not wish to attend theme night events. Their choice to refrain from participation may spread to other families, thus reducing attendance rates. Researchers must also account for past relationships with the school and staff, positive or negative, may affect the level of engagement.

Conclusion

The projected outcome and the actual outcome of the Family Involvement and Engagement Program are two separate concepts and should be treated as such. With careful research, preparation, and planned implementation, the researching body behind this project anticipate a rapport will be established between families of Hardy Elementary students and the academic body. Evidence shows that the intentional relationships between schools and homes has a direct effect on the academic performance of a student. Using this information, the success

of the Family Involvement and Engagement Program will be determined by the attendance of at least 10% of families on event night, an increase in caregivers' perceived academic involvement, and a 35% improvement in students' academic scores by the end of the 2019-2020 school year..

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Survey

(Note: This will be printed on a neon colored ½ sheet of paper and stapled to the top of the survey.)

Hardy Elementary School is working to continually strengthen the partnerships between school, family and community. A Family Engagement and Involvement Program is being developed to meet the needs of the students and families at Hardy and **YOUR VOICE IS NEEDED!** In this attached survey, we are interested in learning more about you, your attitudes towards Hardy Elementary and areas of interest or need so that activities and events that are interesting and helpful to you and your family can be developed. In order to be as effective as possible, we are collecting information from caregivers of Hardy's students and Hardy's faculty. *Your response will remain anonymous* if you do not put your name on it.

Your printed survey can either: 1) be mailed to Family Involvement & Engagement Study, % Patti O'Shea, PO Box 548, Chattanooga TN 37406, 2) dropped off to your child's teacher, 3) placed in the locked box located in the front entryway at Hardy Elementary, or 4) scanned and emailed to poshea@southern.edu. The locked box will be emptied by members of the research team, who are the only individuals that have a key.

Family Engagement and Involvement Program Survey
Hardy Elementary School

Completion and submission of the survey indicates that you have read the attached Informed Consent and agree to voluntarily participate.

When answering these questions, please consider your current experiences and those from the past two years. Your identity will not be revealed, so please be as honest as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Submit only one survey per household and consider all caregivers and students in the household when answering the questions. Use the box at the bottom for any notes or additional information. If you would like a member of the independent research team to contact you, complete the slip at the bottom of this survey and return it using the instructions on the cover page. *If you are a teacher or other faculty member, please begin at question #8*

What is your relationship to the Hardy Elementary student? (Circle one)

Caregiver

Teacher

Other Faculty

Household Information (Please fill in the blank)

1. How many children (under age 18) live in your home?

2. How many adults (over the age of 18) live in the home?

3. What language do you speak in your home?

4. Is there anyone in your family unit that has a mental or physical disability? _____

If yes, describe any accommodations needed to attend school activities _____

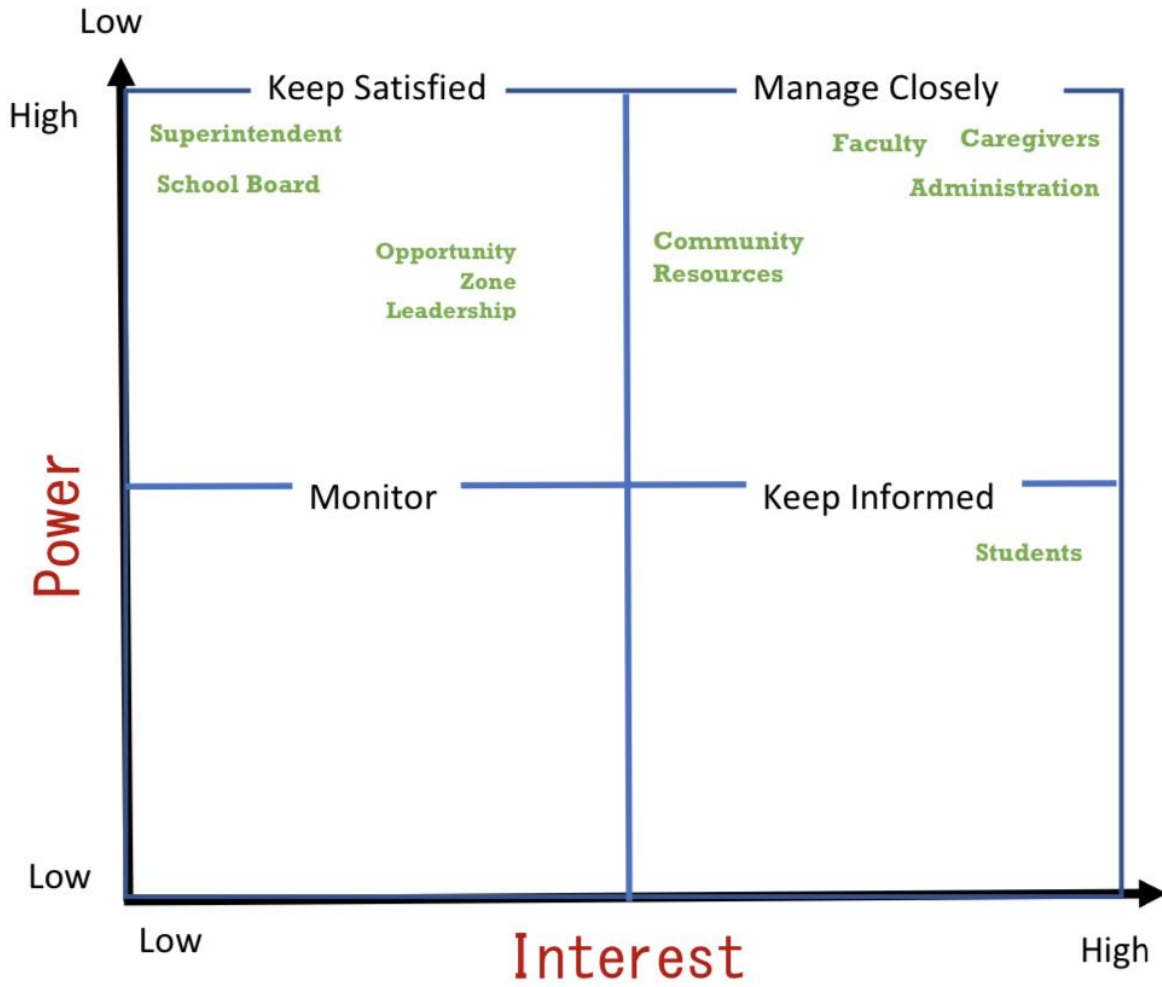
Appendix B: Stakeholder Analysis Table (Matrix)

Stakeholder	Characteristics	Main Interest	Fears and expectations	Potential impact	Priority	Recommendations	Responsibility
<i>Identity of individual or groups.</i>	<i>What sort of person or group are they?</i>	<i>What are their main interests and/or motivations?</i>	<i>What is their potential reaction to the project? What do they expect from the project?</i>	<i>How important is their impact on the project? (low, med, high, critical)</i>	<i>Rank the importance of the stakeholder to the success of the project (critical, high, med, low). Involvement in planning the program.</i>	<i>Implications for your project planning. (e.g. keep informed, involved in planning, etc.)</i>	<i>Who in your cohort will implement the recommendations?</i>
Caregivers	Parents, grandparents, guardians, foster parents who have vested control and interest in the student	The well-being of their children who attend Hardy. They are motivated by helping their child(ren) achieve academic and behavioral success. They also want positive interactions with the staff at the school for their own benefit, as well as their child's.	They may have an initial negative reaction because of a negative history with the school; Lack of interest; They may expect to have to put more time in on their already stretched schedules. Some will be excited to have a voice in the planning and excited for a stronger relationship with the school.	Critical	Critical	Involve in planning and implementation	All
Faculty	Teachers and non-academic staff, including office staff, counselors, classroom aides, cafeteria workers, and the janitor	Helping students succeed academically and socially. Help students achieve test scores that are on grade level or above. Gain support of families of students and engage in positive interactions with the caregivers of their students. Be a positive force at the school and get rehired next year.	Reaction will likely be mixed - excited about getting family involvement, but worried about more demands on their time. They likely won't have high expectations based on history of lack of involvement.	Critical	Critical	Involve in planning and implementation	All
Administration	The principal and assistant principal of Hardy Elementary School	Create a positive atmosphere of support from students' families. Increase caregiver involvement, improve academic achievement and transition out of "Priority" status (getting out from under The Opportunity Zone board).	Excitement and eagerness to see the project succeed and support for the process. They would expect an increase in family involvement.	Critical	Critical	Involve in planning and implementation	Patti & Marie
Students	Children that attend Hardy Elementary from the grades Pre-K - 5	Spend more quality time with families doing fun activities at home for assignments. An opportunity to show-off their work at school to their families.	Students will generally be excited about bringing family to their school to show off their work and meet their teachers. Some will be eager to complete home projects and will likely find it a positive experience. Others will not have the relationships or availability to enjoy these activities. Some will consider it homework and react negatively.	Critical	Low	Involve in implementation on mostly. Very little involvement in planning.	All
Hamilton County School board	The nine members of the board including Tiffanie Robinson who is Hardy Elementary School's representative	Satisfying the people in their districts. For Tiffanie Robinson this includes the caregivers of Hardy's students (who are voters)	The board will react positively since they want positive family connections and support between schools and families. They should expect involvement to improve.	Medium	Low	Keep informed	Liz

time of the day to contact you:

Hamilton County School Superintendent.	Dr. Bryan Johnson	Dr. Johnson is motivated by his pledge to increase academic achievement in the HC schools; The students are his motivation as well as keeping his job	The superintendent will react positively and support the program since he has instituted community liaisons in an effort to gain support from families. He would expect family involvement to increase.	Medium	Low	Keep informed	Susanna
Community Resources	Volunteers & Local agencies that will present and speak at school events; donate to school needs; Rockpoint Church; Big Sisters & Big Brothers; Hope Fellowship Tutors; Baylor School students	Volunteers are motivated by the opportunities to serve people in need. Agencies want to connect people to their agency; By speaking and donating, the agencies hope to get exposure of their agency.	Local volunteers and agencies / organizations will welcome the program because they already spend resources trying to improve the school. They would be eager to get involved.	Critical	Medium	Involve some in planning, but mostly involved in implementation	Susanna
Opportunity Zone Leadership	Saunya Goss, Director of Elementary Schools	Satisfy requirements from the state to achieve academic success for the students	They would first make sure that Reading and Math instruction time is not being disrupted or reduced to implement this program. After scrutinizing the program, they would likely be supportive since it meets with one of their goals to engage caregivers.	Medium	Medium	Keep informed and accept suggestions if offered	Liz

Appendix C: Stakeholder Power-Influence Grid



Appendix D: Logic Model

Inputs(Reso urces)	Outputs		Outcomes (Impact)		
	Activities	Participants (# per month) – then multiply by 9	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Completed Surveys	Collect the surveys that were completed by caregivers and faculty	Caregivers Faculty Research Team	Design the lessons that will be used in the monthly take-home activities and Theme Nights for the entire school year	Engage support and continued involvement of caregivers in students' learning throughout the school year	To increase academic achievement of Hardy students with 41% of students reading on grade level by May 2021
Community Resources	Speak at Theme Night Provide childcare Breakdown the event	(1) Experts in field/topic (6) Volunteers from community (RockPoint Church, Baylor School, TBD)	Bring relevant and helpful information to caregivers each month at Theme Nights Care for children so caregivers can listen to the guest speaker Put chairs and tables away	Engage support and continued involvement of caregivers in students' learning throughout the school year	To increase academic achievement of Hardy students with 41% of students reading on grade level by May 2021
Teachers' planning	Create lesson plans for Theme Night and take-home activities.	All Grade Level Teachers Administration	Engage students in learning to complete prepared lessons for each monthly Theme Night and Take-home activities	Foster a love of learning in students. Engage support and continued involvement of caregivers in students' learning.	To increase academic achievement of Hardy students with 41% of students reading on grade level by May 2021
Training	Explain the program to the faculty and discuss their roles	All Hardy Faculty	Be prepared for the Family Theme Nights and take-home activities for the semester.		
Refreshments	Catering	(3) Volunteers (2) Donors	Provide food and drinks for families that attend monthly Theme Nights	Engage support and continued involvement of caregivers in students' learning	To increase academic achievement of Hardy students with 41% of students reading on grade level by May 2021
Facility (school)	Hold Theme Nights at the school	Administration Janitorial services Guest speaker Teachers (2 per grade level + 2 Related Arts)	Provide a centralized location for parents and staff to meet to engage in monthly Theme Nights	Provide a convenient atmosphere that families enjoy coming to throughout the school year	To increase academic achievement of Hardy students with 41% of students reading on grade level by May 2021
Set up, Break down & Clean-Up	Set up chairs and tables for Theme Nights. Put away chairs and tables after Theme Nights Clean building of trash after Theme Nights Set up audio equipment	Janitor (set up) (2) Employees from the existing janitorial company (clean up) (6) Volunteers to break down table and chairs -(previously included with Community Resources (1)Faculty member (audio equipment)	Provide seating for monthly Theme Nights Maintain a clean and neat environment during and after each monthly Theme Night Provide sound for the speaker to be heard throughout the gym as well as the welcome and announcements. Put the chairs and tables away	Provide a welcoming atmosphere that families enjoy coming to throughout the school year	To increase academic achievement of Hardy students with 41% of students reading on grade level by May 2021
Grants/Private funding	Write a grant for funding and secure donors:	Donors Research Team	Pay for transportation, non-volunteer guest speakers, supplies and other expenses	Sustain the program for the current school year and have funds to begin the next school year	To increase academic achievement of Hardy students with 41% of students reading on grade level by May 2021

Appendix E:Team CITI Training Certificates



Completion Date 30-Sep-2019
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 33507217

This is to certify that:

Elizabeth Mair

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Responsible Conduct of Research (Curriculum Group)
Responsible Conduct of Research (Course Learner Group)
1 - RCR (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Southern Adventist University



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w15b9f215-cb7c-498f-b54c-bbb9be0b721f-33507217



Completion Date 05-Oct-2019
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 33190183

This is to certify that:

Susanna King

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Responsible Conduct of Research (Curriculum Group)
Responsible Conduct of Research (Course Learner Group)
1 - RCR (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Southern Adventist University



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Completion Date 25-Sep-2019
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 33507143

This is to certify that:

Brooklynn Ray

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Responsible Conduct of Research (Curriculum Group)
Responsible Conduct of Research (Course Learner Group)
1 - RCR (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Southern Adventist University



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Completion Date 09-Sep-2019
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 33227322

This is to certify that:

Patricia OSHea

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Responsible Conduct of Research (Curriculum Group)
Responsible Conduct of Research (Course Learner Group)
1 - RCR (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Southern Adventist University



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