

# IHE Quasi-Experiment 2010 Progress Report

## Introduction

During the past several decades, many books, articles, and conferences have reflected the importance of, and have suggested methods for, facilitating an effective parent/family and teacher relationship (Simpson, 1990). Henderson and Mapp (2002) research revealed the following:

- Students with involved parents were more likely to earn higher grades and test scores... be promoted; attend school regularly... and graduate and go on to postsecondary education.
- Programs/interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement and appear to have the greatest affect on student achievement.

Unfortunately, family engagement has not been the focus of preservice education programs. Research shows that 40–50% of new teachers leave teaching within five years due to difficulties they experience in working with families (MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 2004-2005) (Timberlake, 2009).

## Kansas State University Research Study

To address this issue, the Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC) provided funding to several Kansas Institutions of Higher Education (IHE's) to encourage the inclusion and expansion of family engagement in the curricula of preservice education programs. These projects were called IHE Curriculum Enhancement Projects.

In the Fall of 2007, the faculty at Kansas State University (KSU) were recipients of a KPIRC IHE Curriculum Enhancement Award. Preservice teacher candidates in elementary and secondary education received enhanced family engagement instruction in their junior year. The curriculum enhancement planned by the KSU faculty included the following:

- A family engagement video interview with the family of an elementary school student shown to the class.
- A special class on family engagement and ESEA taught by the KPIRC director to provide the teacher candidates with: 1) the latest research on family engagement, 2) an introduction to resources on family engagement for teachers and families, and 3) effective learning strategies/activities parents can use to help their children learn.
- A requirement that teacher candidates conduct a practicum by selecting a family and interviewing them. Each family was asked to complete the PRQ (Parent Relationship Questionnaire) as a pretest of perceived quality of parent – child relationship. The practicum provided a scaffolded experience in which University teacher candidates focused their efforts on working with the family to meet their identified needs.

An integral component of this award was research to determine the efficacy of including additional family engagement and ESEA information in the KSU preservice program curricula. The KPIRC IHE Quasi-Experimental Project—a multi-dimensional, longitudinal research study—evaluated the impact of including family engagement and ESEA/NCLB training in the preservice program at KSU and two other Kansas institutions of higher education, Ottawa University and Baker University. Each university that participated in this research project used a different model for enhancement of family engagement in their

preservice education program. This progress report focuses on the Quasi research conducted at Kansas State University to evaluate their curriculum enhancement efforts.

## **Procedures**

The effects of including family engagement in preservice programs were evaluated using pre-post surveys. These surveys were administered to treatment and non-treatment teacher candidates, who were juniors the semester they received their enhanced teacher training. A post graduation survey was administered after their first year of teaching.

This 2010 progress report focuses on the first group of graduates from Kansas State University, graduates who received family engagement training in the fall of the 2008 academic year (fall 2007-spring 2008). The Kansas State University curriculum model for family engagement and ESEA/NCLB training was to intervene “early” in preservice education at the junior level, therefore, this is the first year that graduates were available for follow-up study.

Graduates in the non-treatment group had the same preservice classroom faculty and curriculum as the treatment group, with the exception of the enhanced family engagement and ESEA/NCLB training. Both groups of graduates—graduates who received enhanced family engagement and ESEA training and those who did not—filled out the same anonymous post graduation survey upon completion of their first year of teaching.

Study results included in this progress report are:

1. Pre-post survey results from original preservice training to provide context for this report; and,
2. Survey results from anonymous, post graduation surveys completed by control and treatment graduates who were teaching during the 2010 academic year (fall 2009 - spring 2010).

## **Rationale**

The rationale behind the inclusion of family engagement and ESEA/NCLB training in preservice programs was a pragmatic one. Including family engagement and NCLB training in preservice training exponentially extended KPIRCs capacity to equip and train teachers to incorporate family engagement into their classrooms, as follows:

When family engagement training was provided to faculty and they enhanced the course curriculum to include family engagement research and best practices, all preservice candidates were trained to implement family engagement practices into their teaching. The impact of providing family engagement and ESEA/NCLB training at the preservice level was exponential: KPIRC provided training to more than 400 teacher candidates in 2008. This was approximately one fourth of the teacher candidates that graduated that year in Kansas. Providing preservice training had the potential of impacting the home school communication of 10,000 students and 20,000 parents once they began teaching, with the long-term, research-indicated outcome of improving student/school academic performance. The formulas to arrive at 10,000 students and 20,000 parents were as follows:  $25 \times 400 = 10,000$  students and  $25 \times 2 \times 400 = 20,000$  parents (the assumptions: 25 students per class, 2 parents per student, times the 400 teachers ). This was a conservative estimate of the numbers that would be impacted because some classes have more than 25 students and some teachers teach more than one class.

## **Survey**

The pre-post survey administered to teacher candidates was developed by KSU faculty member Jim Teagarden and the KPIRC evaluator Suzanne Knorr. It was based upon the principles of the PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (2007) and best practices principles for family engagement and ESEA.

The pre-post survey for this report was distributed online to teacher candidates by KSU faculty. The raw, online pre-post data was uploaded and sent to the KPIRC evaluator to do the compilation, data analysis, comparisons, and charting.

The post graduation survey administered to teacher candidates after they taught for a year was developed collaboratively by the IHE project team. This team included KPIRC director Jane Groff, M.Ed., KPIRC evaluator Suzanne Knorr, Ph.D., KSU faculty member Jim Teagarden, Ph.D., Baker University faculty member Machele Timberlake, Ph.D., and Ottawa University faculty member Mary Ann Benner, Ph.D.

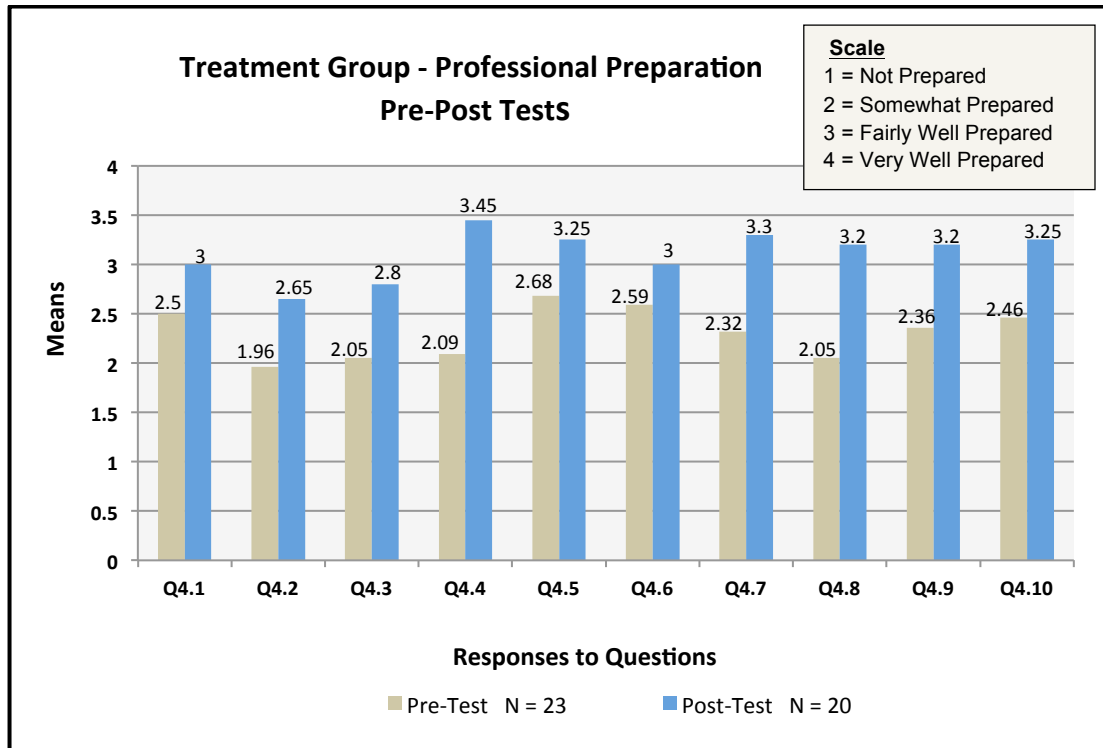
This post graduation survey was distributed online to KSU graduates via Zoomerang by the KPIRC evaluator after the teacher candidates taught for a year. Post graduation survey responses were compiled, analyzed, and charted by the KPIRC evaluator.

## **Data Analysis**

The data in this report was developed by the faculty at KSU and the KPIRC evaluator. The KSU pre-post online survey data was forwarded to the KPIRC evaluator for compilation, analysis, and charting. The post graduation online survey data was collected, analyzed, and charted by the KPIRC evaluator. All results were reported as Means per the protocol established to report the data from earlier IHE research studies at Ottawa University and Baker University.

## RESULTS

### Results of Pre-Post Surveys administered to the Treatment Group during the semester



Q4.1 Ability to work with parents.

Q4.2 Ability to hold effective conferences with parents.

Q4.3 Ability to affect policies related to parental involvement at a building or district level.

Q4.4 An understanding of the parent involvement resource materials available.

Q4.5 An understanding of how to build a classroom or school that is family friendly.

Q4.6 Ability to work with diverse parents and families.

Q4.7 Understanding of the rights afforded families under No Child Left Behind.

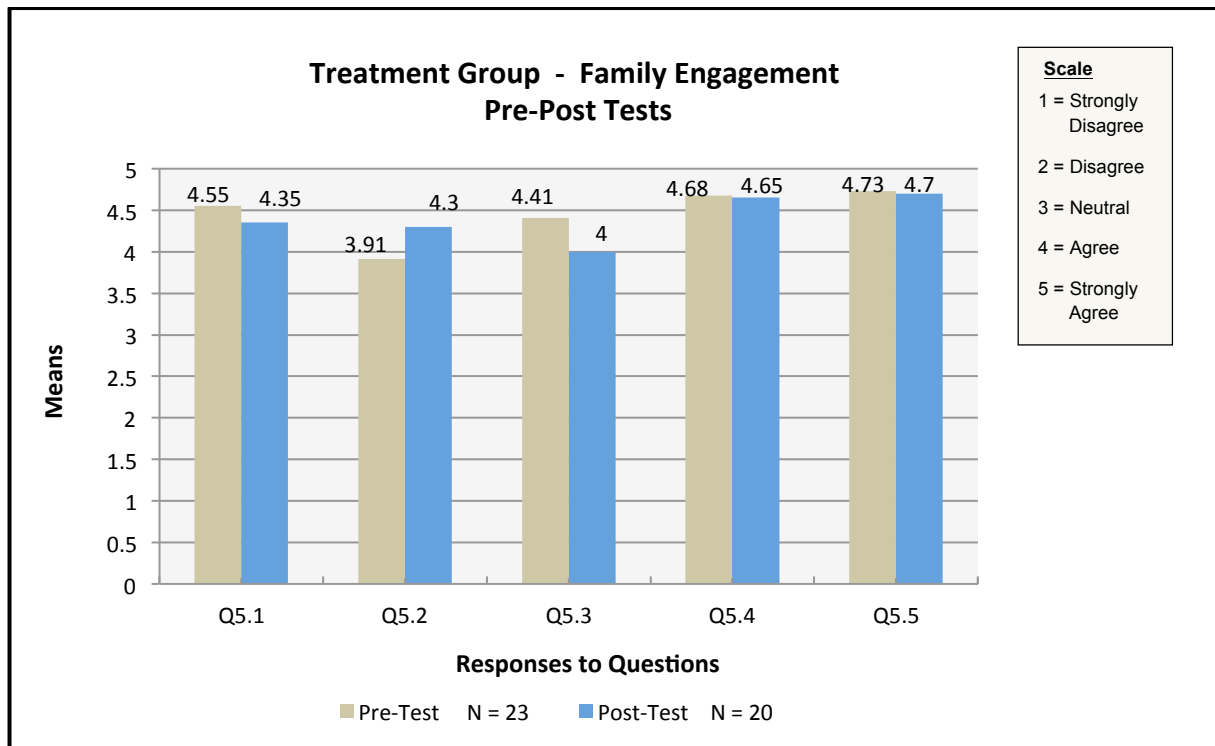
Q4.8 Understanding of the means available to involve parents under Title 1 of No Child Left Behind.

Q4.9 Ability to develop effective strategies to work with parents.

Q4.10 Understanding of the various methods of supporting parental involvement within the school setting.

### **Findings:**

On the post test, teacher candidates in the treatment group overwhelmingly reported that they were prepared to work effectively with parents and families. The results were significant for every question.



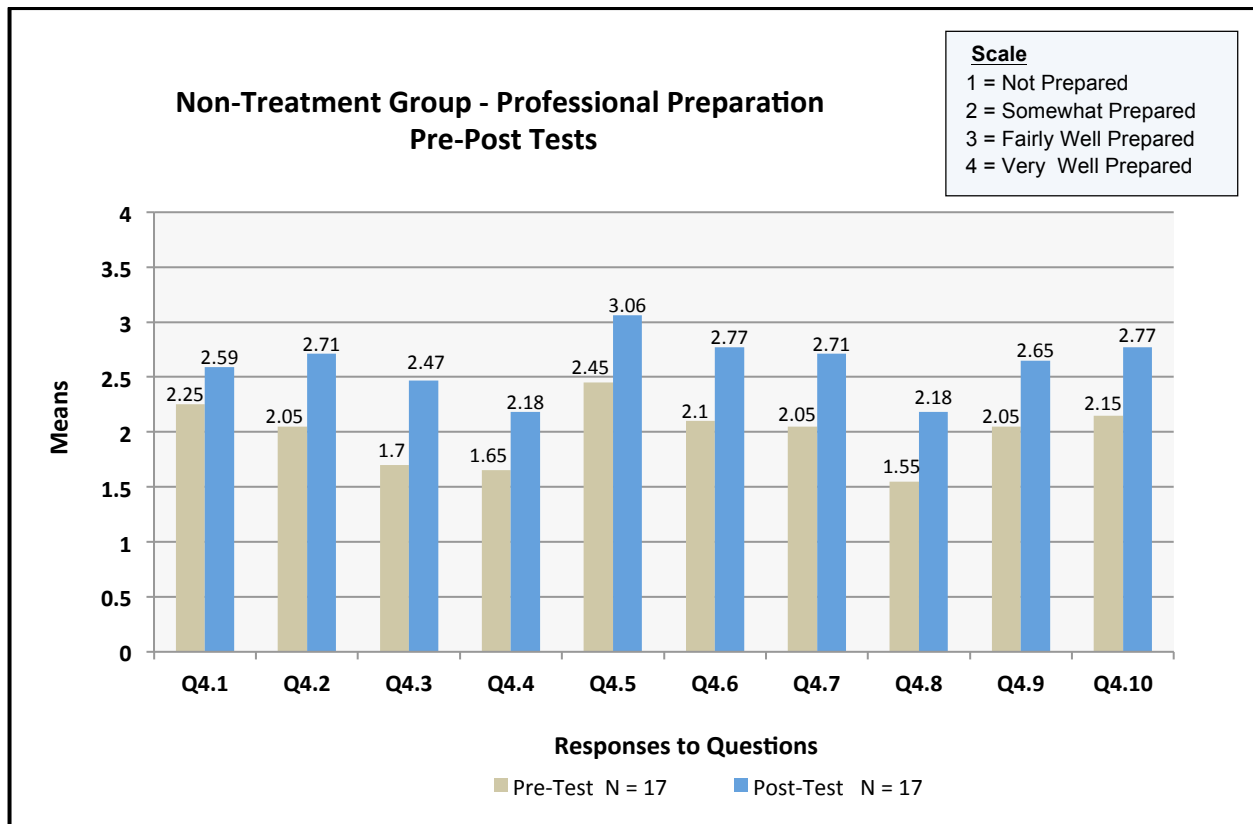
- Q5.1 I think parents must have sufficient knowledge about their child's educational needs to make educational decisions for them.
- Q5.2 I think parental involvement efforts of a teacher or school should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the parents.
- Q5.3 I think parents must attend school functions such as open house or conferences to be effectively involved in the educational process.
- Q5.4 I think that a teacher must actively support parents' efforts at involvement if these efforts are to be successful.
- Q5.5 I think schools and teachers can do many things to make parental involvement more effective and common.

### **Findings:**

On the pre-test/post-test comparison, teacher candidates in the treatment group differed significantly on only two questions in this section. On Q5.2, post test teacher candidates were more likely to agree that the efforts of teachers and schools should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the parents. On Q5.3 post test teacher candidates were less likely to view parent attendance at school functions, such as open houses and conferences, as the criteria for effective parent involvement in the educational process, so the post test scores were lower. This would be expected because the teacher candidates were taught that effective parent involvement in their child's learning can take many forms. Not all parents are able to attend school functions due to work scheduling conflicts. So, effective family engagement can't be assessed only on the basis of attendance at school activities.

The differences on the other questions were not significant.

## Results of Pre-Post Surveys administered to the Non-Treatment Group during the semester



Q4.1 Ability to work with parents.

Q4.2 Ability to hold effective conferences with parents.

Q4.3 Ability to affect policies related to parental involvement at a building or district level.

Q4.4 An understanding of the parent involvement resource materials available.

Q4.5 An understanding of how to build a classroom or school that is family friendly.

Q4.6 Ability to work with diverse parents and families.

Q4.7 Understanding of the rights afforded families under No Child Left Behind.

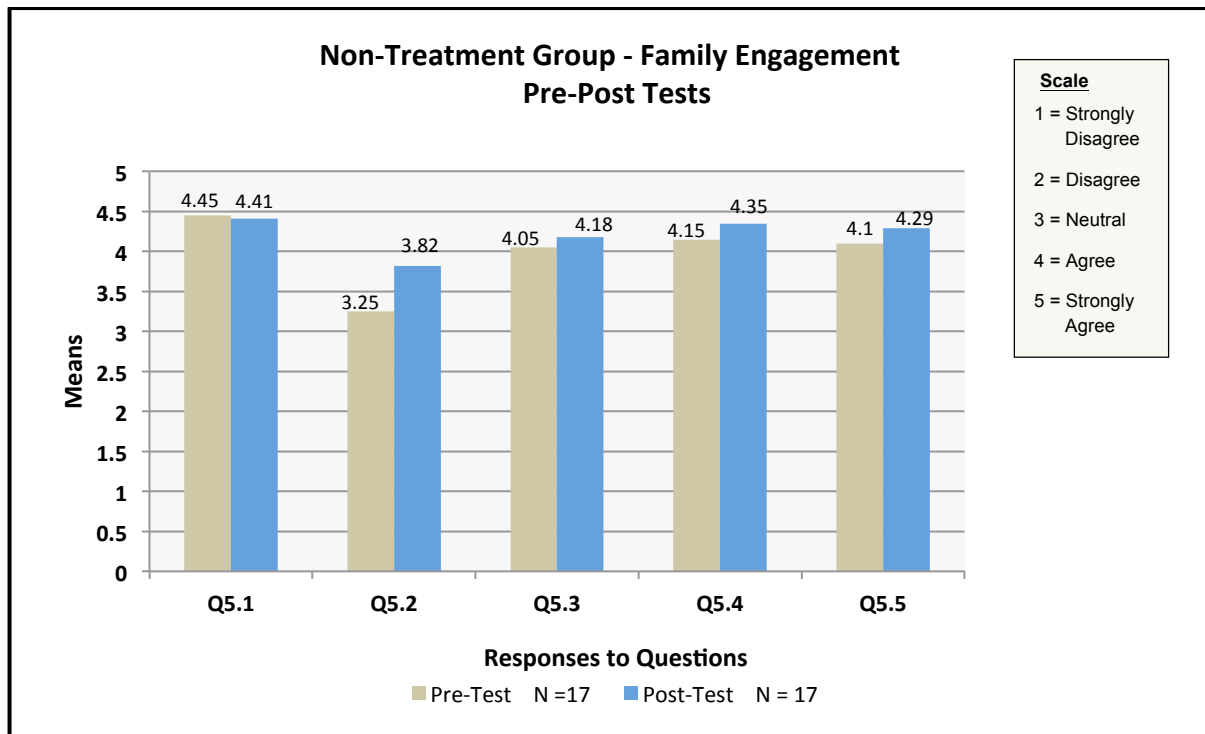
Q4.8 Understanding of the means available to involve parents under Title 1 of No Child Left Behind.

Q4.9 Ability to develop effective strategies to work with parents.

Q4.10 Understanding of the various methods of supporting parental involvement within the school setting

### Findings:

On the post test, teacher candidates in the non-treatment (control) group overwhelmingly reported that they were prepared to work effectively with parents and families. The results were significant for every question.

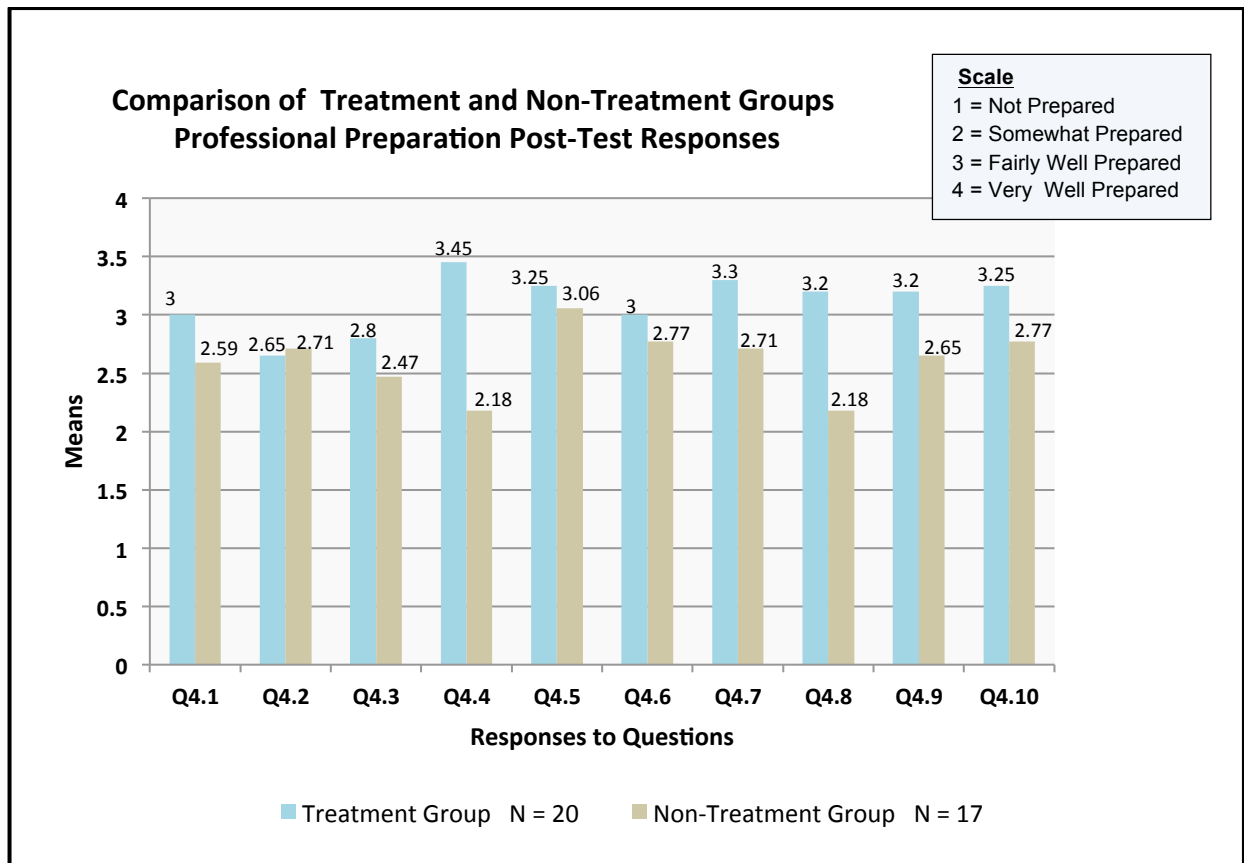


- Q5.1 I think parents must have sufficient knowledge about their child's educational needs to make educational decisions for them.
- Q5.2 I think parental involvement efforts of a teacher or school should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the parents.
- Q5.3 I think parents must attend school functions such as open house or conferences to be effectively involved in the educational process.
- Q5.4 I think that a teacher must actively support parents' efforts at involvement if these efforts are to be successful.
- Q5.5 I think schools and teachers can do many things to make parental involvement more effective and common.

### **Findings:**

Significance was found only on Q5.2, parental involvement should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the parents. After attending classes for the semester, teacher candidates in the non treatment group strongly agreed with this statement. Other differences on the pre-post tests in this section were not significant.

## Results of Comparison between Treatment and Non-Treatment Group Post-Test Responses



Q4.1 Ability to work with parents.

Q4.2 Ability to hold effective conferences with parents.

Q4.3 Ability to affect policies related to parental involvement at a building or district level.

Q4.4 An understanding of the parent involvement resource materials available.

Q4.5 An understanding of how to build a classroom or school that is family friendly.

Q4.6 Ability to work with diverse parents and families.

Q4.7 Understanding of the rights afforded families under No Child Left Behind.

Q4.8 Understanding of the means available to involve parents under Title 1 of No Child Left Behind.

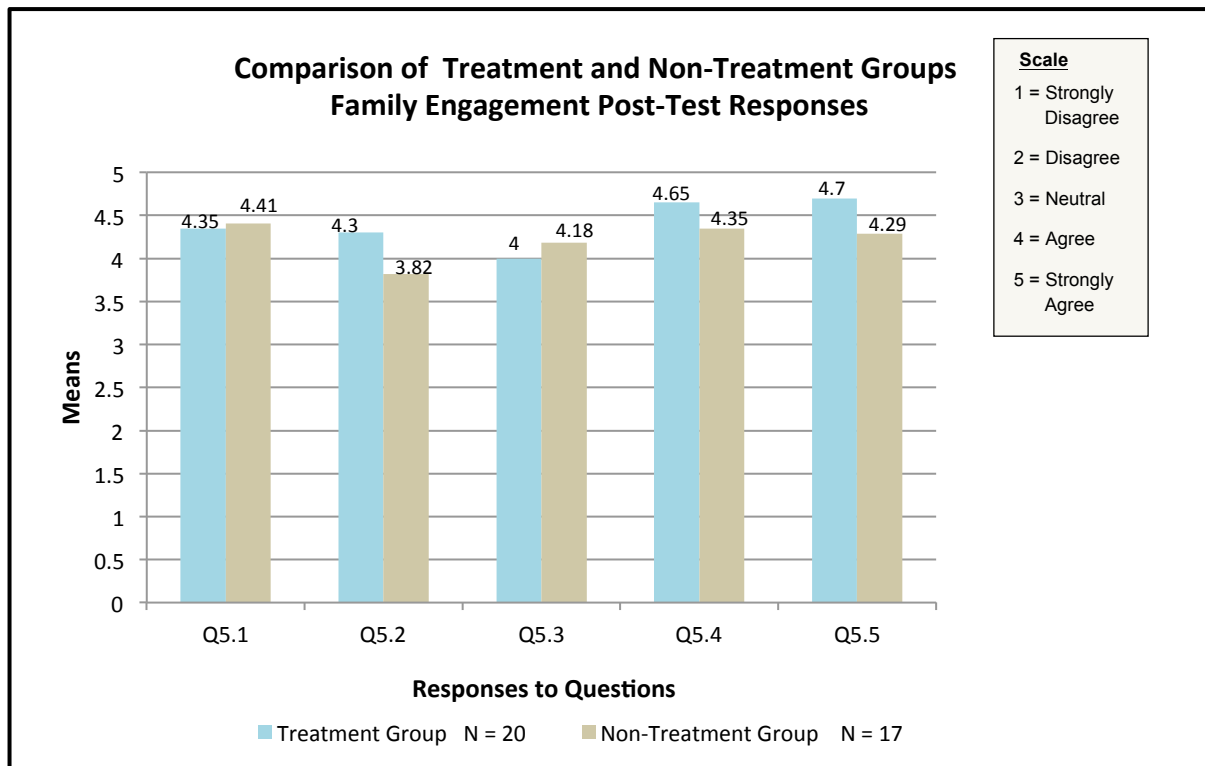
Q4.9 Ability to develop effective strategies to work with parents.

Q4.10 Understanding of the various methods of supporting parental involvement within the school setting.

### Findings:

Significance was found on all questions, except Q4.2, when post test responses of teacher candidates who received enhanced family engagement training were compared to post test responses of teacher candidates who did not receive enhanced training. There was no significant difference for responses to Q4.2, ability to hold effective conferences with parents. The most significant difference reported was for Q4.4. Teacher candidates that received enhanced training reported being better prepared to understand parent involvement and available resource materials. The next most significant finding was Q4.8: teacher candidates that received enhanced training reported a better understanding of the means available to involve parents under Title 1.





- Q5.1 I think parents must have sufficient knowledge about their child's educational needs to make educational decisions for them.
- Q5.2 I think parental involvement efforts of a teacher or school should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the parents.
- Q5.3 I think parents must attend school functions such as open house or conferences to be effectively involved in the educational process.
- Q5.4 I think that a teacher must actively support parents' efforts at involvement if these efforts are to be successful.
- Q5.5 I think schools and teachers can do many things to make parental involvement more effective and common.

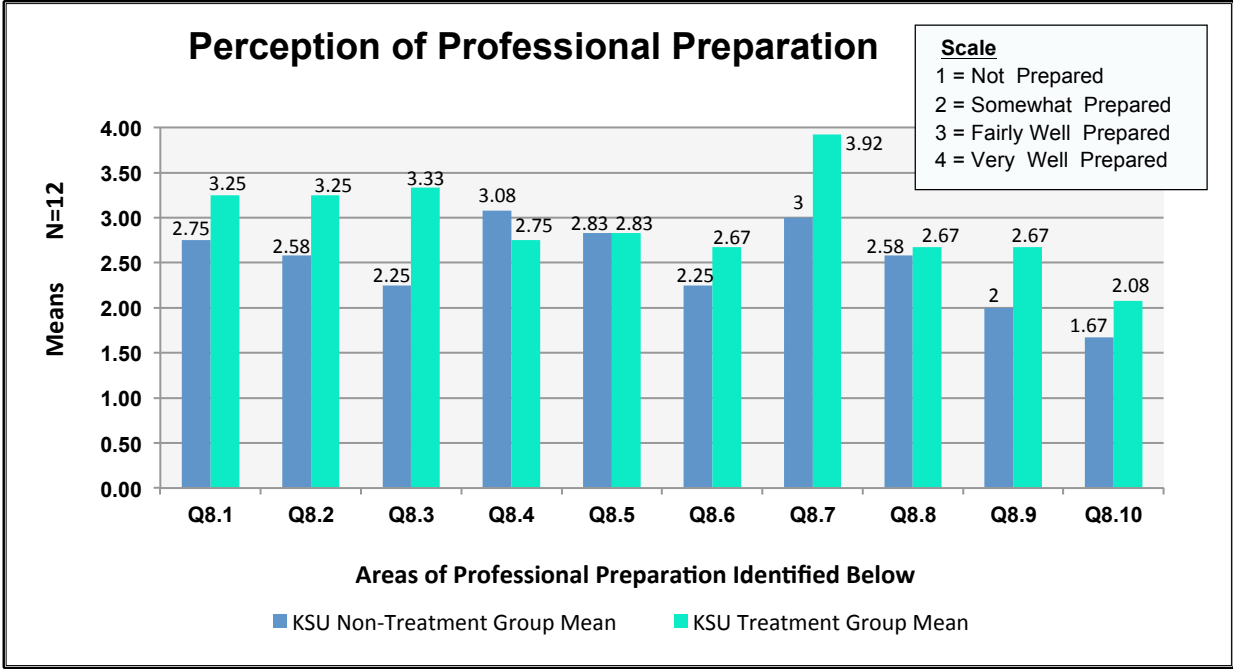
### **Findings:**

Differences between the responses of teacher candidates that received enhanced parent engagement training (treatment group) and those that did not (non-treatment group) were significant for Q5.2, Q5.4, and Q5.5. Those in the treatment group were more likely to believe that parent involvement efforts should be tailored to meet the needs of the individual parents Q5.2, that teachers must actively support parent efforts Q5.4, and that schools and teachers can do many things to make parental involvement more effective and common Q5.5.

Other differences were not significant.

**Results of follow-up Post-Graduation Surveys administered after the first year of teaching**

The post graduation assessment survey was divided into three areas: Professional Preparation—Section 8, teacher Perceptions of Family Engagement Strategies—Section 9, and the Importance of Teacher-Parent Interactions—Section 10. The N for both the non-treatment and treatment groups was 12.



- Q 8.1: Ability to develop effective strategies to work with parents.
- Q 8.2: Ability to hold effective conferences with parents.
- Q 8.3: Ability to help parents support their children’s learning at home.
- Q 8.4: Ability to work with diverse parents and families.
- Q 8.5: Ability to involve the community in classroom activities and children’s learning.
- Q 8.6: Ability to affect parent involvement policies or attitudes or efforts at a building or district level.
- Q 8.7: An understanding of how to build a classroom or school that is family friendly.
- Q 8.8: An understanding of the rights afforded families under No Child Left Behind.
- Q 8.9: An understanding of Parent involvement requirements under Title 1, Section 1118 of No Child Left Behind.
- Q 8.10: An understanding of the PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and tools to meet these standards.

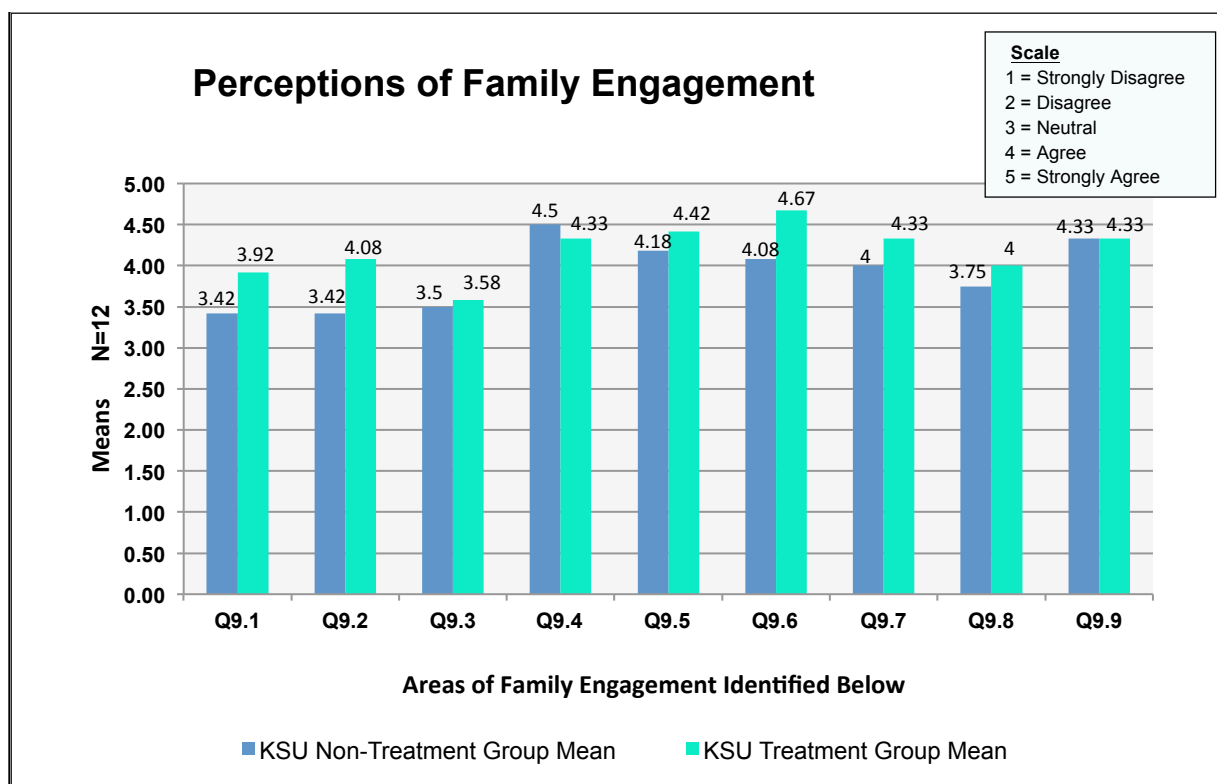
**Findings:**

In most areas where significant differences were found, teachers who received enhanced family engagement and ESEA training (the treatment group) reported they were more prepared than teachers in the non-treatment group. No significant differences were found for Q8.5 and Q8.8.

Q8.3, Q8.7, and Q8.9 show the most significant differences between the groups, followed closely by Q8.1 and Q8.2, all of which focused on the teacher’s ability to build a relationship with the parents: make the classroom friendly and help parents support their children’s learning at home, develop effective strategies

to work with parents, conduct effective conferences with parents, and help parents understand their rights and the services and choices available for their children. On these critical skills, teachers who received the treatment—enhanced family engagement training—reported they were significantly better prepared than teachers in the non-treatment group.

On Q8.4 the significant finding was that teachers in the non-treatment group reported that they were better prepared than the teachers in the treatment group to work with diverse parents. However, it is possible that the non-treatment graduates' higher positive scores are the result of lower standards and not better training. Teachers in the treatment group might have developed higher standards for effective interaction with parents because they knew more about the issue; therefore, they were more critical of their own behavior and outcomes. They were more aware of what they didn't know about working with diverse parents. One recommendation, based upon this finding, would be to provide teacher candidates with more training to work with diverse parents.



**Q 9.1:** Parents have sufficient knowledge about their child's educational needs to make educational decisions for them.

**Q 9.2:** The parent involvement efforts of a teacher or school should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the parents.

**Q 9.3:** Parents who attend school functions, such as open houses or parent-teacher conferences or fundraising, are effectively involved in their child's educational process.

**Q 9.4:** Teachers should actively support parents' efforts to be involved in their child's learning.

**Q 9.5:** Teachers are responsible for creating a welcoming environment, meaningful communication, and interaction among the parents, child, teachers, and school.

**Q 9.6:** Major educational decisions about a child's educational future should be made jointly by parents and teachers.

**Q 9.7:** Teachers should ask parents about a child's home life, interests, talents, and challenges.

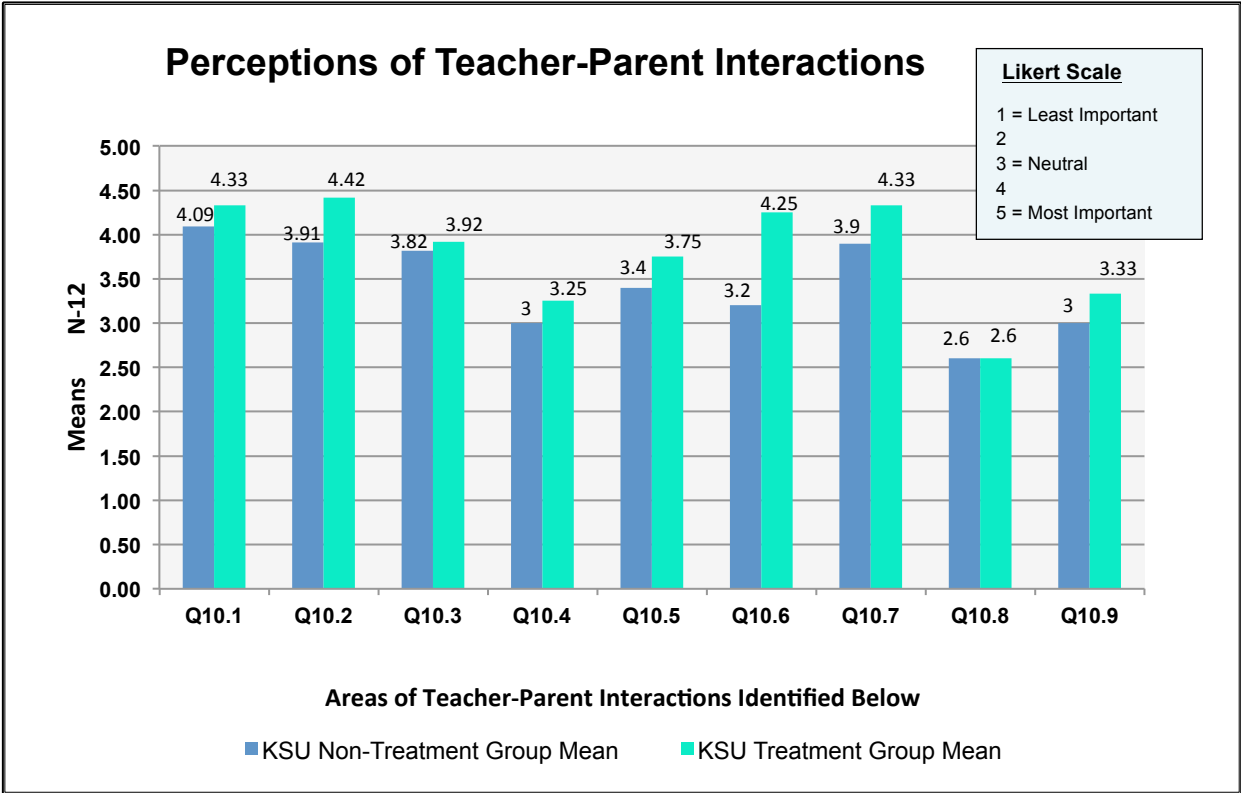
**Q 9.8:** Teachers should promote parent advocacy and leadership within the school.

**Q 9.9:** Parents and members of the community can offer valuable expertise, resources and support to teachers in the classroom and in the schools.

**Findings:**

Q9.1, Q9.2, Q9.6, and Q9.7 were the most significant findings. Teachers who received enhanced family engagement training demonstrated a stronger commitment to the sharing of power and the inclusion of parents as partners in their child's education. A willingness to respect parents' ability to make educational decisions for their child instead of assuming that power for the teacher demonstrates they are accepting parents as partners in the education of their children (Q9.1, Q9.6). Teachers who take the time to consider the individual needs of parents and children, when it comes to family engagement, are much more likely to connect with the family and engage them in the educational process (Q9.2). Understanding what is happening in a child's life and knowing what the child's interests and challenges are can be critical to motivating a child for success (Q9.7). If a teacher takes the time to ask about the child's home life, invites the parents to talk, and makes that personal connection, family engagement is more likely to be successful.

There were no significant differences on the other questions.



- Q 10.1:** Providing general information about student progress on a regular basis.
- Q 10.2:** Personally informing parents about positive news on a regular basis.
- Q 10.3:** Personally informing parents about negative news on a regular basis.
- Q 10.4:** Requesting information from parents about student perceptions of school—teachers, classmates, environment, and classes.
- Q 10.5:** Requesting information from parents about student’s home life, interests, talents, and challenges.
- Q 10.6:** Supporting student learning through collaboration with parents and family.
- Q10.7:** Providing information and tools to parents to help their children be successful.
- Q 10.8:** Informing parents about the rights and services legally available to them through NCLB.
- Q 10.9:** Informing parents about advocacy and leadership opportunities at the school.

**Findings:**

Q10.2, Q10.6, Q10.7 showed the most significant differences between the treatment and non-treatment groups. Teachers who had received enhanced family engagement and ESEA training were more likely to rate positive interactions with parents as most important. For example, Q10.2 focuses on regularly sharing positive news about the child. This is critical for positive behavior reinforcement. The other two questions (Q10.6 and Q10.7) focus on teachers and parents working collaboratively and the teacher taking responsibility to provide parents with the information and tools that will help them help their children be more successful. Q10.9 approached significance. Teachers who received enhanced training were slightly more likely to rate informing parents about advocacy and leadership as important.

There were no significant differences on the other questions.

## Conclusions

Providing enhanced family engagement and ESEA training in preservice programs has a significant impact upon teacher candidate perceptions of, and attitudes toward, many family engagement best practices principles.

## Limitations of the Study

Although significant differences were demonstrated between the responses of teacher candidates that received enhanced family engagement and ESEA training (treatment group) and those that did not (non-treatment group), this study faced serious challenges to internal and external validity. Participants were not randomly selected. Because participation was voluntary, many teacher candidates opted not to participate; thus, Ns were low. The study was conducted over time, so the impact of confounding variables such as history, experiences, and events couldn't be assessed. Furthermore, the responses of graduates that completed their first year of teaching might have been skewed by the school administrators and teachers where they taught and the families with whom they worked and interacted.

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