A CASE STUDY EXAMINING HOW TEACHERS AND PARENTS PROVIDE STRATEGIES THAT NURTURE THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG BLACK CHILDREN IN LOW-SOCIOECONOMIC COMMUNITIES

by

Naomi Nyambura Karaya

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

Gail Collins, EdD, Committee Chair

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to describe how teachers and parents provided strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. The study explored how teachers and parents balance nature with nurture in their instructional and parenting practices to positively impact students’ academic growth and behavior. All participants in this case study were Black and included five teachers, four parents, two school counselors, two psychologists, and two social workers. Both males and females from diverse ethnic backgrounds were selected as participants and identified as co-researchers. The cultural diversity yielded relevant knowledge to reach the diverse Black student population likely to be found in low-income schools. The theory guiding this study was Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as it upholds the critical role nurture plays in child development. Data collection included interviews and focus groups for both teachers and parents. The school counselors, psychologists, and social workers wrote letters to both teachers and parents, giving them strategies that could be useful in nurturing young Black children. Data analysis used pattern matching and explanation building, leading to data interpretation and theme development. Trustworthiness was established by the triangulation of data and member checks. The study found out that building strong positive relationships with students, creating a safe/supportive learning environment, fostering teacher/parent partnerships, building confidence, providing education resources, and holding students to high expectations were the strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-socioeconomic communities.

Keywords: strategies that nurture academic and social development, child development, schools in low-socioeconomic communities, Black children
Dedication

I dedicate this degree to my late father, Eliud Nguku Kamau, and my late mother, Elishiba Waithira Nguku. My dad gave me a passion for learning as he shared his stories of how he benefited from his third-grade education. Having raised himself as an orphan, he kept his dream alive to see his children struggle less in life. He worked tirelessly to ensure that tuition was paid so that my learning continued uninterrupted. My mother found formal education too challenging even to learn the alphabet, but she supported my effort.

I also dedicate this degree to my nuclear and extended family. My husband Erastus has not only prayed for me, but he has given me unwavering support. He gave me time and space to study. My daughter Lydia helped me often when template and Word versions were too challenging for me. My son Phillip cheered me on calling me “Doctor Mom” when the journey got discouraging. My grandsons Jordan and Anthony would tell me that I had done enough typing and needed a break.
Acknowledgments

Growing up in the jungles of Africa, I would never have imagined myself seeing this day, but God in His infinite wisdom, sovereignty, and grace watched my passion for learning as I practiced writing in the dirt. God gets all the glory and credit because, honestly, I do not know how I got here. He fulfilled my yearning for a better life than I had known in my childhood. I anticipate discovering what He has in my next chapter.

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I would like to thank all my co-researchers for their time and willingness to participate in the study. Your contribution was valuable and is greatly appreciated. Thank you, Dr. Todd, for a wonderful job of editing my manuscript.
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Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Central Research Question (CRQ)

Sub-Question (SQ)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Any study done to benefit children tends to be deemed necessary by people of any society because the future of any nation primarily depends on its children (Bakken et al., 2017). Studies conducted on early childhood affirm that social and emotional abilities, which may be more important than cognitive life skills, are developed through nurture (Clements et al., 2017; Humphries et al., 2018). The problem is that most Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities may be in greater need of strategies that nurture their academic and social development because they already have societal disadvantages facing them (Elwick et al., 2018; Nolan, 2020). The purpose of this case study was to describe how teachers and parents provided strategies that nurtured the academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. I explored ways teachers and parents nurtured students as I addressed the research question on what strategies parents and teachers could use to nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-socioeconomic communities. This chapter begins with a discussion of the background for this study, and it includes the social and theoretical contexts. Following the background section is a discussion about the problem and the purpose statements, the significance of the study, research questions, the definition of terms pertinent to this study, and a summary concludes the chapter.

Background

Strategies that teachers and parents use to nurture young Black children in some urban settings have their roots in the history of Black education in the United States (Morgan, 2017). This history traces its origin from the days of slavery, the period following the abolition of
slavery, and the advent of programs for the educationally disadvantaged (Farah, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Zimmer, 2018). Black education has been a unique journey because Blacks belong to an immigrant group denied access to education. "Their milestones in attempting to achieve educational equality, equity, and quality remain the benchmarks for determining the progress made in the education of people of color, generally" (Jackson, 2001, p. 47). The reluctance to adequately fund educational programs for Blacks stems from reasons such as the belief that Black children are limited in intelligence (Farah, 2017; Green, 2016; Oh et al., 2018).

**Historical Context**

Strategies for academic and social development of young Black children, as known today, did not exist in the history of Black education. There were a few self-taught strategies used by Black teachers during slavery and after the abolition of slavery. A series of statutes that criminalized any person who taught slaves or supported their efforts to teach themselves how to read were documented (Jackson, 2001; Meier & Rutherford, 2017; Nieves, 2018; Williams, 2009). Historical recordings only share self-taught strategies used by slaves. Such may have included hiding spelling books under their hats to be ready whenever they could entreat or bribe a literate person to teach them. Such learning was done undercover at night, as the slaves grasped every opportunity to advance their education (Jackson, 2001; Williams, 2009).

The United States is unique in that it is the only country known to have prohibited the education of slaves (Jackson, 2001; Morgan, 2017; Oh et al., 2018). Slaves used storytelling, music, and crafts to pass along cultural traditions and other information (Williams, 2009; Woodson, 2005). Memorization, catechism, poetry, and scripture formed the basis of what education was available. While there were no limitations on reading or drawing, it became illegal to teach slaves to write as fears proliferated among plantation owners concerning the spread of
abolitionist materials, forged passes, and other incendiary writings (Meier & Rutherford, 2017; Williams, 2009; Woodson, 2005). While the law did not clarify any consequences for the slaves who might attain this more highly prized form of literacy, the financial ramifications for teachers were clear (Morgan, 2017).

In 1759, Georgia modeled its ban on teaching slaves to write after South Carolina's earlier legislation (Nieves, 2018; Woodson, 2005). Throughout the colonial era, reading instruction connected to the spread of Christianity did not suffer from restrictive legislation until much later. Many slaves nurtured the rich legacy of Black stories and storytelling brought from Africa as teachers and parents used these strategies to pass on knowledge (Hacker, 1995; Morgan, 2017; Smitherman, 1999). The Blacks used songs, both religious and secular, to teach morals, maintain cultural values, pass on methods of survival, condemn enslavement, protest injustices, celebrate freedom, advocate for political leadership, and praise God (Meier & Rutherford, 2017; Morgan, 2017; Williams, 2009; Woodson, 2005). Blacks faced significant challenges in creating schools during Reconstruction (Morgan, 2017; Oakes, 1985). One problem was a shortage of qualified teachers (Meier & Rutherford, 2017; Morgan, 2017).

Parents are viewed by society as occupying a central role in their children's education (Bennett, 2003; Hayes & Filipovic, 2018). From the days of colonial schools, parents were expected to be involved with school governance, the support of the curriculum, the selection of teachers, and the backing of religious teachings (Hiatt, 1994). This type of parental involvement in school governance waned during the late 1800s and early 1900s with the bureaucratization of schools and the rise in the professionalism of school personnel (Hiatt, 1994). The result was that home life and school life became viewed as two separate spheres leaving decisions such as curriculum development to the professional staff and administrators.
Social Context

Socially, many Blacks live in more miserable, more dilapidated areas characterized by higher poverty, dependency, crime, and mortality. Parents often find that they must send their children to public schools populated by low-income students who score poorly on standardized tests because the government has not made school choice possible (B. Collins et al., 2017). Racial segregation remains an essential basis for stratification in U.S. society (Green, 2016; Humphries et al., 2018). From the time Blacks were allowed to attend school until now, many schools with a high percentage of Black students have fewer books, worse buildings, and less well-paid teachers (Morgan, 2017; Ramberg et al., 2019). Blacks live with a stigma of inferiority and the status of second-class citizenship throughout their lives (Green, 2016).

Schools are social systems influenced by their external and internal environments (Allensworth et al., 2017; Butler et al., 2018; Osher et al., 2016). External environments include state boards of education and their policies and regulations, federal and state legislation, citizens, and parents (Allensworth et al., 2017; Ansari et al., 2019; Dolph, 2017; Jones et al., 2017). Their internal environments include curriculum, instructional practices, strategies and methods, assessment decisions, administrative and instructional staff, and students. A school environment comprises its climate and culture (Dolph, 2017; Jones et al., 2017). School culture is composed of the behaviors, values, and assumptions that people make about each other and their roles in the school.

Teachers and parents in an urban setting could utilize effective academic and social development strategies in a social context of a low-income school by displaying caring bonds and attitudes toward the children (Elwick et al., 2018). Elwick et al. (2018) found that teachers and parents who used effective strategies were able to establish community and family-type
classroom environments, making learning an enjoyable process. As a result of these findings, they proposed that teachers and parents use strategies that positively affect students' achievement, including encouraging students' effort, academic engagement, and appropriate verbal communication and affirmations. The teacher needs to keep in mind that "whatever the reasons for children's behavior whether poverty, personality, a handicapping condition, a dysfunctional home, or an abusive environment, classroom teachers are responsible for managing children, ensuring that they learn" (Kwok, 2017, p. 356). The learning process can be accomplished with the support of parents.

In a low-socioeconomic community setting, gaining students' cooperation in classrooms involves establishing a classroom atmosphere in which teachers are aware of and address students' cultural and ethnic needs as well as their social, emotional, and cognitive needs (B. Collins et al., 2017; Humphries et al., 2018; Kwok, 2017). Effective classroom management involves the utilization of much essential research-based pedagogical processes as well as the ability to respond appropriately to the emotional, social, ethnic, cultural, and cognitive needs of students (Bonner et al., 2018; Claessens et al., 2017; Dolph, 2017; Kwok, 2017). Psychological safety is a hallmark of each classroom (Claessens et al., 2017; Ramberg et al., 2019).

In a low-socioeconomic community setting, teachers need moral authority to be successful, which rests on the perception of students and parents that the teacher is knowledgeable about the subject matter, competent in pedagogy, and committed to helping all students succeed in school and life (Claessens et al., 2017; B. Collins et al., 2017; Dolph, 2017). Verbal exchanges with students reflective of communication from their mothers, who are the primary parents in most Black homes, works for many students (B. Collins et al., 2017). Children who come from communities that have been identified as poor who received high-quality early
education coupled with academic and social development strategies demonstrate positive and long-term outcomes (Bakken et al., 2017; Claessens et al., 2017; B. Collins et al., 2017). Child development experts affirm that it is during these early years that children develop linguistic, cognitive, social, emotional, and regulatory skills that predict their later functioning in many domains (Bakken et al., 2017). This study focused on academic and social development strategies that educators and parents might use to nurture academic success.

**Theoretical Context**

Child developmental changes were primarily ignored throughout human history (Bakken et al., 2017; Ritchie & Tucker-Drob, 2018). Interest in the field of child development finally began to emerge early in the 20th century (Plomin, 2018). Understanding child development is essential because it allows us to fully appreciate the cognitive, emotional, physical, social, and educational growth children experience before they are 8 years old (Antonelli-Ponti et al., 2018; Haier, 2016). Psychological thinkers such as Freud, Erikson, Skinner, Piaget, Bowlby, Bandura, and Vygotsky have developed theories to help explore and explain different aspects of child development, and taken together these theories play a significant role in our understanding of child development (Bredekamp, 2010; Carlyle, 2018; Reubins, 2018).

This study used Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory to focus on how the home and school environments may impact learning. The theory was suitable for this study because academic and social development strategies for young children are greatly influenced by both the teachers and the parents in their social settings. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory suggests that parents, caregivers, peers, and the culture at large are responsible for developing higher-order functions believing that nurture plays a more significant role in cognitive development than nature (Esteban-Gutart, 2018; Haier, 2016; P. Scott & Mahoney, 2017; Stetsenko, 2016;
Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory stresses the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition as he firmly believed that the community plays a central role in making meaning (Bakken et al., 2017). Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory introduced the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is the gap between what a person can do with help and what they can do on their own (Bailey et al., 2017; Plomin, 2018; Rey, 2016; Stetsenko, 2016).

For Vygotsky, cognitive development results from an internalization of language as adults transmit their culture's tools of intellectual adaptation that children internalize, thereby concluding that mechanisms of mental adaptation vary from culture to culture (Bakken et al., 2017; Ritchie & Tucker-Drob, 2018; Russell & Burton, 2020; Smidt, 2009). Vygotsky discovered that play serves a key role in learning and that children often learn concepts based upon make-believe play (Bakken et al., 2017; Jenkins et al., 2017; Plomin, 2018). According to Vygotsky, language plays two critical roles in cognitive development (Sobkin, 2016; Vygotsky, 1934/1986). Communication serves as the primary vehicle through which adults pass culturally valued modes of thinking and problem-solving to their children (Antonelli-Ponti et al., 2018; Bakken et al., 2017; Plomin, 2018; Vygotsky, 1934/1986).

An individual tends to be a product of his or her environment. This fact makes Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory appropriate in studying academic and social development strategies that teachers and parents could use to help young children in an urban setting. The ZPD calls for differentiated instruction, which is highly preferred in reaching all the students (Jenkins et al., 2017; Plomin, 2018). ZPD refers to "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration
with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In education, scaffolding is an instructional structure through which the teacher models the strategy or task of learning and then moves this responsibility to the learner (Plomin, 2018). If scaffolding is administered correctly, it will act as an enabler, not as a disabler, as it helps students stand on a springboard from which to launch their learning (Plomin, 2018). This case study used Vygotsky's sociocultural theory because it advocates for students' active learning with guided participation using structured learning activities tailored to the needs of students. Students' abilities and learning are closely monitored.

**Problem Statement**

The problem that was examined in this study is that some teachers and parents in schools in low-socioeconomic communities may not be aware of the need and the importance of using strategies to nurture young children's academic and social development critical to their overall success. The challenges facing these children are common in low-income communities (Bakken et al., 2017). Schools in low-socioeconomic communities have unique challenges of their own such as teacher shortage, limited resources, difficult classroom discipline, overcrowding, high faculty turnover, lack of parental support, absenteeism, and others (Bonner et al., 2018; Dolph, 2017). Teacher turnover is high because these challenges often frustrate them to the degree that they find alternatives to their jobs. Since the future of any nation depends on its children, it is imperative that teachers and parents are equipped with nurture strategies that they can use in these settings (Clements et al., 2017; Newcomer, 2018). This research explored strategies that teachers and parents could use to nurture young children in the classroom and at home. The literature does not provide much evidence to support the use of such strategies to enhance wholeness in the lives of Black students. Therefore, this research study helps close the gap that exists regarding this topic that teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture young
children's academic and social development in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this case study was to describe how teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. Strategies to help Black children in these schools were generally defined as ways and methods that would uniquely work for young Black children in these settings to assist them academically and socially. The theory guiding this study was Vygotsky's social constructivism that stresses the fundamental role of social interaction in children's academic, social, and emotional development. Vygotsky firmly believed that the community plays a central role in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory lays a firm foundation on strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young children in low-socioeconomic communities through the extensive exploration of the role of culture in intellectual development through the tools of intellectual adaptation, the ZPD, the role of play, and the role of language in academic development (Brackett, 2019; Dweck, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978).

**Significance of the Study**

This study sought to discover how teachers and parents use strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities (Camasso & Jagannathan, 2018). These strategies may help address the challenges students in these settings face by providing nurture that is critical in developing emotional and social skills necessary for academic success (Bakken et al., 2017; Bredekamp, 2010). Early childhood experts agree that a holistic approach to teaching and learning is essential in
developing the whole child to be a productive member (Allen & Kelly, 2015; Berk, 2012; B. Collins et al., 2017). Such strategies encourage educators and parents to engage students in the problem-solving process, especially life skills that are needed throughout life (Bronson & Merryman, 2010; S. Daniels & Peters, 2013; Goertzel et al., 2004; Millar, 2004). The empirical, theoretical, and practical significance of this study follows.

**Empirical**

This study has empirical significance because it examines why strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in school located in low-socioeconomic communities are critical in helping students achieve academic success (Bakken et al., 2017; Bredekamp, 2010; Camasso & Jagannathan, 2018). I also identified appropriate strategies for teachers and parents to use with young children, foundational to all learning (Bredekamp, 2010; Harwood et al., 2008; Humphries et al., 2018). Traits and skills such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, persistence, and self-control as well as emotional skills are vitally important to children's total development (Jones et al., 2017). Jones et al. (2017) added that these traits and abilities are linked to academic achievement, productivity and collegiality at work, positive health indicators, and civic participation, all nurtured through life and school experience. Quality education should include developing emotional and social skills because they are valuable in enabling children to become knowledgeable citizens who will make informed decisions and respond appropriately to local and global challenges (Jones et al., 2017).

**Theoretical**

This study used Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that describes society's contributions to an individual's development by focusing on how adults and peers influence an individual to learn within cultural beliefs and attitudes (Lewis, 2017; Shaffer, 2009; Vygotsky, 1934/1986).
Vygotsky (1934/1986) believed that "human knowledge is primarily a social process that occurs through the interactions that children have with adults and peers, making culture at large responsible for developing high-order functioning through language, proximal development, and play" (p. 78). This study added to the critical role played by language in children. In school settings in low-socioeconomic communities, it is not unusual to have children with behavior problems that inhibit teaching and learning (B. Collins et al., 2017; Cross et al., 2018; Dolph, 2017). Students misbehave when they try to communicate something internal for which they have no verbal language, as misbehaving is an expression of frustration in a student (Bronson & Merryman, 2010; Goertzel et al., 2004; Millar, 2004). Paying attention to children's language is an excellent insight that teachers and parents could use to help them support students without judgment, making them feel understood, valued, settled, secure and giving them a sense of belonging. Using strategies such as respect and modeling that nurture young children's academic and social development in this study will help both teachers and parents create settings that have healthy outcomes for children. These strategies may build their confidence, self-esteem through extended conversations, and imaginative play that fosters abstract thinking (Bronson & Merryman, 2010; Goertzel et al., 2004; Millar, 2004).

Practical

This research found strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities to increase knowledge on the topic and be informative (Nair, 2018). This study focused on the data retrieved from the co-researchers on this subject and how the lessons learned could apply to school settings in low-socioeconomic communities. In addition, this research helped to inform professional and parental practices (Nair, 2018). Every city in America has urban schools with similar challenges.
By implementing effective strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development, these students at risk of failing may attain academic success. Findings such an operational plan could be used in other schools located in low-socioeconomic communities. Lessons learned from the study were authentic because the study methods used teachers, parents, school counselors, school psychologists, and social workers with experience in these settings. The findings may be applicable to other environments where young children are nurtured academically and socially.

**Research Questions**

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory describes the significant contributions that society makes to an individual's development by focusing on how adults and peers influence an individual to learn within the context of cultural beliefs and attitudes (Lewis, 2017; Shaffer, 2009; Vygotsky, 1934/1986). Humphries et al. (2018) stated that nurturing students is critical because it is the one component that helps students develop emotional skills that benefit a child even more than cognitive life skills. Parents hold the responsibility of nurturing their children by giving them a foundation that teachers build on as children transition to school. Children in school settings in many low-socioeconomic communities need strategies that promote academic and social development critical for academic success (Bakken et al., 2017; Dolph, 2017; Gadsden & Dixon-Roman, 2017; Jackson, 2001). There is a need to establish student-centered environments characterized by a high degree of student engagement, cooperative learning, timely feedback, accountable talk, and personalized technology with teachers' assistance (Allen & Kelly, 2015; B. Brown et al., 2018).
Central Research Question

What strategies do parents and teachers use to nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-socioeconomic communities?

Sub-Question One

What types of resources would teachers need to promote the social well-being of Black children in the classroom?

Sub-Question Two

How do the strategies used by teachers to nurture academic and social development positively impact their Black children’s behavior in the classroom?

Sub-Question Three

How do teachers who nurture the academic and social development of young Black children foster the intellectual growth of their students?

Sub-Question Four

In what ways do Black parents effectively partner with teachers as active adults in their children's lives to provide academic success?

Sub-Question Five

What play activities do Black parents use to display love and affection, strengthening positive relationships with their children before age 8?

Sub-Question Six

What are some ways that Black parents create psychological safety, enabling children to talk about their problems freely?
Definitions

1. **Caregiver** – Caregiver refers to a person most closely attached to the child and responsible for the daily care and support of young children (Bredekamp, 2010).

2. **Early Child Development** – Refers to children's cognitive, physical, language, socio-emotional, and motor development from conception to 8 years of age (Bredekamp, 2010).

3. **Nurturing Care** – Refers to a stable environment created by parents and other caregivers that ensures children's good health and nutrition, protects them from threats, and gives young children opportunities for early learning through emotionally supportive strategies (Siegel & Bryson, 2011).

4. **Sociocultural Theory** – Vygotsky's perspective on cognitive development, in which children acquire their culture's values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society (Vygotsky, 1934/1986).

5. **Tools of Intellectual Adaptation** – Vygotsky's term for the method of thinking and problem-solving strategies that children internalize from their interactions with more competent members of society (Shaffer & Kipp, 2013).

6. **Zone of proximal development** – The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978).

Summary

Chapter One began with an overview and a background that explores the historical, social, and theoretical contexts that support this examination of strategies that nurture young
children’s academic and social development in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities. The problem statement, purpose statement, the significance of the study, research questions, and definitions were also addressed in this chapter. The problem is that some teachers and parents in low-income schools may not be aware of the need and the importance of using strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young children critical to their overall success (Bakken et al., 2017; Jackson, 2001). The purpose of this case study was to describe how teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young children in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. This study is critical because our children are our future (Bakken et al., 2017; Nolan, 2020).
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Both nature and nurture play an essential role in developing a child (Bick et al., 2017; Dweck, 2017). This chapter begins with the theoretical framework of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which is relevant to this case study exploring strategies that parents and teachers could use to nurture young Black children's academic and social development in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities. Related literature covers a rationale for using a developmental theory, nature/nurture debate, and their roles in developing young children. Different aspects of child development such as physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, cultural, and children's playing approaches are discussed. The roles of parents and teachers as well as the importance of their partnership are highlighted. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the unique challenges of schools located in low-socioeconomic communities.

Theoretical Framework

Out of the seven significant theories on child development, I selected Vygotsky's sociocultural theory because this case study focused on how the environment may impact learning. The sociocultural theory stated that human learning is mainly a social process and that parents, caregivers, peers, and the culture at large are responsible for developing higher-order functions (Vygotsky, 1978). Many of the views on child development learning are focused on the biological forces of nature, while nurture is ascribed to environmental pressures that primarily influence human development (Bredekamp, 2010). A middle ground exists among many contemporary researchers who believe that the relative contributions of nature and nurture depend on the aspects of development in question (Bredekamp, 2010). However, they stressed that all complex human attributes such as intelligence, temperament, and personality are a
product of a long and involved interplay between biological predispositions and environmental forces. In that case, there is undoubtedly a literature gap on strategies that nurture young children’s academic and social development in low-socioeconomic communities. Bowlby's attachment theory and Bandura's social learning theory have dealt with nurture but not in an extensive way (Carlyle, 2018). Only Vygotsky's sociocultural theory explores the role of nurture in academic development in a comprehensive manner (Brennan, 2004; Carlyle, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978).

**Introduction to Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory**

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is a theory in psychology that focuses on society's contribution to an individual’s development (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, 1978). According to sociocultural theory, the fundamental concepts of social interactions play an essential role in learning using language as an essential tool (Carlyle, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). Human learning is essentially a social process in which adults and peers influence an individual's learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Since learning is a socially mediated process in which children acquire their cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies, cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how learning occurs (Brennan, 2004; Carlyle, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky was a seminal Russian psychologist best known for his sociocultural theory (Jovanovic, 2015; Kellogg & Shin, 2018; Wink & Putney, 2002). Vygotsky’s untimely death prevented him from elaborating his theoretical views and expanding his early empirical work (Wink & Putney, 2002). Vygotsky's work was hidden from the Western world until Kozulin translated and published it in English in 1962 (Vygotsky, 1934/1986). Vygotsky's work has been widely cited and studied by western-European and American developmental psychologists and educators (Kostelnik et al., 2004). Sociocultural theory is a theory in psychology that looks at the
significant contributions that society makes to individual development. The interaction between developing children and the culture in which they live becomes very important (Kostelnik et al., 2004). According to Vygotsky, cognitive abilities are socially guided and constructed (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, 1978). Given this information, we can say that culture serves as a mediator for the formation and development of specific abilities such as learning, memory, attention, perception, thinking, language, and problem-solving (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, 1978). Vygotsky stated that "Learning is more than the acquisition of the ability to think; it is the acquisition of many specialized abilities for thinking about a variety of things" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 79).

**Sociocultural Theory Explained**

Sociocultural theory is "Vygotsky's perspective on cognitive development in which children acquire their cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society" (Shaffer & Kipp, 2013, p. 231). According to this theory, intellectual growth occurs in a social context. A child’s unique cognitive skills evolve from social interactions with parents, teachers, and other competent associates (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). Vygotsky proposed that development gets evaluated from the perspective of four interrelated levels in interaction with children’s environments, namely, micro-genetic, ontogenetic, phylogenetic, and sociohistorical (Miller, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978).

Micro-genetic development refers to changes over relatively brief periods, such as memory strategies that a child can use to solve a math problem (Miller, 2011). Ontogenetic development is the development of the individual over his or her lifetime. Phylogenetic development is about changes over evolutionary time, measured in thousands and even millions of years (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002; Shaffer & Kipp, 2013). Cultural, historical development
is made up of the changes that have occurred in one's culture, the values, norms, and technologies such as history have generated (Shaffer & Kipp, 2013).

**Tools of Intellectual Adaptations**

Vygotsky stated that each culture transmits beliefs, values, and preferred methods of thinking or problem-solving. These are what he calls tools of intellectual adaptations, and these tools get passed on from one generation to the next (H. Daniels, 2001; Langford, 2005; Miller, 2011; Smidt, 2009). Thus, culture teaches children what to think and how to go about it. Vygotsky proposed that infants are born with a few elementary mental functions such as attention, sensation, perception, and memory (H. Daniels, 2001). The culture eventually transforms the operations into new and more sophisticated higher mental processes (H. Daniels, 2001; Langford, 2005).

Therefore, Vygotsky viewed mental functions, even those carried out alone, as affected by the beliefs, values, and tools of intellectual adaptation of the culture in which a person develops, making them socio-culturally determined (Miller, 2011; Smidt, 2009). This means that the tools of intellectual adaptation vary from culture to culture (Langford, 2005; Smidt, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Selective attention is the process of directing awareness of relevant stimuli while ignoring irrelevant stimuli in the environment (Langford, 2005). Paying attention is an essential process as there is a limit to how much information gets processed at a given time. Selective attention allows an individual to tune out insignificant details and focus on what is essential. Sensation, perception, and memory are also vital in adaptation (H. Daniels, 2001; Miller, 2011). Intellectual adaptations effectively take place within the appropriate zone of proximal development.
Zone of Proximal Development

Zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a term for the range of tasks that are too complex to be mastered alone but accomplished with guidance and encouragement from a more skilled person (Rey, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), "The zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 90). Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning is a necessary and universal aspect of developing culturally organized, precisely human psychological function. The most crucial application of Vygotsky's theory to education is in his concept of a ZPD (Miller, 2011). Essentially, this zone is the gap between what a child knows and what he or she does not yet know. According to Vygotsky, children acquire cultural beliefs, values, and problem-solving strategies in the context of collaborative dialogues with more skillful partners as they gradually internalize their tutor's instructions to master tasks within their ZPD.

Learning occurs best when more skillful associates appropriately scaffold their intervention (Langford, 2005; Miller, 2011). Scaffolding is the process by which an expert instructing a novice responds contingently to the novice's behavior in a learning situation so that the beginner gradually increases his or her understanding of a problem (Shaffer & Kipp, 2013). Scaffolding was a term introduced by Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist, in the late 1950s (Bruner, 1978). Scaffolding is the "social collaboration that fosters cognitive growth" (Shaffer & Kipp, 2013, p. 233). Much of what children acquire from more skillful associates such as parents and teachers happens through guided participation, a process that may be highly context-independent or in day-to-day activities as the expert provides support and encouragement.
Scaffolding emerged as a part of social constructivist theory influenced by the work of Vygotsky (1978), who argued that learning best takes place in a social environment.

**Play and Language Development**

Vygotsky conducted extensive research on play. He stated that play serves a key role in learning and that children often learn concepts based upon make-believe play (Sobkin, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). He argued that cultural norms, rules for behavior, and social skills are frequently learned through play. Consequently, play is an important activity that enables children to remember, modulate, and control their behavior (Sobkin, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). Imaginative playing transcends the immediate context of the play because it feeds back to the player of his or her world with others, contributing to the directionality of the cultural life course on social as well as personal levels (Sobkin, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978).

According to Vygotsky, language plays two critical roles in young children's academic and social development (Sobkin, 2016). The first role of language is that it serves as the primary vehicle through which parents pass culturally valued modes of thinking (Vygotsky, 1978). These modes of thinking are transmitted through cultural social identity groups such as food, clothing, music, play activities, social rules, and expectations (Sobkin, 2016). The second role of language is that of problem-solving. This takes place as children internalize language, which drives cognitive development, yielding to ways of thinking and reasoning (Sobkin, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). Eventually, language becomes one of the more powerful tools of intellectual adaptation. Vygotsky claimed that a child's private speech becomes a mental self-guidance system that regulates problem-solving activities and eventually is internalized to become covert verbal thought (Vygotsky, 1978). Private speech is the use of language for self-regulation of behavior.
Vygotsky believed that children who engage in large amounts of private speech are more socially competent than children who do not use it extensively. Vygotsky (1987) stated that private speech does not merely accompany a child's activity but acts as a tool used by the developing child to facilitate intellectual processes, such as overcoming task obstacles, enhancing imagination, thinking, and conscious awareness (Sobkin, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). Children's use of private speech diminishes as they grow older and follows a curvilinear trend due to changes in ontogenetic development whereby children can internalize language to self-regulate their behavior (Vygotsky, 1987).

Children's adventures explore their environment, and their social, educational worlds affect their development. Vygotsky placed higher weight on the influence that adults and other cultural agents have on children's thinking, believing that nurture plays a more significant role in cognitive development than nature (Lewis, 2017). In emphasizing sociocultural influence on child development, Vygotsky clarified that one must consider the evolutionary past in explaining contemporary behavior and development (Jornet & Cole, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). This focus on the ancient origins of behavior illustrates Vygotsky's recognition that one cannot account for child cognitive development by social, cultural factors alone without considering human nature (Rey, 2016).

Many childhood development experts support Vygotsky's theory of nurturing young children's academic and social development (Bredekamp, 2010; Siegel & Bryson, 2011). Children are already learning at birth, and they develop and learn at a rapid pace in their early years (Berk, 2012; Schunk, 2019; Siegel & Bryson, 2011). Early experiences provide a critical foundation for lifelong progress. The adults who provide for the care and education of children from birth through age 8 bear a great responsibility for their health, development, and learning
(Schunk, 2019). Young children thrive when they have secure, positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning (Bakken et al., 2017; Carliss, 2018).

Studies have shown that early childhood is when developmental changes with profound and lasting consequences for a child's future occur, making a solid case for strategies that nurture young children’s academic and social development (Schunk, 2019; Siegel & Bryson, 2011). The long debate on nature versus nurture’s influence supports the use of strategies that nurture academic and social development of young children and has concluded that a child's experiences and interactions early in childhood have substantial implications for the future of that child (Brackett, 2019; Chan et al., 2018). This debate has a strong implication for the settings in which young children are cared and educated and the adults who provide that care (Carliss, 2018).

**Relevance of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory to Education Today**

Four educational applications of Vygotsky's theory are reciprocal teaching, scaffolding, apprenticeship, and collaborative leaning. Each application is briefly discussed below. Reciprocal teaching is used to improve students' ability to learn from the text as teachers and students collaborate in learning and practicing four essential skills of summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting (Rey, 2016). Over time, the teacher gradually minimizes his or her role. Also, Vygotsky’s theory is relevant to instructional concepts such as scaffolding and apprenticeship. A teacher or a more advanced peer helps structure or arrange a task so that a novice can work on it successfully (Rey, 2016). The fourth application to Vygotsky's theory is collaborative learning with group members of different levels of ability. The more advanced peers can help the less developed members operate within their ZPD.
**Reciprocal Teaching**

Reciprocal teaching is an instructional practice identified to improve reading comprehension through explicit teaching of skills needed for metacognition (A. Brown et al., 1984). Over time, reciprocal teaching is effective for diverse learners, such as pre-readers, with limited comprehension and decoding skills (Mayes et al., 2021). Reciprocal teaching also benefits English language learners and students with specific learning difficulties (Mayes et al., 2021).

Reciprocal teaching focuses on four thinking strategies: predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing (A. Brown et al., 1984; Zimmerman et al., 2019). It is an amalgamation of reading strategies that are believed to be used by effective readers and follows a dialectic process to enable metacognitive thinking and empower students to take ownership of their learning in a systematic and purposeful process (A. Brown et al., 1984; Zimmerman et al., 2019). During a joint teaching session, the teacher and students use prior knowledge and dialogue to construct a shared understanding of the text and build reading comprehension (Zimmerman et al., 2019). Teachers monitor the discussion and provide cognitive scaffolding through a shared language related to the four thinking strategies (Paige et al., 2018). Research on reciprocal teaching has shown improved comprehension results and transfer of skills to other curriculum areas (A. Brown et al., 1984). It is also noted that the dialogical approach is inclusive of students with different abilities and students who have diverse sociocultural experiences as all perspectives are embraced in a reciprocal discussion (Paige et al., 2018).

Over time, reciprocal teaching has developed three primary purposes (Rasinski et al., 2017). Firstly, it is a framework for explicit instruction and the practice of four specific comprehension fostering strategies to develop the self-monitoring central to adequate
comprehension (Rasinski et al., 2017). Secondly, it uses a clearly defined process for interactive engagement. This process has been shown to ensure that learning is maintained over time, is generalized across settings, and is transferable within conceptual domains. Thirdly, it is a vehicle for inclusive practice as it delivers an overarching philosophy of participation, contribution, critical reflection, and inclusiveness within the context of learning (Rasinski et al., 2017).

A. Brown et al. (1984) identified several information-processing strategies that skilled readers use in the process of clarification, such as explicit and implicit understanding of the purpose for reading, activation of relevant background knowledge, focusing attention on important content, critical evaluation of content for internal consistency and compatibility with prior knowledge and common sense, periodically reviewing and interrogation of self for understanding, and finally, testing inferences and predictions. These strategies underpin the four concrete activities of predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing that form the framework of reciprocal teaching to foster comprehension and monitoring for understanding (A. Brown et al., 1984). Difficulties in understanding are ascribed to challenges in the text rather than student inadequacy (Rasinski et al., 2017). The learning emphasis is on the emergence of strategies that provide a way to understand through interaction with diverse others, expert scaffolding, and anticipation of expected competence (Paige et al., 2018). Through interaction in mixed-ability groups, students developing skills in comprehension are supported by the social context and common teaching frameworks (Rasinski et al., 2017). They engage at their level and can observe and learn from more competent peers who, with the teacher, model higher-level involvement (Paige et al., 2018). Reciprocal teaching is based on Vygotsky’s theory of the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. Thinking aloud and discussion of thoughts aid in clarification and revision of thinking and learning, therefore
developing cognition. Vygotsky’s ZPD is critical to identifying appropriate text and scaffolding activities to support student success (Vygotsky, 1978).

**Scaffolding**

Scaffolding as a teaching method, was first introduced in the late 1950s by Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist (Zimmerman et al., 2019). He used the term to describe young children’s oral language acquisition. Scaffolding is inspired by Vygotsky's concept of an expert assisting a novice or an apprentice (Rey, 2016). Scaffolding is changing the level of support to suit the child's cognitive potential (Zimmerman et al., 2019). Throughout a teaching session, one can adjust the amount of guidance to fit the child's potential level of performance (Paige et al., 2018). More support is offered when a child is having difficulty with a particular task and, over time, less support is provided as the child makes gains on the task (Rey, 2016). Ideally, scaffolding works to maintain the child's potential level of development in the (ZPD) (Rey, 2016). An essential element to the ZPD and scaffolding is the acquisition of language. According to Vygotsky, language is fundamental to children's cognitive growth because language provides purpose and intention so that behaviors can be better understood (Rasinski et al., 2017).

Empirical research suggests that the benefits of scaffolding are not only valuable during a task but can extend beyond the immediate situation (Rasinski et al., 2017).

Instructional scaffolding can be thought of as the strategies a teacher uses to help learners bridge a cognitive gap or progress in their learning to a level that they were previously unable to accomplish (Young et al., 2017). These strategies evolve as the teachers evaluate the learners' initial level of ability and then through continued feedback throughout the progression of the task. In classrooms, scaffolding may include modeling behaviors, modeling prompting, thinking aloud, dialogue with questions and answers, planned and spontaneous discussions, and other
interactive planning or structural assistance to help the learner bridge a cognitive gap (Young et al., 2017). Closing the gap can also happen through peer mentoring from more experienced students. The more knowledgeable others may include teachers, parents, and peers. Scaffolding is changing the level of support to suit the cognitive potential of the child. Over the course of a teaching session, one can adjust the amount of guidance to fit the child's potential level of performance.

**Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship is a teaching method dealing with learning through physical integration into the practices associated with the subject (A. Collins et al., 1989). In creating this awareness, learners also affect their environment as they are accepted by master practitioners, their specific talents, and contributions within the field (A. Collins et al., 1989). The apprenticeship perspective can be used to teach procedures to students (Rey, 2016). However, it can also be used to develop master practitioners in fields that involve increased complexity, numerous webs of interaction, or shifting environments demanding constant attention (Mayes et al., 2021). Apprenticeship is a teaching method utilized by educators to teach students how to solve problems, understand tasks, perform specific tasks, and deal with difficult situations (A. Collins et al., 1989; Paige et al., 2018).

Apprenticeship is also used in problem-solving situations helping students know how to react when faced with a similar situation (Young et al., 2017). Students work very closely with an expert at learning a specific skill (Young et al., 2017). Apprenticeship learning is very beneficial to the learner because the student acquires information that can be applied through practical applications in the field of study. Successful development through apprenticeship requires that the learning process be active, social, and authentic (Young et al., 2017). Teachers
or parents allow the student to be highly involved in the processes of decision making and action because they know that it is the doing that will have the most effect on the student's schema (Rasinski et al., 2017). Apprenticeship is the conceptual basis of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning in that content mastery by students is developed through the gradual accumulation of experience under the guidance of a more knowledgeable other.

**Collaborative Learning**

The origins of collaborative learning as a teaching methodology can be traced back to ancient civilizations (Zurcher, 2015). However, the principles of collaborative learning are based on John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, and Benjamin Bloom (Zurcher, 2015). They all suggest that collaborative learning gives students opportunities to internalize their learning (Dewey, 1938; Hall, 2020; Vygotsky, 1978). Research shows that students learned faster and retained more when they became partners in the process of teaching and learning instead of remaining mere receivers of knowledge from their educators (Young et al., 2017). Collaborative learning theory is rooted in Vygotsky's ZPD where learners rely on one another to accomplish tasks that they otherwise would not be able to complete individually (Young et al., 2017). Vygotsky supported the idea of learning as a social process (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, 1978).

Collaborative learning is based on the model that knowledge can be created within a population where members actively interact by sharing experiences and take on asymmetric roles (Young et al., 2017). Learners perform tasks where everyone depends on and is accountable (Rey, 2016). Thus, collaborative learning is commonly illustrated when groups of students work together to search for understanding, meaning, or solutions or to create an artifact or product of their learning (Young et al., 2017). Collaborative learning activities can be group projects, joint problem solving, debates, study teams, and other activities (Rey, 2016). The ZPD gives guidance
as to what set of skills a learner has that are in the process of maturation. In Vygotsky's (1934/1986, 1978) definition of ZPD, he highlighted the importance of learning through communication and interactions with others rather than just through independent work. Collaborative learning is essential in achieving critical thinking as individuals can achieve higher levels of learning and retain more information when they work in a group rather than individually (Hall, 2020). This achievement applies to both the facilitators of knowledge (the instructors) and the receivers of knowledge (the students; Hall, 2020). According to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, students learn through interactions on the social level and then carry that learning to themselves (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, 1978). This is what connects collaborative learning to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory.

**Current Educational Trends**

Multiple factors are driving change in the way students are educated. The pressure varies from context to context, but the message is the same: schools are failing to prepare children for the global challenges ahead (Elfert, 2019; Goldie, 2016; Hamburg, 2017). Students are not learning adequately under the present education system, and they are not being equipped with the skills and knowledge to lead satisfying and productive working lives (Hamburg, 2017). The 21st century has immense potential to reaffirm the role of education to equip learners to address complex societal, economic, and environmental issues (Borthwick & Hansen, 2017). The transformation from teacher-led learning to self-directed learning will provide learners with a range of competencies and skills needed to succeed in the modern global economy (Elfert, 2019; Goldie, 2016; Hamburg, 2017).

Personalized and tailor-made instruction will help learners reach their potential. Learners will be better prepared to interact with their communities, virtually and in person, and deal
confidently with people from different cultures while learning throughout their lives (Dennis, 2018; Elfert, 2019; Ghosn-Chelala, 2018). Education should prepare learners to tackle collaborative problem-solving scenarios that are persistent and lack clear solutions (Elfert, 2019). Real-world challenges are highly complex, often ill-defined, and interdisciplinary, spanning multiple domains socially, economically, politically, environmentally, legally, and ethically (Dennis, 2018; Elfert, 2019; Ghosn-Chelala, 2018). Learners must have opportunities to reflect on their ideas, hone their analytical skills, strengthen their critical and creative thinking capacities, and demonstrate initiative (Borthwick & Hansen, 2017). In particular, the ability to evaluate new inputs and perspectives, build new capabilities, and strengthen autonomy will be crucial.

If today's learners are not adequately prepared to collaborate and resolve the world's economic, environmental, health, social, and political challenges, education will have missed its real hallmark (Dennis, 2018; Elfert, 2019; Ghosn-Chelala, 2018). Vygotsky has acquired the status of a grandmaster (Dennis, 2018). His work represents more than a contribution to a specific field of psychology and provides a broad framework or way of thinking about and dealing with psychological issues. It is not uncommon today for Vygotsky to be ranked alongside Freud, Piaget, and others as one of the leading innovative voices of 21st century psychology. This ranking is probably due to the translation into English of his six-volume set of collected works. As English is the modern language of scientific discourse, many researchers interested in Vygotsky’s thinking translated his articles, chapters, and books into English (Veer & Yasnitsky, 2011). Although the translations were not completely accurate, the translations are reliable and adequately picture Vygotsky’s idea (Veer & Yasnitsky, 2011). The largest public publication was Vygotsky’s best-known book *Thought and Language* published by MIT press in

**Related Literature**

Studies have shown that early childhood is a time when developmental changes are happening that can have profound and lasting consequences for a child's future, and this makes a strong case for strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young children (Schunk, 2019; Siegel & Bryson, 2011). The early years are critically important for self-regulation, which makes up the set of abilities that enable children to control their emotions and behavior, interact positively with others, and engage in independent learning (Humphries et al., 2018). There is a general agreement that academic growth may result from both nature and nurture because intelligence and subsequent learning are viewed as being primarily molded both by heredity and the environment. Trying to separate nature and nurture is impossible and unproductive (Cubeddu & MacKay, 2017; Koops, 2019; Wellberg, 2019).

**Developmental Theory**

A developmental theory in psychology is a scientific approach that aims at explaining growth, change, and consistency throughout an individual’s lifespan with a specific focus on a childhood where most change occurs (Bick et al., 2017). The theory views human development as progress from simple to more complex understandings of the self and the world over time (Bick et al., 2017). This progress may be continuous or occurring in stages. A developmental theory is a valuable tool in describing and offering explanations on how development occurs and the kind of influences that impact development (Bandura, 1986; Harms et al., 2018). The developmental theory guides and helps the researcher interpret research findings. The theory
provides the researcher with a blueprint or model to piece together various studies (Bandura, 1986).

**The Rationale for the Use of a Developmental Theory**

A developmental theory is an organized system of principles and explanations of certain aspects of child development (Bick et al., 2017). A developmental approach is essential to make an informed decision about meaningful differences while providing high-quality care and education (Bick et al., 2017). Teachers and parents need knowledge of child development, learning, and best practices which become tools for making sense of this vast array of information (Bick et al., 2017; Chan et al., 2018; Harms et al., 2018). Developmental theories assist teachers and parents in several ways. Approaches help to describe, explain, and predict behaviors (Berk, 2012). Additionally, developmental theories "guide and give meaning to what we see" (Berk, 2012, p. 6), and they help adults interpret behavioral observations. Theories help distinguish typical development patterns from unique development patterns, which in turn assists both teachers and parents in providing additional instructional support or services to young children.

**Nature/Nurture Influence Debate on Young Children**

Researchers are aware of the complexity of gene-environment interaction, and there is agreement that nature or nurture affect behaviors (Elliot & Krusekopf, 2017; Moyer, 2017; Yates & Twigg, 2017). Nature proponents assume that the characteristics of the human species are a product of evolution and that individual differences are due to each person's unique genetic code, while nurture proponents believe that the environment has a more significant influence on academic development (Elliot & Krusekopf, 2017; Shaffer & Kipp, 2013; Wellberg, 2019). In practice, hardly anyone today accepts an extreme position simply because there are too many
facts on both sides of the argument, inconsistent with an all-or-nothing view (Cubeddu & MacKay, 2017; Koops, 2019; Wellberg, 2019). Instead of asking whether psychological traits get influenced by nature or nurture, the question is rephrased as how much, with a consensus that nature plays 50% and nurture plays a 50% role in a child's academic and social development (Cubeddu & MacKay, 2017; Koops, 2019; Wellberg, 2019).

The nature–nurture question has been a central concept of developmental research, but it can also be a significant context for developmental research in its appeal to deterministic thinking (Koops, 2019; Sravanti, 2017; Wellberg, 2019). Practically, the nature–nurture question comes into play when a child has an academic problem. However, most scientists agree that it is both. It is both child and parent, but it is also neurons and neighborhoods, synapses and schools, proteins and peers, and genes and governments. However, that conclusion does not explain how it is both (Wellberg, 2019).

While nature is the genetic predisposition or biological make-up of an individual, nurture is the physical world that influences nature (Sravanti, 2017). Behavioral epigenetics research has indicated that life experiences can affect gene expression, which means that nature is vulnerable to nurture (Sravanti, 2017). There is evidence for bidirectional and interactive effects between parenting and children's characteristics (Sravanti, 2017; Wellberg, 2019). During various phases of development, children need appropriate experiences that support their interest in exploration, experimentation, and self-direction (Sravanti, 2017). Hence modifying nurturing ways by adapting to the nature of a child will lead to desirable consequences for both the individual and society at large. Every child can grow up to be a responsible adult provided the environment is conducive to their development. People behave the way they do because nurture is more influential than nature (Levitt, 2013; Sravanti, 2017).
Studies regarding the influence of nature and nurture made it increasingly difficult to argue for the overwhelming supremacy of either nature or nurture as the primary driver of academic and social development in young children (Hesterman, 2018; McDonough et al., 2019; Plomin, 2018). Today, most scientists who carefully examine the ever-expanding research base have come to appreciate that nature and nurture domains get interwoven with one another (Hesterman, 2018; McDonough et al., 2019; Plomin, 2018). While genes influence the environment, a person's background and experience can directly change the level at which specific genes get expressed, altering the brain's physical structure and activity (Plomin, 2018). Guided by this understanding, the question of nature versus nurture ceases even to make sense in many ways (McDonough et al., 2019). The key to understanding the origins and emergence of both the brain and behavior lies in understanding how inherited and environmental factors are engaged in the dynamic and interactive processes that define and guide the development of the neurobehavioral system (Hesterman, 2018; McDonough et al., 2019; Plomin, 2018).

**The Role of Nurture in the Development of Young Children**

Children are already learning at birth, and they develop and learn at a rapid pace in their early years (Baker, 2017; Schunk, 2019; Siegel & Bryson, 2011). Early experiences provide a critical foundation for lifelong progress. The adults who provide for the care and education of children from birth through age 8 bear a great responsibility for their health, development, and learning (Schunk, 2019). Young children thrive when they have secure, positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning (Bakken et al., 2017; Berk, 2012; Carliss, 2018). The long debate on nature versus nurture’s influence on young children supports the use of strategies that nurture academic and social development of young children. A child's experiences and interactions early in childhood have
substantial implications for the future of that child (Brackett, 2019; Chan et al., 2018). There is a strong implication for the settings where young children get educational care and the adults who provide that care (Bredekamp, 2010; Carliss, 2018). The capacity for conscious and voluntary self-regulation is critical to understanding what it means to be human as self-regulation influences choices, decision-making, planning, perception of freedom, and responsibility (Berk, 2012; Levitt, 2013; Sravanti, 2017). Self-regulation is one of the central and significant mental developmental hallmarks of early childhood. It controls cognitive systems, such as maintaining attention, directing, and monitoring thinking, engaging in independent learning, and problem-solving. Control of behavior and emotions is essential at home and in school (Sravanti, 2017).

Watson (1925) stated, "There is no such a thing as the inheritance of capacity, talent, temperament, mental constitutions, and behavior characteristics" (as cited in Shaffer & Kipp, 2013, p. 82). The conclusion was that when given a dozen healthy infants in a great environment, the adult can tap into their potential, turning them to any type of the desired specialist regardless of talent, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations and race, and ancestral roots (Shaffer & Kipp, 2013). Using such strategies consistently may assist children in passing successfully through the stages of early childhood, given that children require sensitive, nurturing care to build capacities for trust, empathy, and compassion (Arndt, 2018; Bakken et al., 2017). Supportive, warm, nurturing emotional interactions with young children help the central nervous system develop appropriately (Bakken et al., 2017).

**Child Development**

Child development can be defined as the process in which a child changes over time, covering the whole period from conception to an individual become a fully functioning adult (Allen & Kelly, 2015). Child development is inclusive of physical growth, intellectual, language,
emotional, and social development. These factors are influenced by both genetic inheritance and the environment in which a child is raised. To promote children's health, it is essential to understand their peculiarities and the environmental conditions favorable to their development (De Souza & Verissimo, 2015). All domains of child development, including physical development, cognitive development, social and emotional development, and linguistic development, as well as approaches to learning, are essential, and each domain supports and is supported by the others (Adair, 2014).

Teachers are responsible for fostering children's development and learning in all these domains and general learning competencies and executive functioning, including attention, working memory, self-regulation, reasoning, problem-solving, and approaches to learning (Adair, 2014). There is considerable overlap and interaction across these domains and competencies (Pyle, Poliszczuk, & Danniels, 2018). For example, sound nutrition, physical activity, and sufficient sleep all promote children's abilities to engage in social interactions that, in turn, stimulate cognitive growth (Pyle, Poliszczuk, & Danniels, 2018). Children who experience predictable, responsive relationships and responsive interactions with adults also tend to demonstrate improved general learning competencies and executive-functioning, developmentally appropriate practice as methods that promote each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning (Brillante & Nemeth, 2018).

Teachers could implement developmentally appropriate practice by recognizing the multiple assets all young children bring to the early learning program as unique individuals and as members of families and communities (Brillante & Nemeth, 2018). Building on each child's strengths and taking care not to harm any aspect of each child's physical, cognitive, social, or
emotional well-being, teachers design and implement learning environments to help all children achieve their full potential across all domains of development and all content areas (Zeng et al., 2017). Teachers use developmentally appropriate practice to support every child as a valued member of the learning community. Developmentally appropriate practices must also be culturally, linguistically, and ability appropriate for each child (Zeng et al., 2017).

**Physical Development and Motor Skills of Young Children**

Physical activity is fundamental to each child's early development and affects many aspects of a child's health. High physical activity levels in young children promote cognitive development and motor skills (Zeng et al., 2017). Early childhood is the most critical and rapid period of cognition development in human life (Donnelly et al., 2016). Learning sequences of motor skills and movements combine to produce a smooth, efficient action to master a particular task with fine and gross motor skills, locomotor and object control skills, and bodily coordination (Donnelly et al., 2016). Teachers help young children develop physically by giving them opportunities to participate in various structured and unstructured activities (Baker, 2017; Camasso & Jagannathan, 2018). The teachers also teach a lesson on using the senses of sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste so that the young children can explore the environment and process information (Camasso & Jagannathan, 2018). Teachers enhance gross motor skills through activities such as running, jumping, skipping, throwing, catching, and kicking (Baker, 2017).

When planning learning environments and activities, teachers may find it helpful to consider a continuum ranging from children's self-directed play to direct instruction (Donnelly et al., 2016). Teachers use guided play opportunities to identify children's interests and introduce new vocabulary and concepts, model complex language, and provide children with multiple
opportunities to use words in context (Zeng et al., 2017). Physical development is also enhanced as teachers create learning environments that reflect children's interests and provide sustained time and opportunities for children to engage in self-directed play individually and in small groups (Zeng et al., 2017). Teachers also strategically make comments and suggestions and ask questions to help move children toward a learning goal, even as children continue to lead the activity.

For young children to take full advantage of learning opportunities, certain physiological preconditions must be met (Baker, 2017). Among these are sleep and rest (Donnelly et al., 2016). Both physical and mental health and the ability to think well depend on getting an adequate sleep quality (Baker, 2017). Sleep is fundamental for neural plasticity and the consolidation of memories and for removing toxic proteins that build up in the brain over waking hours (Donnelly et al., 2016). When children are sleep deprived, their brain networks are not as coherently organized or regulated (Donnelly et al., 2016). Over time, chronic sleep deprivation leads to mood, emotion regulation, memory, cognition, creative thinking, and situational awareness (Donnelly et al., 2016). Although individual children vary in the amount of sleep they need, sufficient sleep is required for optimal learning (Baker, 2017). Teachers and parents have the responsibility to ensure that young children get enough sleep to learn well.

Adequate nutrition and the absence of toxins are necessary for the healthy brain development of young children (Whyte et al., 2018). Deficiencies in nutrients, such as iron, and diets rich in refined sugars and high in saturated fats have compromised brain development and can lead to impairments in learning, memory, and cognition (Whyte et al., 2018). Exposure to environmental toxins from inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions, air pollution, and low lead levels negatively impact brain development that can be permanent (Rumsey et al.,
Exposure to drugs and alcohol among children has negative impacts on the brain development (Rumsey et al., 2019). Teachers and parents can ensure that young children are getting adequate nutrition; issues of toxins that are beyond their control may have to be referred to policymakers (Rumsey et al., 2019).

Physical activity impacts the physiological regulation underlying social and emotional well-being, cognition, and memory (Harris & Smith, 2017). The efficiency and organization of neural networks are supported by fitness (Harris & Smith, 2017). Academic achievement and behavior in children and physical and psychosocial well-being and cognition across all ages have been found to improve in the short term and the long term because of physical exercise (Turner, 2018). Though brain development and learning occur with a sedentary lifestyle, much research suggests that physical activity is highly beneficial and that its beneficial effects are strengthened with the availability of natural green space (Turner, 2018). Teachers and parents have a responsibility to ensure that young children get plenty of time to engage in physical activities and have them in a natural setting.

Physiological preconditions that must be met for optimal brain development and learning development matter to young children (Whyte et al., 2018). Chronic and excessive stress and loneliness are toxic to brain development (Whyte et al., 2018). Stress from threats to emotional safety and feelings of belonging, such as a stereotype threat, influences a person's underlying physiology and neural functioning (Rollè et al., 2019). Such identity-related stress impacts cognitive performance in the short term, and in the longer term has been linked to premature aging of the brain and body (Rollè et al., 2019). Teachers and parents can buffer the adverse effects of stress through supportive relationships (Whyte et al., 2018). Exposure to green spaces has also been found to reduce stress biomarkers and increase health and well-being (Whyte et al., 2018).
Individuals who have experienced trauma or toxic stress from abuse or neglect often require extensive supports and targeted interventions strategically integrated throughout their schooling experience (Rollè et al., 2019). The adults in the children's lives have the power to assist children in dealing with stress by giving them opportunities to exercise in natural settings and supportive emotional relationships throughout the school year (Whyte et al., 2018).

**Cognitive Development of Young Children**

Cognitive development is the construction of thought processes, including remembering, problem-solving, and decision-making, from childhood through adolescence to adulthood (Rollè et al., 2019). Cognitive development refers to how an individual perceives, thinks, and gains an understanding of his or her world through the interaction of genetic and learned factors. Areas of cognitive development include information processing, reasoning, language development, and memory (Rollè et al., 2019). Cognitive skills development is a broad concept that involves the maturing of a variety of abilities and is defined by the American Psychological Association as the skills involved in performing the tasks associated with perception, learning, memory, understanding, awareness, reasoning, judgment, intuition, and language (Baker, 2017). Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that intelligence changes as children grow and interact with their environments (Baker, 2017). Piaget stated that all young children develop cognitively following the four universal stages in the same order regardless of culture (Baker, 2017). These stages are the sensorimotor stage, preoperational stage, concrete operational stage, and formal operational stage (Rollè et al., 2019). Understanding how children learn and use strategies in acquiring knowledge is impacted by both genetics and the environment in which children are brought up.
Teachers enhance cognitive development in various ways. Teachers can make meaningful connections a priority in the learning experiences they provide each child (Pyle, Prioletta, & Poliszczuk, 2018; Turner, 2018). Teachers foster cognitive development as they practice their understanding that all learners learn best when the concepts, language, and skills they encounter are related to things they know and care about, and when the new learnings are themselves interconnected in meaningful, coherent ways (Harris & Smith, 2017). Before teaching a lesson, teachers could start with brilliant brain activities to increase alertness, enhance memory, improve brain processing, and sync the brain to the purpose (Harris & Smith, 2017). Brain brilliant activities may include singing, movement, calming activities, and quick-connect activities such as eye contact (Harris & Smith, 2017). Teachers help children develop cognitively when they integrate learning within and across all the developmental domains (physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive), and subject areas of language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health (Rumsey et al., 2019; Shonkoff, 2017; Whyte et al., 2018).

Teachers also nurture cognitive development by building on the funds of knowledge of each child, family, and community to offer culturally and linguistically sustaining learning experiences (Rollè et al., 2019). By planning developmentally appropriate lesson plans, teachers intentionally make decisions based on three core considerations of commonality, individuality, and context (Whyte et al., 2018). Educators build on ideas and experiences that have meaning in the children's lives and are likely to interest them, in recognition that developing and extending children's interests is particularly important when children's ability to focus their attention is in its early stages. This kind of assistance is given by teachers meeting young children where they
are academically both as individuals and as part of a group, and helping each child meet challenging and achievable learning goals (Rollè et al., 2019).

Effective strategies include acknowledging, encouraging, giving specific feedback, modeling, demonstrating, creating, and adding challenges, asking practical questions, giving assistance, providing information, and giving directions (Pyle, Priioletta, & Poliszczuk, 2018). Teachers also intentionally use technology to promote effective learning and development within the framework of developmentally appropriate practice (Pyle, Priioletta, & Poliszczuk, 2018). Teachers foster cognitive development by planning curriculum experiences that follow logical sequences and that allow for depth, focus, and revisiting concepts. Learning sequences allow children to spend sustained time with a more select set of content areas rather than skimming briefly over a wide range of topics (Leggett, 2017). Lessons plans should offer experiences in ways that facilitate children's memory and further understanding of concepts. Teachers of young children should use dance to express creativity, create and explore visual art forms to develop artistic expressions (Yates & Twigg, 2017). Teachers allow young children to use voices, instruments, and objects to express creativity and dramatic play in presentations using dialogues, actions, objects, and imaginations to tell creative stories (Leggett, 2017).

Parents can take steps to nurture cognitive development. LeMonda et al. (2017) suggested that one of the essential variables for reading comprehension is the home literacy environment composed of the literary interface. Literacy interface before school provides a family literacy program in low-income settings that helps enhance literary interactions with children in their early developmental stages. Parents can ensure that they use the public libraries or books for the children to read at home. Their learning environment predicts the children's success based on their ethnically diverse backgrounds. The early learning environment with diverse literacy
activities and adequate learning materials provide academic stability and pathways (Rose et al., 2018). Nurturing emotional relationships is crucial in developing a primary foundation for intellectual and social growth and bond-building skills (Clements et al., 2017). Creativity and abstract thinking are developed through emotional interactions. At the most basic level, relationships foster warmth, intimacy, and pleasure (Arndt, 2018).

Young children need security, physical safety, and protection from illness and injury. Their basic needs for nutrition and housing are critical for physical health and emotional stability (Clements et al., 2017). Regulating screen time with technology to avoid brain overstimulation helps children stay calm and alert for new learning (Clements et al., 2017). Relationships also teach children which behaviors are appropriate and which ones are not (Arndt, 2018). Parents who take these steps ensure that their children are well taken care of and help them with cognitive development. These interactions and experiences also lay the foundation for vocabulary and concepts that support later academic development across all subject areas.

**Social and Emotional Development of Young Children**

Teachers can promote social and emotional development in the classroom by embedding their teaching practices throughout the day, remaining sensitive to children's needs, helping them feel secure and confident, and act as models for effective social behavior (Biglan et al., 2017). When teachers ask students questions to help children find a solution to a social conflict, the teachers help students develop problem-solving skills (Biglan et al., 2017). Reading a story and engaging students in a conversation about the socially challenging situation can also serve as a lesson in handling social problems and literacy. Teachers may be attentive to each unique child's social and emotional skills and needs so that one can respond with the lessons and interventions tailored to help every child develop his or her skills (Biglan et al., 2017). Providing young
children with consistent structures and expectations about appropriate behavior through play activities helps them remember and follow classroom norms and behave in ways conducive to learning (Biglan et al., 2017).

Positive relationships with adults are critical to children's social and emotional development (Brinkworth et al., 2018). Teachers make classrooms a comfortable, secure, and safe place where children can focus on learning. They should also provide caring opportunities for children to develop and practice critical social skill (B. Collins et al., 2017). Children are more likely to develop positive relationships when teachers model appropriate social behaviors and provide opportunities to build new social and emotional skills (Newcomer, 2018). Teachers could also provide explicit guidance, offer a curriculum that is engaging and relevant to children's lives and culture, and engage with parents in a two-way relationship to build children's social and emotional skills that reflect an ethic of care and nurture (Newcomer, 2018).

Encouraging empathetic thinking with questions that promote children's confidence and developing problem-solving skills is another way a teacher could help students develop social skills (Ramberg et al., 2019). Teachers may use social and emotional development strategies by providing opportunities for children to interact competently and cooperatively with other children to develop friendships with several peers (Biglan et al., 2017). Teachers could get to know and understand children by reflecting on their knowledge of the community, seeking information from the family, observing the children, examining the children’s work, and using authentic, valid, and reliable individual child assessments (B. Collins et al., 2017).

Language Development of Young Children

Language development in young children includes phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary, comprehension, and written expression (Humphries et al., 2018).
Teachers and parents help young children acquire language development by giving them opportunities to listening to the human voice and learn to distinguish sounds and develop language (Chong & Lu, 2019). They gestures help young children learn to perceive and respond to emotional cues and form a sense of self (Arndt, 2018). There is a connection between home literacy environment and language abilities (Humphries et al., 2018).

A home literacy environment predicts language development in young children (Bakken et al., 2017). Teachers and parents can practice traditional reading instruction skills including oral language, phonological awareness, and print knowledge (Humphries et al., 2018). Reading storybooks predicts oral language and indirectly reading comprehension. Shared storybook reading provides a unique context for language learning, offering exposure to novel concepts and vocabulary items rarely encountered in everyday conversation through text and adult talk around the text (Bakken et al., 2017). If parents read with children regularly from an early age, their sensitivity to the child's linguistic competence increases, allowing more effective strategies to support children's contributions and comprehension (Humphries et al., 2018). This regular reading, in turn, encourages children's interest in books, leading to more frequent book-sharing episodes. Children's active participation in shared reading positively affects vocabulary development (Bakken et al., 2017).

Teachers and parents also help children with language development by vocalizing conversations, practicing calming interactions, availing opportunities for peer conversations, especially during play (Bakken et al., 2017). Teachers and parents can also establish productive early childhood education settings with rich environments with materials to manipulate, such as a sand table, water table, blocks, playhouse area, art supplies, and musical toys (Humphries et al., 2018). They then provide regular opportunities to investigate, move, and play with these
materials. Adults in these settings encourage children to play and work together in learning group games or setting to pursue their interests (Chong & Lu, 2019).

The adults in the young children's lives maintain early childhood education settings by providing regular routines such as circle time, snack time, storybook time, inside and outside playtime, and a balance of activities and learning opportunities (Chong & Lu, 2019). They also incorporate songs, stories, and conversations in these settings (Bakken et al., 2017). The adults are responsible for modeling and supporting language development, music, dance, and games that develop movement, sense of timing, and sequence (Bakken et al., 2017). Teachers plan literacy activities that include drawing, painting, playing, and building with manipulatives to develop small motor and hand-eye coordination (Humphries et al., 2018). These activities, along with affirmative and supportive interactions, build the brain's architecture in important ways and help students become ready for more symbolic learning that they can link to these concrete experiences (Humphries et al., 2018).

**The Cultural Development of Young Children**

Concerning healthy behavior, children have always followed their parents as role models. Therefore, parents need to respect their identity, free space, and pay attention to their children's specific needs in addition to monitoring academic performance, behavior, and self-discipline (Lee, 2020; Usher et al., 2020). Butler et al. (2018) concluded that although healthy human environments can vary significantly in their specific characteristics and cultural features, when a person's world is impoverished in any of these dimensions, brain development and the learning that depends on it are compromised. Conversely, when a person's world is enriched in these dimensions, brain development is facilitated, and knowledge is enabled. Except in the rare case of severe, life-threatening genetic disorders, all children have the genes essential for brain
development and the propensity to learn (Butler et al., 2018; Farah, 2017; Harms et al., 2018). It is important to note that, across the life span, targeted school designs, interventions, and supports of the sort broadly related to social, emotional learning have been shown to improve neural and cognitive functioning and emotional health with long-term benefits for individuals (Oh et al., 2018).

Factors that affect the relationship between culture and child development from cross-national studies suggest that much is learned from the rich diversity of childrearing beliefs and practices exhibited by families in the United States (Nottingham, 2017; Whitebread et al., 2019). Except for the contributions of the Native American population, most aspects of mainstream culture in the United States were transported from another society (Bell, 2010; Gelfand et al., 2015; Reynolds, 2017). American culture is modified and reshaped by each newly arrived group and each successive generation. In this respect, like most open societies in the world today, the United States is a nation whose culture remains a continuous work in progress (Reynolds, 2017). The complex amalgam of cultures that encompass the contemporary U.S. population includes the contributions of a variety of groups whose initial arrival reflected a mixture of circumstances, including voluntary immigrants, involuntary slaves, grateful refugees, and conquered indigenous peoples (Bell, 2010; Gelfand et al., 2015; Reynolds, 2017). Within this multilayered context, research on the role of culture in the development of young children in the United States is exceedingly complex and challenging (Gelfand et al., 2015).

Equating ethnic status with distinctive cultural characteristics is highly problematic (Bell, 2010; Copone & Mey, 2016; D. Scott, 2013). Central to the problem is the frequent finding of significant variation within ethnic groups in values, beliefs, and practices. Most attempts to describe the culture of different ethnic groups in the United States typically begin with the
general characteristics of their native region, such as Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America (Bell, 2010; Copone & Mey, 2016; D. Scott, 2013). Different members of a given ethnic group generally demonstrate varying degrees of adherence to its identifiable values, beliefs, and practices, thereby making it virtually impossible to characterize the group's culture (Copone & Mey, 2016). Teachers help young children with cultural development by recognizing that children's experiences vary by social identity, race, ethnicity, language, gender, class, ability, family composition, and economic status (Reynolds, 2017). All these experiences impact learning. Teachers can make adaptations to affirm and support each child's multiple social identities (Reynolds, 2017).

**Adults in the Lives of Young Children**

Teachers and parents are significant adults in the lives of children because they spend a more substantial percentage of time with them. This factor makes the teacher–parent partnership a considerable component in determining students' success in academics and social development. Research shows that home support for early learning complements learning at school (Elwick et al., 2018; Hayes & Filipovic, 2018). Playing math games, reading with children, and asking children open-ended questions as they play are examples of fun, straightforward ways to build critical foundational skills both at home and school (Elwick et al., 2018).

**The Role of Parents in the Development of Young Children**

In making a case for strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities, parents play the most significant role in the development of an individual, especially the role of mental, physical, social, financial, and career development (Clements et al., 2017; Syrnyk, 2018). The family is essential because it provides love, support, and a framework of values to each member as parents.
help their children every step of their life (Clements et al., 2017; Syrnyk, 2018). Family members teach one another, serve one another, and share life's joys and sorrows, providing a setting for an individual's personal growth and becoming the most critical influence in a child's life (Syrnyk, 2018). The primary function of the family is to ensure the continuation of society, both biologically through procreation and socially through socialization (Clements et al., 2017; Syrnyk, 2018).

Theory and current research on parenting suggest that responsive parental involvement promotes optimal development outcomes for children (Steinberg & Kumer-Nevo, 2019). Mothers and fathers may be involved in similar and unique ways engaging in complementary parental roles within the family system (Steinberg & Kumer-Nevo, 2019). Research indicates that mother–child relationships are often characterized by didactic and caregiving interactions in which maternal warmth sensitivity is associated with positive child outcomes. In contrast, father–child interactions are commonly characterized by playful interchanges that include teasing, rough-and-tumble play, and encouragement of risk-taking (Giallo et al., 2013). These interactions vary depending on child gender and age and family dynamics, including co-parenting practices, couple relationship quality, parental perspective on gender roles, and family contextual or cultural influences (Steinberg & Kumer-Nevo, 2019). A father's engagement significantly affects children's cognitive, language, social and emotional development. It is difficult to define the complexities of a father's involvement, including direct interactions, availability, and managerial functions (Giallo et al., 2013).

**The Role of Teachers in the Development of Young Children**

For children, school is not only an educational hub but also a home outside the home with plentiful free space offering a window of freedom, scope of interaction with other children,
psychological solace besides providing pedagogy and scholastics values (S. K. Brooks et al., 2020; Stewart et al., 2020). Schools play an edifying role in promoting the importance of personal hygiene, physical activity, healthy food, and body habits (Ghosh et al., 2020). To mitigate the psychosocial ill-effects of economic disparities in children, proactive and targeted interventions can be proposed. Parents and teachers play a vital role in making the mission successful. Friendly interaction and communication among parents, teachers, and children may help to soothe their anxieties and other physical and mental issues (Wang et al., 2020). Including children in household and family activities as appropriate will improve their self-sufficiency skills, and thus with simple steps, family relations are re-vitalized, and children are psychologically buttressed (Bayham & Fenichel, 2020; Ghosh et al., 2020).

Examining why effective teachers remain at schools in low-socioeconomic communities, Billingham (2019) and Bonner et al. (2018) stated that teachers in these settings provide an enduring contribution. They act as positive role models, creating meaningful, rigorous lessons that allow students to think critically about issues and solutions affecting their lives. They support students in attaining the high expectations they place on them. These teachers build meaningful relationships with students and their families, and they share with their students their belief that students will one day become agents of change (Bonner et al., 2018). They believe that students will later become catalysts for social justice, and so the teachers take responsibility for their students' failure, but they also hold students accountable for their learning (Bonner et al., 2018). "The best teacher is the one who kindles an inner fire, arouses moral enthusiasm, inspires the student with a vision of what she may become, and reveals the worth and permanency of moral, spiritual and cultural values" (Berk, 2012, p. 29). School settings need to establish curricula and instructional practices to promote positive social development with self-
regulation while mitigating challenging behaviors in ways that reflect an understanding of the multiple biological and environmental factors that affect behavior (Koops, 2019).

**The Importance of Teacher–Parent Partnerships in the Development of Young Children**

Positive connections between parents and teachers improve children's academic achievement, social competencies, work habits, attitude towards school, grades, and emotional well-being (Hayes & Filipovic, 2018). Building a partnership between parents and teachers is an effective strategy to address opportunity gaps, especially in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities (Nolan, 2020). The partnership supports children's learning and ability to develop lifelong skills and networks while strengthening parents' capacity to be engaged in their children's school experience (Nolan, 2020). Teacher–parent partnerships have three main components: communication, consistency, and collaboration (Nolan, 2020). Effective communication is open, transparent, constructive, and timely. This communication should start at the beginning of the school year and stay active throughout the year. Consistency is provided by creating routines and providing opportunities to enhance a child's learning to reinforce what the teacher is teaching. Collaboration involves cooperative planning and problem-solving to develop specific, positive strategies to help children achieve their highest potential (Brackett, 2019). Child development experts agree that parents and educators working together could develop the potential within children and set them up to be anything they wish (Brackett, 2019).

Children learn from their parents' and teachers' facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, and words about what kinds of behavior lead to approval or disapproval. Brackett (2019) stated that patterns built up through the give-and-take between children and adults and the emotional tone and subtle interactions in relationships are vital in forming who an individual becomes. Whatever an individual can learn as moral development and self-regulation also develops
through the experiences of nurturing interactions (Koops, 2019). The relationship of parents and teachers to a child with an emotional quality of their interaction, the experiences they share, the adult's beliefs about the child's capabilities, all work to help motivate young children's learning and inspire their self-confidence (Arndt, 2018; Biglan et al., 2017; Koops, 2019).

Commonplace interactions provide contexts for supporting the development of intellectual learning skills and the emotional security in which early learning thrives (Hesterman, 2018; Moyer, 2017). Parents and teachers are responsible for knowing how a child develops and learns, including cognitive development, specific content knowledge, skills, general learning competencies, socioemotional development, physical development, and health (Arndt, 2018). The importance of consistent, stable, nurturing, and protective relationships that support the development and learning across domains and enable children to engage in learning opportunities entirely is strongly advocated for by child development experts (Arndt, 2018; Biglan et al., 2017; Koops, 2019).

**Unique Challenges of Low-Income Schools**

Schools located in low-socioeconomic communities have unique challenges of their own such as poverty, limited resources, large class size, inexperienced administrators and teachers, low test scores, weak instructional systems, and lack of parental support. It is difficult for teachers to stay (Bonner et al., 2018; Bristol & Maeda, 2018). The effects from outside factors such as poverty, trauma, parental depression, and the experience of violence in the home or community that affect children's learning and development should be addressed and necessary adjustments made to help young children experiencing those effects (Chong & Lu, 2019; Koops, 2019; Moyer, 2017). Parents and teachers working with diverse populations must pay attention to diverse family structures, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, culture, and language to
effectively help the children (Chong & Lu, 2019; Koops, 2019; Moyer, 2017). Research suggests that many disparities in overall health and well-being are rooted in early childhood (Arndt, 2018; Biglan et al., 2017). Stressors in early childhood can disrupt neurologic, metabolic, and immunologic systems, leading to poorer developmental outcomes. Consistent, responsive caregiving relationships and supportive community environments promote an optimal trajectory (Koops, 2019; Moyer, 2017).

The first 8 years of a child's life build a foundation for future health and life success, and therefore the cumulative and lifelong impact of early experiences, both positive and negative, on a child's development can be profound (Arndt, 2018; Biglan et al., 2017). Society needs to address disparities by reducing barriers that might prevent children from reaching their full potential. Addressing this would promote a holistic child development because chronic stressors in early childhood, such as poverty, can have cumulative lifetime effects on learning, earnings, and health (Arndt, 2018; Biglan et al., 2017; Moyer, 2017). The family breakdowns deny the children opportunities to have the appropriate interactions with adults. Single parents, who comprise close to 80% of the population in low-income schools and are too busy working to provide basic needs, would greatly benefit from the information (Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, n.d.).

**Needs and Outcomes of Young Black Children**

Children are born eager to learn, taking delight in exploring their world and making connections. However, the degree to which early learning supports a child’s delight and wonder is primarily found in their setting. Young children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that fully support their optimal development and learning across all domains and content areas (Moore & Ramirez, 2016). Young children also have a fundamental right to live in
a society dedicated to helping them achieve their full potential (Moore & Ramirez, 2016). However, the historical and current inequitable distribution of societal power and privilege based on race results in limited opportunities that harm young Black children in early childhood (Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018). Opportunities are too often denied to young children when educational practices are not responsive to their developmental, cultural, and linguistic characteristics (Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018).

More than 60% of Black children face the unavoidable challenge of dealing with adverse childhood experiences (Priest et al., 2013). The diversity of adverse childhood experiences includes psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, mental illness, suicide, violence, physical and emotional neglect, parental separation and divorce, homelessness, bullying, discrimination based on race, poverty, parental incarceration, and community violence, all of which suggests that no single strategy will be adequate (Bethell et al., 2017). An evaluation conducted by Bethell et al. (2017) found promising positive outcomes in some communities although all community networks struggled to achieve community-wide change and no single model worked best for developing the capacity to address adverse childhood experiences or building resilience. While preventing the initial occurrence of these adverse childhood experiences is a logical priority, many children who have already experienced negative effects from adverse childhood experiences have treatment needs (Bethell et al., 2017). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians regularly screen young children for circumstances such as maternal depression, parental substance abuse, poverty, and community violence, all of which could lead to toxic stress in young children (Kerker et al., 2016).

Metzler et al. (2017) found that several protective factors can prevent or ameliorate the harmful effects of adverse childhood experiences. A positive, supportive relationship with one or
more adults is of primary importance. Studies show that children with secure attachment relationships with their caregiver(s) can better regulate their responses to unsettling situations than children with less secure caregiver attachments (Metzler et al., 2017). In addition to supportive relationships, a child’s intrapersonal skills can buffer the effects of adverse childhood experiences. Children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences but demonstrate adaptive behaviors, such as managing their emotions, are more likely to have positive outcomes (Metzler et al., 2017). Children and adults alike can help cultivate resilience through practicing self-care routines and strengthening critical social and emotional skills such as empathy, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Mersky et al., 2013). Another way to support resilience is the use of trauma-informed approaches (Mersky et al., 2013). However, the practice of screening for trauma, including adverse childhood experiences, is not yet widespread among pediatricians (Mersky et al., 2013).

Studies have shown that districts serving the most students of color tend to receive less state and local funding, and there are inequities to be more prevalent and more substantial than those based on poverty (Bowman et al., 2018). In addition, Hanks et al. (2018) found that many Black students start school academically behind their peers. They determined that some states have made progress in this area, as leaders continue to identify, assess, and remedy the funding necessary to ensure that students have equitable access to resources such as high-quality, rigorous curricula, effective teachers, and safe as well as supportive learning environments.

Despite evidence that supports the value of play, not all Black children are allowed to play, a reality that disproportionally affects Black children (Hanks et al., 2018). Play is often viewed as being at odds with the demands of formal schooling, especially for children growing up in under-resourced communities (Hanks et al., 2018). The highly didactic, highly controlling
curriculum found in many elementary schools, with its narrow focus on test-focused skill
development, is unlikely to be engaging or meaningful for children (Green, 2016). It is also
unlikely to build the broad knowledge and vocabulary needed for reading comprehension in later
grades (Green, 2016). Instead, the lesson children are likely to learn is that they are not valued
thinkers or successful learners in school (Green, 2016). Self-directed play, guided play, and
playful learning, skillfully supported by early childhood educators, build academic language,
deepen conceptual development, and support reflective and intentional approaches to learning
that add to effective strategies for long-term success (Bethell et al., 2017). Even though research
finds that culture and context matter, relatively little research has been conducted with Black
children (Hanks et al., 2018). Developing more effective schools could change the outcome of
Black children addressing issues of governance, mental health, parenting programs, staff
development, and ongoing assessments followed by modifications (Comer, 1993).

**Summary**

Vygotsky, regarded as the father of social constructivism, believed that knowledge is
constructed through dialogue and interaction with others (Kellogg & Shin, 2018; Lewis, 2017;
Shavarts & Bakker, 2019; Vygotsky, 1978). He argued that knowledge is co-constructed in a
social environment and that people use language as a tool to construct meaning (Shavarts &
Bakker, 2019; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the culture affecting cognitive
development if cognitive development varies across cultures. Early childhood experts agree that
young children thrive when they have secure, positive relationships with parents and teachers
who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning (Bakken et al.,
2017; Berk, 2012; Carliss, 2018). Studies have shown that developmental changes in early
childhood can have profound and lasting consequences for a child's future (Berk, 2012; Schunk, 2019).
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The examination of strategies that nurture academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities has its roots in the humanistic theory that states that for a student to succeed academically and socially, a holistic approach in teaching must cater to the cognitive and emotional needs of the students (Berk, 2012; Bredekamp, 2010; Carliss, 2018). The purpose of this case study was to examine how teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. Research questions, the setting, participants, procedures, and the researcher's positionality are discussed in this chapter. Data collection methods included interviews and focus groups with the teacher and parent co-researchers and letters to teachers and parents written by the school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Data analysis used pattern matching and explanation building leading to data interpretation and theme development. Four critical components of trustworthiness and the ethical considerations for this study were also addressed in this chapter that concludes with a chapter summary.

Research Design

Through this qualitative research study, I examined the strategies used by teachers and parents in low-socioeconomic communities to nurture young children's academic and social development. A qualitative study was the most appropriate type of design for this research because it involved exploring real-life experiences. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of research that explore a social or human problem. They stated that "the researcher builds a
complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 15).

One type of qualitative research is a case study design. Yin (2018) stated that an investigation might use case study research if the main research questions are in-depth \textit{how} or \textit{why} questions. In addition, Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that when using a case study design, the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary system over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, and audiovisual materials to document and report case description and case themes. Yin (2018) identified five essential aspects of case study research to a case study’s questions, its propositions if any, its case(s), the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. Three of these components were used in this research that was conducted at Bickham Elementary School (pseudonym).

I used an exploratory holistic single-case design that did not use propositions. The rationale for selecting a single case in studying strategies that nurture academic and social development of young Black children was that this design represented a significant contribution to knowledge and theory building by confirming, challenging, or extending the theory, all of which are critical tests of a significant theory (Yin, 2018). The single-case study was exploratory because there is less literature or information on the topic of study.

**Research Questions**

Research by Humphries et al. (2018) stated that nurturing students is critical because it is the one component that helps students develop emotional skills that benefit a child even more than cognitive skills in life. Children in many low-socioeconomic communities lack nurture that is critical in developing emotional and social skills necessary for academic success due to their
home-life challenges or dysfunctional communities (Bakken et al., 2017; Dolph, 2017; Gadsden, & Dixon-Roman, 2017; Jackson, 2001). Allen and Kelly (2015) stated that the primary teacher's assignment is to build quality and intimate relationships with children: "Each child should be assigned to a primary educator who is responsible for establishing a relationship with the child and ensuring their comfort in the school setting" (p. 249). There is a need to establish a student-centered classroom characterized by a high degree of student engagement, cooperative learning, timely feedback, accountable talk, personalized technology, and the teacher playing the role of a facilitator (Allen & Kelly, 2015; B. Brown et al., 2018).

Central Research Question

What strategies do parents and teachers use to nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-socioeconomic communities?

Sub-Question One

What types of resources would teachers need to promote the social well-being of Black children in the classroom?

Sub-Question Two

How do the strategies used by teachers to nurture the academic and social development positively impact their Black children’s behavior in the classroom?

Sub-Question Three

How do teachers who nurture the academic and social development of young Black children foster the intellectual growth of their students?

Sub-Question Four

In what ways do Black parents effectively partner with teachers as active adults in their children’s lives to provide academic success?
Sub-Question Five

What play activities do Black parents use to display love and affection, strengthening positive relationships with their children before age 8?

Sub-Question Six

What are some ways that Black parents create psychological safety, enabling children to talk about their problems freely?

Setting and Participants

The setting for this case study was Bickham Elementary School (pseudonym), located at the heart of a poor, urban demographic area in Georgia. All students were on free lunch, and the school academic performance was below that of the state. In this case study, five Black teachers and four Black parents were selected as co-researchers. They were interviewed individually, and they also participated in focus groups. Additional co-researchers included two school counselors, two psychologists, and two social workers of diverse backgrounds and gender. They wrote letters to both teachers and parents, giving them tips on strategies that could nurture young Black children’s academic and social development in a low-income school.

Setting

Bickham Elementary School was an appropriate site for the study because of its location in the heart of a poor urban demographic area in the state of Georgia (Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, n.d.). According to the Public-School Review website, at the time of the study, Bickham Elementary School served 557 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, and all students qualified for free school lunch. The percentage of students achieving proficiency in math was 36% (which is lower than the state average of 41%) for the 2019–2020 school year. The percentage of students achieving proficiency in Reading/Language Arts was 38% (which is
lower than the state average of 38%) for the 2020–2021 school year. Students' mobility due to family instability was relatively high, and students from single-parent homes comprised 87% of the total population (Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, n.d.). Teacher turnover was about 40% due to challenges of limited parental support, economic disadvantages, and the state's expectations for high scores on standardized tests.

Participants

Yin (2018) stated that the "case selected may be individualized with an array of possibilities for purposeful sampling" (p. 123). For a qualitative case study, 10 to 15 participants are acceptable (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In this case study, five teachers, four parents, two school counselors, two psychologists, and two social workers of diverse backgrounds and genders were selected as co-researchers for the study. Yin (2018) stated that participants in a case study provide critical information or interpretation of the case study, and they may suggest other sources of evidence for the researcher to check. Moustakas (1994) defined all research participants as co-researchers because the essence of the phenomenon is derived from participants’ perceptions and experiences, regardless of the interpretations of the researcher. This case study used individual interviews with all teachers and parents, one focus group for the teachers, and another focus group for the parents. In addition, the two school counselors, two psychologists, and two social workers were asked to write letters to both parents and teachers giving them tips from their professional experiences for how to provide strategies for nurturing the social and academic development of young Black children.

Researcher Positionality

I believe so much in the role of mother/child nurture that I decided to be a stay-at-home mom while my children were young. Being a grandmother moved the topic of nurture up another
notch. I tend to see the children I teach from a grandparent's tender view, convincing me of the importance of individualized care of every child by the adults in their lives. I was raised in Africa by loving and nurturing but illiterate parents. The teachers partnered with my parents to nurture me in my childhood, shaping the veteran teacher I have been in both Kenya and the United States. My experience of teaching young children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities for 20 years in the United States has sparked interest in nurture and how it affects students' academic and social lives. The nurture approach adopted by a school could solve the challenges faced in low-income school settings. As one born and raised in Africa, the impact of limited resources on the lives of individuals is clear to me. However, parents and teachers can partner to offset some of these challenges by helping students succeed in life. Humphries et al. (2018) stated that addressing the whole child's needs is critical in ensuring that each child reaches his or her academic potential. This approach may be accomplished as teachers and parents successfully address the young children's academic, social, and emotional learning needs. Nurture is multi-faceted as it goes beyond academics to encompass students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs by looking at the whole child.

**Interpretive Framework**

This study used the paradigm referred to as advocacy participatory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This paradigm is a collaborative experience that "allows the researcher to engage participants as co-researchers, actively contributing to research" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 29). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that this worldview focuses on the needs of the powerless and empowers co-researchers to make positive changes through reform because the framework of the study addresses social issues pertinent at the time, such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and domination (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This paradigm in
research offers a voice to co-researchers and gives them the ability to form a plan for reform as their actions focus on bringing about change. An advocacy/participatory worldview holds that research inquiry needs to intertwine with politics and a political agenda (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, "the research contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 25), as well as addressing specific issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation. I selected co-researchers as participants because they were a resource of knowledge, and they provided a diverse understanding of various issues that affect their school environments.

**Philosophical Assumptions**

A philosophical assumption is a theoretical framework used by a researcher to collect, analyze, and interpret the data that are collected in a particular field of study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It establishes the background used for coming to conclusions and decisions. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that in qualitative research, a philosophical assumption is interpretive, humanistic, and naturalistic. This research used three philosophical assumptions, namely ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions.

**Ontological Assumption**

I used the ontological philosophical assumption that investigated the nature of being, reality, and existence and what is known about this nature (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a qualitative researcher who holds the view that there are multiple realities and that there is no access to an existence independent of the human mind, I used the words of participants in quotes and themes to show differing perspectives.
**Epistemological Assumption**

Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that an epistemological, philosophical assumption seeks to know the truth or factual knowledge. It also aims to understand the relationship between the researcher and what is studied as it will be used qualitatively to confirm the assumption that there is no one truth but multiple truths or realities. Since truth is subjective to each person, interviewing my co-researchers helped me understand their views of reality as a researcher.

**Axiological Assumption**

An axiological philosophical assumption explores the role that values hold and those facts cannot be separated from values, since things cannot describe how they are but only how individuals perceive them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This assumption encourages the researcher to consider the "value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and their biases as well" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). There is no such thing as absolute objectivity, and values are entrenched with everything. I used this assumption by being upfront with reports about values or biases. This approach helped me write narratively and subjectively using the first person and informally using the personal voice.

**Researcher’s Role**

My role as a human instrument in this study was that of a fourth-grade teacher working for the same school district as the co-researchers at Bickham Elementary School. I held no leadership or position of authority over the co-researchers. My role included interviewing, convening focus groups for teachers and parents, and obtaining letters of nurture tips from school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. As is required in qualitative research, I attempted to access thoughts and feelings as I explored the ideas and experiences in depth of the co-researchers while safeguarding their identity and data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This helped me
maintain rigor and credibility of various aspects of this research study. One of the assumptions I brought to the study was that all my targeted co-researchers would cooperate to do interviews, focus groups, and write letters simply because improving educational practices is crucial in improving students' academic achievement. The bias I brought to the study was that of my ideas of strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development based on my personal experiences as a mother and a veteran teacher. I monitored and reduced my bias, collected data, analyzed data, and presented my findings as is expected in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I also recorded my biases in my reflexive journal in Appendix Q. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that transformative worldviews, also called advocacy participatory, focus on the needs of the powerless. I desired to have co-researchers from whom I could obtain knowledge to help both the teachers and the parents make positive changes in the lives of disadvantaged children.

**Procedures**

Before proceeding with the research, I sought IRB approval and also the principal’s permission to conduct interviews and focus groups with the teachers and obtain letters from school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. After I received permission from the IRB to collect data, I conducted a pilot study using two teachers of different genders, two Black parents of different age groups, a counselor, and a social worker. The information was eye-opening. The male teacher incidentally had not looked at students’ nurture from my perspective, and as an aspiring principal, he took a keen interest in my study. I needed to modify a couple of teacher questions because they were almost asking the same thing. The response from the pilot study motivated me in my data collection because the answers given were intriguing and thought-provoking, shedding some light on issues I never thought of regarding the education of
young Black children. The study challenged my assumptions on why some people in the Black community may not value education as they do not view education as a ticket to success in America.

Permissions

To conduct this case study, I first obtained approval from the school district. The district superintendent provided a letter of approval to conduct this research. I placed this letter temporarily in Appendix A, but it has been replaced with the IRB approval letter in my final dissertation to preserve the confidentiality of this school district. After I completed a pilot study, I obtained permission from the Bickham Elementary School principal to conduct interviews and focus groups with the teachers and obtain letters from school counselors, psychologists, social workers.

In this case study, five teachers, four parents, two school counselors, two psychologists, and two social workers of diverse backgrounds and genders were selected as co-researchers for the study. This case study used individual interviews with all teachers and parents, one focus group for the teachers, and another focus group for the parents. In addition, the school counselors, psychologists, and social workers were asked to write letters to both parents and teachers with tips on how to provide strategies for nurturing the social and academic development of young Black children. I used interviews because interviews help the researcher obtain detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions, and opinions as they allow more detailed questions to be asked, achieving a high response rate (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Peterson, 2019; Yin, 2018). Consent forms were shared with all the co-researchers for them to read and sign before participating.
Recruitment Plan

After completing the pilot study, I hand-delivered and/or emailed the recruitment letters with screening surveys to potential participants (Appendices B–H). Out of the pool of potential participants who answered the screening surveys, co-researchers who met the participant criteria of the case study were selected. I went around the school building and hand-delivered or emailed information to co-researchers who had been selected (see Appendix H). I attached the Consent Form (see Appendix I, J, and K) with directions given to participants on how to sign the form and return it to me through email, and those working with me signed and gave me back the consent forms. Another email (see Appendix H) was sent to participants who completed the screening survey but were not selected for further participation in the case study. Data were gathered through interviews, focus groups, and letters (Yin, 2018). Teachers' and parents' interviews and focus groups were audiotaped to create a transcription, and I also asked teachers and parents to check their transcriptions for accuracy before beginning data analysis. School counselors, psychologists, and social workers wrote digital letters and send them to me through email.

Data Collection Plan

Once the research problem is determined and the intent for the study identified, case sampling procedures lead to developing procedures for conducting extensive data collection drawing on multiple data sources (Rubin, & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018). First, I contacted each of the selected co-researchers to schedule his or her interview based on the information given on the screening survey. Each interview was audiotaped so that the transcription would be accurate and co-researchers' quotes exact (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016). I conducted a member check at the end of each interview by asking the participant to
review his/her transcript for accuracy. After completing the interviews, I then conducted two focus group interviews, one with the teacher co-researchers and one with the parent co-researchers, to obtain more information on the topic (Yin, 2018). Then, to obtain my third data collection method, I requested the school counselors, psychologists, and social workers co-researchers write a letter based on their expertise that contained strategies and tips that teachers and parents could use as they interact with young children in low-income communities to help them with academic and social development. The logic of using this sequence was that once lengthy interviews and focus groups were conducted, the letters could confirm or add information obtained from the interviews (Rubin, & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018).

**Individual Interviews**

Qualitative interviews have long been an essential research method, and they have been called the primary method used in research to provide the most direct, research-focused interaction between the researcher and the participants (Rubin, & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018). The interviewing process includes the steps of gathering primary and backup tape recording devices, sitting down with the respondent, and taking notes on nonverbal cues as the interview progresses (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Peterson, 2019). The interviewer is usually a professional who poses questions to the interviewee in an alternating series of often brief questions and answers (Patton, 2015; Peterson, 2019; Yin, 2018). Interviews help the researcher obtain detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions, and opinions as they allow more detailed questions to be asked, achieving a high response rate (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Peterson, 2019; Yin, 2018). The interviews for this case study conducted with teachers and parents from Bickham Elementary provided the first source of data collection.
The questions below were used for the interviews. After each question, the research question that it addressed is identified: Central Research Question (CRQ) and Sub-Question (SQ) 1–6.

**Individual Interview Questions**

Standardized open-ended Individual Interview Questions for Teachers (Appendix L)

1. Please describe your educational, career backgrounds and teaching experience of young Black children. CRQ
2. Please tell me about your understanding of strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children familiar to you. SQ2
3. Reflecting on how teachers nurtured you when you were a young child, how have you borrowed and used strategies they used in your classroom? SQ1
4. Why might you think that those strategies are significant and still relevant for your use today? SQ1
5. Experts suggest that nurture in early childhood is a predictor of an individual's success in life. Do you agree with this suggested prediction? Why or why not? SQ3
6. Describe how you are using strategies that nurture academic and social development this year. SQ2
7. What has sharpened your awareness of the importance of using strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in low-socioeconomic communities’ schools? SQ1
8. What timeless strategies that nurture young Black children’s academic and social development are you aware of? SQ2
9. Think about a friend who has been very successful in life. What strategies do you think were used by their teachers early in life? SQ2
11. Some research has found that teacher-nurture plays a critical role in early childhood. Why do you believe that this statement is true or false? SQ3

12. If you were to meet a 19 year old who is getting ready to be a mom, how would you share the importance of strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in early childhood? SQ2

13. Imagine you getting interviewed at a teacher conference in front of thousands of educators. Why and how would you convince them to use strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in a challenging school like yours? SQ3

14. I would like to ask you a question that will prompt you to put everything together. Based on your life experience of dealing with young Black children, what advice do you have for educators to develop strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in the classroom? SQ2

15. This next question is unique in that it will invite you to reflect on your experiences. How has technology shaped your strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in low-socioeconomic communities’ schools? SQ1

16. We have covered much ground in our conversation, and I appreciate the time you have given to this. One final question is, what else do you think would be vital for me to know about strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young children in low-socioeconomic communities’ schools? CRQ

Questions 1 through 5 assisted me in familiarizing myself with my co-researchers in a manner that posed no threat and was also a way of introducing the familiar topic of strategies...
that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities. Researchers must have a good relationship with their co-researchers and building good interpersonal relations to generate rich data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Peterson, 2019; Yin, 2018). The purpose of establishing rapport between researcher and participant is to both generate rich data and maintain respect between researcher and co-researchers (Hsiung, 2018; Patton, 2015; Peterson, 2019; Yin, 2018).

Questions 6 to 8 were reflective questions that assisted co-researchers in thinking about how they were nurtured by their teachers and how that nurture still influences them in their adult life. Question 8 asked the co-researchers to reflect on their family related to the subject of strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development in low-socioeconomic communities. How one was raised may create a lens through which he or she views nurture and what values one can consider important (Clements et al., 2017; Syrnyk, 2018). The co-researchers were asked to reflect on their parental influence on how they view strategies of nurture as a subject. Question 9 was similar, but the reflection was on a successful adult and how that adult may have been nurtured academically and socially.

Question 10 asked the co-researchers to think of someone they knew well and considered successful in life. The co-researchers gave an opinion on what they thought of that person's early childhood experiences with the teachers that set them on a trajectory of success. Thinking of someone else's experiences is non-threatening, and in this case, it connected early childhood nurture with outstanding success in life that is deemed valid (Biglan et al., 2017; Clements et al., 2017). I shared how teachers nurtured me to be successful, coming from a background that held no promise for success so that the co-researcher could relate to the question.
Question 11 asked the co-researchers to be vulnerable with me after establishing a positive relationship (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). This question allowed me to gather information on some critical strategies that are necessary if children are to experience success later in life. Since teachers needed to grow daily in their teaching practices, personal struggles were essential components in reflecting on transformational educational practices. The topic of strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development is very complex, and reflecting on how one got nurtured or not nurtured may have made the co-researcher raise questions on how the adults in their lives nurtured them, and that yielded positive or negative emotions. Question 12 required co-researchers to think of early childhood development's biggest threats, such as "extreme poverty, insecurity, gender inequities, violence, environmental toxins, and poor mental health" (Dolph, 2017 p. 365).

Questions 13 and 14 were to help co-researchers act as experts (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that the "participant's role is more salient" (p. 320) than the researcher's role and may help the researcher gain insider views and subjective data. By taking the role-play of a 19 years old who is planning to be a parent, the participants gave deep thoughts about what could work on the topic. By assuming that the co-researchers address a crowd of educators, the co-researcher gave deep thoughts on personal values and theoretical understanding and educational practices that may have supported the co-researcher’s stand with the topic.

Qualitative researchers must ensure access to their co-researchers with the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Peterson, 2019; Yin, 2018). As most qualitative data get collected through interactions with co-researchers through interviews, surveys, questionnaires, or participant-observation groups, a researcher must find co-researchers who are willing to speak about their experiences (Aspers, & Corte, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018;
Yin, 2018). Questions 15 asked the co-researchers to play the role of technology experts as they were asked to give information based on their experiences with technology. The enrichment gained from this helped me learn from the practical experience of the co-researchers. Question 16 allowed the teacher participant to give overall valuable information as an expert on the topic. The co-researchers were given an opportunity to add any other information not given before, and this enriched the collected data.

Standardized open-ended Individual Interview Questions for Parents (Appendix F)

1. Please tell me about yourself and your experience of parenting a young Black child? 
   CRQ

2. How do you display love and warmth as you spend one-on-one time with your child? 
   SQ4

3. What routines do you have in place to establish stability for your child? SQ6

4. What activities would you consider to constitute bonding moments with your child? SQ4

5. What activities do your children do to help them think outside themselves to develop responsibility? SQ6

6. How have you created a village to strengthen the support your child may need from others to develop socially? SQ5

7. What do you do to determine if your child performs on grade level in math and language arts? SQ5

8. What are some strategies you use to encourage critical thinking at home? SQ6

9. How do you support literacy at home? SQ5

10. What has made you aware of the importance of using strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in low-income schools? SQ6
Questions 1–6 focused on positive parenting. Libin (2020) stated that positive parenting is all about empowering Black children to develop skills and strengths that will support them throughout their lives and give them opportunities to hone and practice those skills and strengths. The effects of positive parenting may include helping children develop a deep understanding of empathy, self-confidence, better relationships with others, and problem-solving skills (Libin, 2020; Siegel & Bryson, 2011). Questions 7 to 10 addressed parental support of the academics of the child. Research shows that home support for early learning complements learning at school (Bennett, 2003; Hayes & Filipovic, 2018). Playing math games, reading with children, and asking open-ended questions as they play are examples of fun, straightforward ways to build critical thinking foundational skills at home (Nolan, 2020).

**Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan**

Once the data collection process for the case study commences, Yin (2018) suggested that the early analysis of the data is a critical step in the overall interpretation of the case studies. To assist in the early analysis of the case studies, I used the codes and coding techniques. This technique was selected as it lent itself to linking the data back to the research questions (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) suggested that data analysis may begin by looking at the central research question first and then identifying the evidence that addresses the question, leading to drawing a tentative conclusion. To analyze individual interviews, I used the five steps suggested by Yin. I started by putting information in different arrays, reflecting different themes and subthemes. Next, I made a matrix of contrasting categories and placed the evidence within such a matrix. There was not much contrast because the data did not show outstanding outliers. I then created visual displays of flowcharts and other graphic organizers to help me examine the data. I then tabulated the frequency of different themes and subthemes using a color-coded table. Finally, I
put information in some sequential order for write-ups. I created six different charts that reflected the six emerging themes with their subthemes.

Coding was done by putting the information on a graphic organizer and assigning tags or labels to the data collected (Yin, 2018). My coding identified a word, a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph important to the research. Yin (2018) suggested that 15–30 initial codes be created for short-term memory. Chunks or segments of data from the interviews began by associating them with one or more initial codes (Yin, 2018). As needed, codes were expanded or changed. Yin (2018) stated that most codes eventually used to code the case study data would evolve once the coding commenced. If the codes were too many, the codes were grouped according to a particular theme they addressed.

The last next step is to rationalize the expanded codes to remove any duplications or anomalies that may have arisen in their creation (Yin, 2018). The rationalized process found similarities between the expanded codes which assisted in analyzing the data more closely. As I considered the theoretical outputs from the database, I was able to make predictions of the output, which drove the research's potential findings, helping me arrive at the appropriate conclusions. This process was used to analyze all the individual interview questions from both the teachers and the parents.

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups are a form of group interviews that capitalize on communication between research participants to generate data (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Although group interviews are often used simply as a quick and convenient way to collect data from several people simultaneously, focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method (Syrnyk, 2018). This means that instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question, in
turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes, and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view (Jonsen et al., 2018). The method is beneficial for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and examining what people think and how they think and why they think that way. The following questions were used for the focus groups.

**Focus Group Questions**

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions for Teachers (Appendix N):

1. How can teachers partner with parents to lay a firm foundation for early literacy? CRQ
2. How could teachers assist young Black children to build healthy social and emotional skills in their classrooms? SQ2
3. Why is fostering a supportive environment that promotes strong relationships among teachers, students, and parents vital? SQ1
4. How could teachers implement meaningful, engaging instructional practices that develop students' ability to self-regulate? CRQ
5. How do teachers use habits, skills, and appropriate mindsets that build students' social, emotional, and academic competencies? CRQ
6. How do teachers model appropriate social behavior in the classroom? SQ1
7. How can teachers address barriers that hinder the implementation of strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development in low-socioeconomic communities’ schools? SQ2
8. Why do teachers always need to remain sensitive to children's physical, emotional, and academic needs? CRQ
Questions 1–3 familiarized me with what the teachers could do to improve students’ achievement through strategies that nurture young Black children’s academic and social development in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities. Children with emotional difficulties often experience problems at school in terms of academic progress and peer relationships (Pianta, 2017). They are also more likely to continue to experience emotional problems in their adult lives. Quin (2017) stated that teachers' high expectations expressed through nurture bring about remarkable changes in the children. When the theory which underpins nurture is applied to the school environment with a clear curriculum focus, a positive cycle of growth and development is set in motion as teaching and learning become more effective for all children and the morale of all is boosted and improved (Quin, 2017; Ramberg et al., 2019).

The nurturing school supports committed teachers concerned about the emotional development of young Black children into adults (B. Collins et al., 2017; Ramberg et al., 2019). Pianta (2017) added that improvement in behaviors was associated with cognitive engagement in learning standards tasks, yielding an overall academic improvement. Nurture is viewed as an effective intervention strategy proven to improve academic achievement (Quin, 2017). School leaders can develop a nurturing climate in the building by visiting teachers before classes start, greeting students as they enter the building, and providing expected planning time for teachers that gives teachers and students an expanded capacity for learning (B. Collins et al., 2017).
Academic achievement is improved as principals focus relentlessly on the quality of instruction that defines and promotes high expectations. In a 21st century classroom, teachers could foster academic and social improvement by knowing their students, involving students in developmentally appropriate problems solving, fostering a question-friendly environment, making learning student-centered, and modeling creativity in the classroom using technology (Higgins & BuShell, 2018; Schofield & Davidson, 2017).

Questions 4 and 5 provided insights into what teachers use in their educational practices to enhance academic and social development in the classroom. Inquiry-based dialogue through nurturing thoughtful, inquisitive, and non-hierarchical communication can lead to positive and productive relationships between teachers and students (Sanli, 2019; Trach et al., 2018). Teachers use oral history approaches to reflect upon the relationships, and the narrative nature of inquiry-based dialogue promotes and strengthens teachers' relationships with students (Vandenbroucke et al., 2017). Teachers promote the cognitive processes essential in learning by creating emotionally, positive, structured, and cognitively stimulating classroom environments (Sanli, 2019; Trach et al., 2018).

Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 focused on what the teachers needed to be equipped with to identify students with social and emotional problems, identify barriers that hinder teachers from using effective strategies, questioning techniques that promote emotional oneness, and the role of classroom management in establishing a climate conducive to social and academic success. Teachers have a responsibility to identify students who may need intervention with their social and emotional problems. Teachers need to be trained and be given strategies such as observing the relationships and social interaction with peers, conflict negotiations, students' regulation of emotional and social behavior, responsible conduct, engagement, and persistence (Sointu et al.,
Barriers to the implementation of these strategies may be multicultural (Djonko-Moore et al., 2018).

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions for Parents (See Appendix G)

1. How have you celebrated the small victories of your children? CRQ
2. How have you found support in providing strategies that nurturing your children academically and socially? SQ5
3. What activities do you do to build a strong relationship with your child? CRQ
4. What have you done to ensure that you are not only doing what is suitable for your child but what is best for your child? SQ6
5. How have you resisted the temptation to rescue your children from academic challenges and struggles to enhance critical thinking and the value of hard work? SQ6
6. How have you partnered with your child's teacher to enhance the nurture of your child? SQ5
7. What has been your greatest challenge you face while trying to meet the academic needs of your child? SQ6
8. How have you managed your anxiety to help your child cope with the uncertainties and academic or social struggles your child faces? CRQ
9. In what ways have you been vulnerable with your children to help them understand that struggle is typical to all humans? SQ4
10. What affirmation statements do you give to your children to ensure them that they are destined for success? CRQ

Questions 1–6 gave me insight into what decades of research have demonstrated that the parent–child relationship and the family environment are at the foundation of a child's well-being
and healthy development (Brunton & Thornton, 2010; Gadsden et al., 2016). The impact of parents may be most significant during the earliest years. During this time, a child's brain is rapidly developing with all the experiences created by the family environment. Parents help children build and refine their knowledge and skills, charting a trajectory for their social and academic well-being during childhood and beyond. Supporting parents by equipping them with knowledge and resources will enhance their role and help them overcome parental barriers that they are likely to face. Questions 5–10 shed light on the many challenges parents face as they juggle the role of being both teachers and parents. Concerning healthy behavior, children have always followed their parents as role models. Wang et al. (2020) stated that parents need to respect their identity, free space, and pay attention to their children's specific needs in addition to monitoring academic performance, behavior, and self-discipline skills (Lee, 2020; Usher et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020).

**Focus Group Data Analysis Plan**

Similar to how interviews were analyzed, I use the codes and coding techniques to analyze the data from the focus groups. Focus groups were videotaped to make it easier to match comments with the participants. This technique was selected as it lent itself to linking the data back to the research questions (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) suggested that data analysis may begin by looking at the central research question first and then identifying the evidence that addresses the question, leading to drawing a tentative conclusion. To analyze the focus group interviews, I used the five steps suggested by Yin. I started by putting information in different arrays, reflecting different themes and subthemes. Next, I made a matrix of contrasting categories and placed the evidence within such a matrix. There was limited contrast due to the absence of outliers. I then created visual displays of flowcharts and other graphic organizers to help me
examine the data. I then tabulated the frequency of different themes and subthemes to find anomalies. Finally, I put information in some sequential order for write-ups. This analyzing was applied to the data gathered from both the teachers’ and the parents’ focus groups.

**Letter-Writing**

School counselors are certified/licensed educators who improve student success by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. Thuy (2020) stated that the school counselor helps students set goals, manage emotions, apply interpersonal skills, and apply academic achievement strategies for success. School psychologists apply mental health, learning, and behavior expertise to help children succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally (Johnson & Rehfuss, 2020). School social workers assist students with health concerns, behavioral concerns, positive behavior support, and academic supports coupled with intervention strategies to increase students' success (Thuy, 2020). All three of these professionals collaborate with families, teachers, and school administrators to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the communities (Johnson & Rehfuss, 2020; Thuy, 2020).

Here are the directions for these letters (see Appendix P):

Dear school counselor, psychologist, social worker

Kindly take about 30 minutes to write a letter to teachers and parents explaining the importance of using strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development in a low-income school setting. In the letter, explain to teachers and parents your views about education as a partnership between home and school and how you feel about shared knowledge in helping the child develop or grow holistically, socially, and academically. Using
your professional knowledge and experience, write a paragraph to the teachers and a paragraph to the parents giving them strategies and tips to help students succeed.

The letter by educational experts to teachers and parents was chosen as a data collection method because, through it, home and school connections could be established, and this helps the students adjust to the two learning environments. When teachers and parents partner in educating children, there is an advantage of shared rights and responsibilities towards the common goal of students' success (Arndt, 2018; Brissenden-Smith et al., 2018). The teamwork may foster the best educational experiences, nurture the students, and support learning as well as foster appropriate child development (Costales & Anderson, 2018).

**Letter-Writing Data Analysis Plan**

Since the letters did not need to be transcribed, they were easier to analyze using the similar method used for interviews and focus groups of coding. Yin (2018) suggested that data analysis may begin by looking at the central research question first and then identifying the evidence that addresses the question, leading to drawing a tentative conclusion. To analyze the data from letters of school counselors, psychologists, and social workers, I used the five steps suggested by Yin. I started by putting information in different arrays, reflecting different themes and subthemes. Next, I made a matrix of contrasting categories and placing the evidence within such a matrix. I then created visual displays of flowcharts and other graphic organizers to help me examine the data. I then tabulated the frequency of different themes and subthemes. Finally, I put information in some sequential order for write-ups. The analysis included the data from all the letters collected.
**Data Synthesis**

Qualitative data analysis "involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data and forming an interpretation of them" (Yin, 2018, p. 165). I used pattern-matching and explanation building. To find the patterns, I used chart paper to map out information. First, I read the transcriptions of each individual interview and put information in different arrays reflecting different themes. The themes were numbered to accommodate as many emerging themes as possible. I used green for the individual interviews to mark the themes and subthemes. I repeated the process with the focus group transcriptions using a red marker. The letters were analyzed using a blue marker. The emerging patterns helped me build explanations on themes and the subthemes emphasized. The next step was to create a matrix of contrast. The matrix did not have much information because there were no major outliers. I created visual displays by taking each theme with a flow chart of its subthemes. I tabulated the frequency of different themes to determine their order of popularity. The sequential write-up started with the most popular theme as determined by frequency tabulation (Patton, 2015; Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018).

In this case study, I organized the data from interviews, focus groups, and letters into digital files. Furthermore, I created a file naming system ensuring that the "materials can easily get located in large databases of text for analysis" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 185). I used graphic organizers to help me analyze the information easily. I began the analysis process by reading the transcripts in their entirety several times to immerse myself in detail. I wrote notes on the margins of the field notes as an initial process of exploring the database (Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018). Data were described as codes classified into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By forming systems and categories, I was able to build detailed descriptions, apply codes, and develop
themes to provide interpretation considering a researcher's views or views of perspectives in the literature (Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018). The data analysis concluded with a write-up creating a coherent narrative that included discussion of themes and answers to the research questions using quotes from the co-researchers derived from their interviews, focus groups, and letters to teachers and parents (Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018). The data from the co-researchers provided corroborating evidence through the triangulation of multiple sources of data that ensured the credibility of the case study findings.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is one way researchers can persuade themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The trustworthiness of a research study is essential to evaluate its worth, and it establishes that the research study's findings accurately portray the participants' responses. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refined the concept of trustworthiness by introducing the criteria for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to parallel the conventional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability. Each measure of trustworthiness will be discussed below, along with how this study's findings provided evidence for each area.

**Credibility**

Guba and Lincoln (1989) claimed that the credibility of a study is determined when co-researchers or readers are confronted with an experience they can recognize. Credibility addresses the "fit" between respondents' views and the researcher's representation of them (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested several techniques to address credibility, but I elected to use prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member-checking. Triangulation of the data was done by exploring and synthesizing data from the interviews, focus groups, and
letters to increase the credibility and the validity of research findings. I used the interviews, focus
groups, and letters to teachers and parents for the research findings. To do this, I used a voice
recognition system, notation choices, active listening, and audiotape material. Credibility can
also be operationalized through member checking, in which my co-researchers were asked to
check their transcripts for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the generalizability of the inquiry. In qualitative research, this
concerns only case-to-case transfer (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The researcher cannot know the
sites that may wish to transfer the findings; however, the researcher is responsible for providing
thick descriptions. Those who seek to communicate the findings to their site can judge
transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). "It is not the researcher's task to provide an index of
transferability. The researcher's responsibility is to provide the database that makes
transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (H. Brooks et al., 2018, p.
39). I created an audit trail (see Appendix R) that provides readers with evidence of the decisions
and choices made by the researcher regarding theoretical and methodological issues throughout
the study, which requires a clear rationale for such decisions (Koch, 1994). Sandelowski (1986)
stated that research and its findings are auditable when another researcher can follow the
decision trail. Furthermore, Koch (1994) argued that another researcher with the same data,
perspective, and situation could arrive at the same or comparable, but not contradictory,
conclusions.

Dependability

Dependability is showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Lincoln
& Guba, 1985). Dependability can be demonstrated through an effective description of
procedures undertaken in the study. I used a reflexive journal to add trustworthiness; the reflexive journal recorded my biases, both before beginning my study and as issues arose along the way. Researchers can ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). When readers can examine the research process, they can better judge the dependability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way that a research study may demonstrate dependability is through peer review. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined peer review as a "process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and to explore aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308).

A disinterested person is not an immediate stakeholder in the outcome of a project but a knowledgeable source on the topic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used two trusted and knowledgeable people who have expertise in qualitative research methods and understood the topic for this study to review my findings. This helped me to talk through their interpretations to verify their conclusions. These planned conversations assisted me in affirming and challenging my results to ensure that they are confirmable. I used peer review to provide an external check on the research process, increasing confirmability and examining referential adequacy to check preliminary findings and interpretations against the raw data.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used reflexivity as a means of establishing credibility. The purpose of my reflexive journal was to help me acknowledge my own experiences, actions, thoughts, feelings, values, and identity, making them part of my data analysis and data interpretation. My reflexive journal
sharpened my understanding and knowledge on my topic, and it helped me reduce some of my bias (see Appendix Q).

**Ethical Considerations**

The challenges researchers encounter during "the data analysis and representation process are ethical issues related to participant protection from harm and disclosure of comprehensive findings" (Yin, 2018, p. 122). In this study, the site and the participants were given pseudonyms. Participants' responses were confidential, too, using pseudonyms. I created a codebook with their names and matching pseudonyms. This codebook was kept in a locked file separate from other data. I conducted interviews in a location where others could not easily overhear the conversation. The recordings of these discussions will be stored in password-locked computers for 3 years, and after that, they will be deleted. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Limited access to analyze procedures and lack of agreement about how findings get represented were minimized by embedding member-checking strategies and opportunities for sharing methods and results (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Hsiung, 2018; Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018). I used password protection for electronic files. I stored research records securely, and I was the only researcher with access to the documents. I presented multiple perspectives reflective of a complex picture provided by the co-researchers (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Hsiung, 2018; Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018). All names and locations were given pseudonyms to preserve the confidentiality of the participants and sites.

**Summary**

This chapter explained how this case study explored strategies teachers and parents use to nurture young Black children's academic and social development in low-socioeconomic communities. The holistic single-case research design had research questions, natural setting, and
participants. Data collection was done through individual interviews and focus groups of teachers and parents and letters from school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Data analysis strategies included pattern matching and explanation building that led to confirmation of the resolution.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to describe how teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in school settings in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. The participants were five teachers, four parents, two counselors, two psychologists, and two social workers. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis including emerging themes and an explanation of themes that yielded in-depth understanding of the research topic. Strategies that teachers and parents used to nurture young Black children’s academic and social development were building relationships with students, creating a safe and supportive learning environment, teacher/parent partnership, building confidence, providing educational resources, and holding high expectations for students. The chapter ends with a summary.

Participants

This section provides a snapshot of the co-researchers. The description of the teachers includes their years of experience, degrees, and the grade each teacher taught during the year of the study. The parents’ description includes their age, number of children, and their careers. The description of school counselors, psychologists, and social workers presents the number of years they have worked with Black children in low-income schools. All the participants were Blacks, and this was significant because the research was to benefit young Black children. These participants fully understood the background, the communities, and the lives of young Black children. Moreover, only Black participants worked at the site of study.
Teacher Participant Profiles

The teacher co-researcher group was made up of teachers who had taught young Black children for more than 10 years. My rationale for this choice was the desire to get rich and helpful information from their diverse experiences. All of them were passionate about the education of young Black children because they could identify with these children. They believed that educators had played a role in shaping them to be where they are. All except one were females. It was important to get the perspective of a male teacher regarding the topic of study.

Penny

Penny is an enthusiastic and energetic certified teacher who has been teaching children for the past 20 years. She began teaching Pre-K in a predominately White private school where 95% of her students were White. As more Black students began to enroll, the White population decreased significantly. She has been with the current school district for about 10 years where the Black population at the school is around 98% percent. She has taught Pre-K to Grade 4. She has a Master of Education in early childhood.

Rose

Rose is a calm and pleasant certified early childhood educator who began her teaching career in an extremely poor and rural area in Florida. At first, she taught intensive reading to middle school seventh and eighth graders who failed their state test. She moved to her current school district a year later and has taught second to fifth grades for the last 17 years. She has a master’s degree in early childhood. Before getting her professional certification, Rosa gave private flute lessons to students who could not afford to pay for lessons.
**Matilda**

Matilda is a funny, petite teacher who has taught young Black students in two countries for a total of 27 years. She has taught from kindergarten to fifth grade specializing in language arts. She has taught in both private and public-school settings, and she holds an Educational Specialist degree in early childhood.

**Maggie**

Maggie is a deep, reflective certified early childhood teacher that has been teaching Black children for a total of 24 years. She rarely laughs, and it was shocking to learn that she lost her mother when she was in first grade. Maggie has taught Title I students for 19 years. Maggie has just completed her doctorate in early childhood, and she hopes to identify and help traumatized children.

**Jonathan**

Jonathan is that sarcastic but friendly and outgoing teacher who graduated in 1996 and has been teaching Black children for 22 years as a certified teacher in early childhood. He has a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in education. His main experience has been in the Black neighborhood schools where he enjoys sharing knowledge and resources with Black parents.

**Parent Participant Profiles**

The parent participant group was made up of Black women of different ages and career choices. All the parents had at least one or two boys, a factor that brought emotional involvement in our discussions as each feared the fate of the boys considering the George Floyd incident that circulated the globe. Two had happy and stable marriages and two were women angry with the fathers of their children. They all acknowledged that raising Black children was more challenging than what they had anticipated.
**Brittney**

Brittney is a hard-working, beautiful, kind, and gentle 29-year-old divorced mother of two Black boys and a full-time project Manager for a large healthcare system. She finds parenting both challenging and rewarding but she is happy to have a stable village around her. Her middle-class income has allowed her to settle in a diverse and stable neighborhood, limiting exposure to violence and poverty for her boys.

**Tiffany**

Tiffany is a brilliant and neat executive director over a surgical and medical division in a major hospital in her city. She has three Black children, two boys and one girl. Tiffany’s major challenge was understanding the educational system because she was raised in a different country.

**Maria**

Maria is a sweet, calm, and married 43-year-old mother of three Black children. Maria worries about her children being treated differently because of the color of their skin. She is afraid that they may not advocate for themselves successfully.

**Charity**

Charity is a quiet, strong-bodied 37-year-old single Black mother of four children, ages 6 through 13, whose marriage of 16 years was ended by domestic violence. She studied sociology and then went back to school and obtained a master’s degree in elementary education. She teaches as a certified teacher, and she finds parenting Black children alone very challenging with no coping strategies.
School Personnel Participant Profiles

The school counselors, psychologists, and social workers were selected based on their experience of working with young Black children in low-income schools. It was a little challenging to find people who wanted to participate because all of them had been forced to take up extra responsibilities that also kept them from interacting with the children as they desired. A couple of counselors told me that they had been required to act as substitute teachers as the pandemic brought teacher shortages in schools. The psychologists and social workers were assigned clusters of schools to serve, leaving them with no free time for anything else.

Frasier

Frasier has been a school counselor for 25 years. She does non-profit work and holds speaking engagements in her free time. She strongly believes in teacher parent partnership for the success of Black children who are born disadvantaged. She is an award-winning counselor.

Amelia

Amelia taught school before getting her doctorate in counseling. She has worked for the same school district for the last 19 years. Amelia feels overwhelmed by her workload that has been increased by staff shortage as she is tasked with other administrative duties that keep her from working with children as she should.

Olivia

Olivia earned her doctorate in psychology 14 years ago. It was difficult for her to find a position in the school district where she has been working for the last 8 years. She has been serving students in a cluster of three different schools.
Edith

Edith is a vibrant 41-year-old psychologist who has worked with children of all races. In the last 7 years, her school demographics has changed to 80% Black.

Emma

Emma has worked as a social worker for the same school district for the last 29 years. She is very experienced, and she knows almost all the social workers in the district. She viewed the topic as potential research that could yield some helpful solutions to many problems faced by Black children, and she made her response to the task thorough and comprehensive.

Sophia

Sophia had been a teacher for 15 years, but she decided to leave the classroom and do social work because she could no longer deal with the stress of challenging student behaviors. After a couple of health scares, she went back to school and got a master’s degree in social work. She has been working for the school district for 6 years and her mantra was as follows: “Think of what you could do if you are not afraid.”

Results

This section presents the result of the data analysis process, presenting the findings using in vivo quotes from the participants. All quotes from participants in this results section are presented verbatim, which includes verbal ticks and grammatical errors in speech and writing to accurately depict the participants’ voices. The central research question and its sub-questions are explored. The data were collected using teachers’ and parents’ individual interviews followed by focus groups and letters by counselors, psychologists, and social workers. The data were analyzed using codes that developed into themes.
Theme Development

The purpose of this case study was to describe how teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. Data were collected through teachers’ and parents’ individual interviews and focus groups and letters written to teachers and parents by school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the codes were placed into themes. The focus groups were videotaped and transcribed, and the codes were placed into themes. All the collected data were individually analyzed. During the individual case analysis, the data were coded and placed into themes that related to the research questions. Creswell (2018) stated that in qualitative research, themes are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form common ideas.

The following six themes are presented in the table below and then individually discussed in detail. Building relationships with students through genuine care, modeling, and individualized attention is the top theme. Equally important is creating a safe and supportive learning environment by upholding the dignity/respect of each student, creating room to make mistakes, and building a community of learners. Teacher/parent partnership is established by communication, trust, and openness. Building confidence is critical to young Black children, and it can be done by offering daily affirmations, encouragements, and validation. Educational resources may include planned, thoughtful, as well as purposeful instruction by teachers, quality curriculum, and educational resources. The sixth theme is that of holding students to high expectations using data-driven instructions, use of technology, and immediate feedback.
### Table 1

**Theme Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes and Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Theme 1: Building Relationships with Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build relationships, awareness, anxiety, apathy, aggression, uncaring, indifferent, positive relationships, whole truth teachable moments, hesitant, acknowledge, authentic</td>
<td>Genuine care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive stories, character, kind, listen, express emotions, directions, speaking, respect</td>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel seen, middle name, culture, diversity, traumatic situations, relevant, please</td>
<td>Individualized attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Theme 2: Safe and Supportive Learning Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made to feel important, mistakes, well-rounded, empathetic, trust, trusted space, respectful, self-discipline, socially responsible, appropriate, valued, greet, worthiness, difficult conversations, race</td>
<td>Dignity and Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take chances, no wrong answers, behavior issues, believe in students, dream, opportunity</td>
<td>Room to Make Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions, heterogeneously, groups, uniformity, cooperation, facilitate</td>
<td>Community of Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Theme 3: Teacher /Parent Partnership</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy calls, calls, phone calls, emails, ClassDojo, agenda books, effective</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation, connection, trust, bonding, dependable, protect, difficult conversations, physically affectionate, date night, predictable</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatic situations, guardians, aware, good practices</td>
<td>Openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Themes and Subthemes</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</table>

**Major Theme 4: Building Confidence**

- Express how wonderful, abuse, neglect, homelessness, food shortage, incarceration, mental illness, domestic violence, recovery, trauma, greet, awake hours
- Daily Affirmations

- Rewards, positive, frustrate, discouraged, helpless, truancy, rebellion, anger, hungry, tired, arguments, lack of medical care, suicidal ideations, mood swings
- Encouragement

- Feel validated, royal family, culture, troublemakers, afraid, withdrawal
- Validation

**Major Theme 5: Educational Resources**

- Intentional, judgement, organized, attention, deficit skills, will, determination, commercial breaks, movement, non-verbal cues, never assume knowledge, music, break down, unfamiliar, play, classroom management, test driven, pedagogy
- Planned, Thoughtful, and Purposeful Instruction

- Thrive, concise, standard English, known to unknown, standards, mastery, struggle, grade level, efficient, effective, information, curriculum, abreast, development, explain
- High-Quality Curriculum

- Disadvantaged, knowledge, literature, penalized, crime, drugs, violence, poverty, mediocre life, disparities
- Learning Resources

**Major Theme 6: High Expectation**

- High scores, evaluations, micromanaged, future leaders, accountable, achievement, effective, testing, emphasis, progress, performance, check
- Data-Driven Instruction

- Platforms, pace, reinforce, technical, skills, practice, matriculate, explore the world, exposure
- Use of Technology

- Do my best, get a stern talking, redo the assignment
- Immediate Feedback

Based on Table 1 six themes and 18 sub-themes emerged. Each theme with its corresponding sub-themes is discussed below. The participants’ individual responses supporting
the themes and the sub-themes are embedded within the discussion of each theme and its sub-theme.

**Theme 1: Building Relationships with Students**

All three groups of co-researchers stated that building relationships with students was the top strategy that teachers and parents could use to help young Black children. In giving the rationale and the importance of building relationships with students, school psychologist Olivia wrote in her letter, "It is essential to recognize the sociocultural experiences of Black children is distinctly different from children of other racial or ethnic groups.” Maggie in her individual interview emphasized the importance of building relationships when she said:

Building relationships with Black children I have served over the years has been the number one most important strategy that nurtures my students’ academic and social development. It is always helpful to know your students. You will not teach your students until they know you care about them.

Penny agreed with this during her interview when she said, "Another way to help Black children is to build relationships with Black students." She also stated that building relationships is challenging because "the exposure to violence and sexual content often spills over into the instructional day. Once the students are off track, it is often difficult to regain their attention."

Rosa agreed with the others on building relationships on her interview when she said, "I do not have a kid of my own, but I knew I could not teach angry children. I made connections with them. I acknowledge them before I started each day." Maria added her view on building relationships during her interview when she said, “My child has helped me understand him as he gives me knowledge on his struggles.” Social worker Sophia wrote in her letter, "Active listening
is a skill that can help you develop a close healthy relationship with your child. Listen without interrupting, correcting, or judging."

**Sub-Theme: Genuine Care**

Black children need to be cared for by adults who genuinely care about their well-being. They need to feel loved by human beings who understand their backgrounds and the challenges they may face. Genuine care is demonstrated as the adults take time to develop authentic interactions with students. Black children need a safe place at home and at school to thrive. Teachers may not effectively teach the children until the children know that the teachers care. Convinced of the need for genuine care, Rose said in her interview, "Once a child feels loved and celebrated, the academic portion will fall in place." Jonathan added a classic phrase during the focus group when he said, "Be present and give it all you got." Matilda agreed with Rose and Jonathan in her interview when she said, "I try to diversify my lessons to establish a connection with my students and show them that I care about them personally." Rosa went on to state, "This generates thrives on authentic interactions." Genuine care can also be modeled to children by the parent. To stress this point, Tiffany said in her interview, "Outside the country we took them to orphanages to see destitute children. They responded with a lot of love, compassion, and did not understand how children could not have parents."

**Sub-Theme: Model**

Adults should not make the mistake of assuming that a child knows what to do. Most of the essential things are caught, not taught. Teachers and parents must model what they expect the children to do or produce. The adults must know the status of each child at the beginning of the day to effectively provide what the child needs to succeed socially and academically. Penny spoke of what she did in class in her interview when she said, "I model the work, and they rise to
the occasion.” In her interview, Rose explained how she models emotional support to her students when she said, “I model being kind to them. I ask them questions and express their emotions so that it isn’t an issue of them feeling like no one is listening.” She continued to explain what she models in her class, adding:

I model following directions. I model ways of saying or making responses. I give examples or consequences or rewards. I speak to them as if they were adults. I teach them respect to all people. They know that I am their biggest advocate.

During his interview, Jonathan agreed about modeling when he said, "When it comes to habits, we are to make sure that we are modeling good habits for them. Some of the things that we want them to do, we can model." During the focus group, Matilda agreed with Jonathan on the importance of modeling: “These children in elementary school are seeing things that I did not even know existed until I was in college. They have seen inappropriate things not fit for this conversation.” Rose contributed to the conversation by adding, "Teach them how to respect their peers as well as adults." Psychologist Olivia wrote about the importance of modeling in her letter: “Black children look to their parents to be their number one cheerleader such that when they are absent or uninvolved, this hurts the child's academic experience and robs them of a sense of belonging.”

**Sub-Theme: Individualized Attention**

Learning at home or school happens when students are treated as individuals. The parents who have more than one child need to slot time to spend one-on-one with each child. Teachers need to learn the background of each child and that of their family. Every child needs to be acknowledged in class and get individualized attention, especially if a child is struggling in school. Rosa explained what she did in her classroom during the focus group discussion when
she said, "I am making it a point to give each child individualized attention and encourage them as needed. My students just want to please me." Maggie also spoke to this point during this discussion: "Learning happens when students are treated as individuals. Take time to understand their culture." Jonathan agreed with Maggie in this conversation when he said, "Learning is culture, and the culture of the Black child is verbal, and so I enjoy engaging them a lot in conversations." Maggie added:

I also think that culturally relevant pedagogy is an essential strategy to reach Black students academically and socially. I make sure my students see and hear stories that have characters that look like them and have plots and settings that they may have experienced.

During the discussion in the focus group Rose added this observation: "Each student does not have a positive role model at home or a role model at all. School is where they see the first act of compassion and sometimes love." Brittney, in her interview, gave her view that children need to feel personally cared for when she said:

I display love and warmth by being very physically affectionate with my children. Ask them personal questions and try to take an interest in the things that interest them in the hopes of making them feel seen, loved, and important.

There are various ways of giving children individualized attention. In her interview, Tiffany explained her way as a parent when she said:

I have girls out with my daughter and my husband will have boys and eat out. I arrange time for them to spend with each, and each has him, or her game, I take time to attend the game to cheer them up and support. We read bedtime story or stories a show
before bedtime and end in prayer. We do big birthday celebration with their friends and have sleepovers having to buy them their favorite snacks and presents.

In her interview, Charity added that the relationships are built through a display of love and warmth when she explained,

As I spend one-on-one time with my children, I display love and warmth through affectionate hugs and kisses, time for them to express their feelings and emotions, so they know that I care about how they feel and sometimes just giving in to doing what they want. The activities that I would consider bonding moments with my children are picnics at the park, reading them a book, teaching them a lesson, watching a movie, or just hugging them until they fall asleep.

During her interview, Penny emphasized individualized attention when she said:

All children must trust the teacher to feel supported. All the children are different. Never embarrass a child in front of others. It is good to correct them in private. When children are embarrassed, they shut down and they are afraid of teachers who embarrass them.

**Theme 2: Safe and Supportive Learning Environment**

A safe and supportive learning environment emerged as the co-researchers’ second favorite theme. Creating a safe learning environment is critical as Black students come from diverse backgrounds, and many may be dealing with racial stressors and other kinds of trauma that impact self-esteem and their capacity to engage well academically. During the focus group discussion, Maggie spoke of this when she said: “The most effective way to ensure growth is to ensure a good foundation. That foundation is a secure and efficient learning environment where they do not need to feel scared or hesitant to learn or participate.” Penny supported Meggie, stating, "I believe students want and need a safe, structured, and supportive environment where it
is safe to make mistakes and learn from them." Jonathan strongly agreed with both Maggie and Penny in the discussion and said, "I sit them heterogeneously because they are susceptible to being labeled."

All children must trust the adults to feel supported, and it is the responsibility of the adults to ensure that children do not give up on themselves. Matilda agreed with all the other teachers during the focus group discussion when she said:

Making a safe learning environment is key, as students from diverse backgrounds may be hesitant to participate in learning. Make a connection with your students to open to your teaching and lessons. Show patience and understanding as students come from many different backgrounds, and what you may think is belligerence or a lack of cooperation might be that student's default way of interaction. Lastly and most importantly to facilitate all of these, create a safe and secure environment where all students are on a level playing field.

In her interview, Brittney supported a safe and supportive environment when she said, "Our lives are very predictable. During the school year, we have much structure." A safe and supportive environment can also come from the extended family. In describing the village that surrounded her children during the interview, Brittney said:

We have a powerful village within my family and their father's family. They frequently see my parents and brother. My brother does monthly bonding activities with them. They see their other grandmother and aunt. I have a few friends the boys interact with regularly. Some with children and some without.

In expressing the need for a safe and supportive environment during her interview, Maria told of her worry as a parent when she said, "Among some of my fears include anxiety around bullying
and being treated differently from other kids. I also worry about my child's ability to advocate for himself if he is not being treated fairly.” Maria added that there were things that could be put in place to support the environment when she said: “Stability came with being consistent, providing a good structure, and flexibility when needed. For example, making sure he understands his tasks and explaining my rationale for doing certain things, such as chores, time management, etc.”

Charity expressed her concern about a safe and supportive environment when she said: “I have encountered many educators who taught or were engaged in my children's education who did not care, who were very mean and inconsiderate of my children's emotional state. Not every teacher should be in their profession!” The school environment should be non-threatening so that children can look forward to coming there daily. Commenting on a supportive classroom, Rose said during the teacher focus group, "It would be good if the teachers knew what these kids were going through." Psychologist Olivia stressed the importance of establishing a safe environment when she wrote, "It may be important to recognize that Black children may be dealing with stressors such as meeting basic needs that may get in the way of their academic performance."

Psychologist Edith added that children must be viewed holistically when she wrote to the teachers:

Whether we are looking at their history, experiences at home, cultural practices, possible family issues, poverty, or other issues, these students have unique experiences. These issues impact how the students socialize and even how they perform when they come to school. Therefore, as teachers, it is essential to understand each student's experience when they present to the school.
Social worker Edith wrote to the teachers that they need to "Ensure that your classroom serves as a safe and welcoming space." She wrote that teachers teach relationship skills while engaging students in their learning and encouraging parental involvement.

**Sub-Theme: Dignity and Worth**

Parents and teachers need to treat young Black children with dignity and worth; this treatment is due to every human being. Every effort that a child makes must be celebrated. Small victories, too, should be acknowledged and celebrated. There is a need to establish routines and structures so that students know what to expect. Social worker Sophia addressed dignity and worth when she wrote, "When people feel heard, they hear." Jonathan supported this idea during his interview when he said, "Children who feel loved tend to do better and are happier even if they do not have material wealth." Maggie agreed with Jonathan in her interview when she said:

I greet each student at the door each day and say, "Good morning!" and wait for them to respond. I start the day with a check-in. I show students a Blob Tree with pictures of different feelings and ask students to tell the class which blob looks like them and why.

Students can share what they are feeling.

Matilda added a fine-tuned way of making students feel dignified when she said during focus group:

A few timeless strategies that I believe nurture their social and academic development are getting to know students personally by taking a genuine interest in them, including learning, and pronouncing their names correctly and affirming Black students through curriculum, primarily through books. I say all this to say that when students know they matter and you care about them, they are more willing to put their best foot forward.
In her interview, Brittney added that young Black children need to be prepared for the way the world may view them because of the race when she said:

   Apart from having complex conversions about race and how others may see them in this world, it is also challenging to be the parent faced with the day-to-day demands of life and decision making. As young Black children, they often wondered why there were no people of other races in our neighborhood. Race issues could interfere with their dignity and worth as adults. Brittney believed that human worth and dignity could be modeled to children by adults when she said in the focus group, "They believe in giving to the less fortunate. We can never see a homeless person without donating."

**Sub-Theme: Room to Make Mistakes**

   Young Black children want and need a safe, structured, and supportive environment to make mistakes and learn from them. They need to be given opportunities to redo any assignment not done correctly. They also need adults to assure them that all people make mistakes. The most important thing is to learn lessons from the mistakes. During the teacher focus group, Jonathan affirmed this point when he said, "There are no wrong answers in my class." In the same discussion, Maggie supported the idea of getting to the root of an issue if a student was misbehaving in class when she said:

   Research on childhood trauma has made me realize that students with behavior issues are trying to get others to see that something is wrong in their lives. . . . I have learned to wonder what happens to a child rather than wondering what is wrong.

   She strengthened her point by adding, "Just as a teacher would not expect to teach children when they have stated they are hungry, a teacher should not expect normal behavior from a student
who has lost a parent or who is homeless." Successful people may have had people who believed in them and supported their dream while praising them and, according to them, the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

**Sub-Theme: Community of Learners**

Teachers need to create a community of learners where young Black children get a sense of belonging. The young Black children come to school with different challenges, and when they know that they are not alone in their struggles, they thrive. They know that the teacher and their classmates are allies to help them. The community of learners needs to have rituals and routines that make life predictable. Penny, convinced of establishing a community of learners in her interview, said, "I sit them heterogeneously because they are sensitive to being labeled." During the focus group, Matilda gave an idea of how her class was a community when she said:

**Kids know that the first thing we do in the morning is sing after we greet at the door, so it is already set in their mindset. They have a mindset that this is a part of their classroom, and we are on our way to college.**

**Theme 3: Teacher/Parent Partnership**

All the co-researchers stated that effective teacher/parent partnerships would greatly help young Black children academically and socially. During the focus group, Maggie strongly felt that parental involvement was critical for student success when she said, "Parental involvement need to be mandatory." Penny supported this view in the discussion when expressing her concern and said, "Some days, most of my time is spent on discipline sessions with very little support from home. Once the students are off track, it is often difficult to regain their attention." The mentality of viewing teaching as the teachers' responsibility among the Black communities needs to change. It may also be essential to educate the parents on the benefits of their involvement.
Jonathan expressed his view on this in the focus group: "To be honest, parental support plays a vital role. The strategies work if the parents are supporting the teacher. The teacher's role must be valued and respected."

Matilda emphasized the importance of partnership in her interview when describing people who were successful by saying, "Strategies that were being used in the home environment paired with teachers who were positive, caring, flexible, and multi-dimensional probably played a major role in their overall success." She continued to say that children who lack parental support struggled in school:

The biggest challenge I have observed is students who do not have a good home life.

They tend to be afraid of speaking by or for themselves, and many times, they need a lot of extra work and extra love to be broken out of their shell. Another difficulty is with unruly students from unstable homes.

During the focus group, Rosa added that a parent might need to know what to do when she said, "I would let that parent know to engage as much as possible. If you do not know, ask for help. Kids are sponges. Use kind words, reinforce that your child is kind, smart, and loving." In her interview, Brittney added that parents need to connect with their children about school when she said:

After school, I meet them at the bus stop, and we walk back to the house. I ask how their day was and get all the interesting stories about what happened in school or what they learned that stuck out to them.

Brittney explained how she partnered with the teachers during her interview when she said:

I rely heavily on the feedback we receive from their teachers during parent–teacher conferences and their standardized testing results. We do nightly homework which entails
reading aloud for 30–45 minutes daily and practicing math facts. I also monitor their grades from classwork closely.

Maria stated how she partnered with teachers when she said:

I depend on the report, but I also collaborate with the teachers. I visit the school during open houses, speak with the teachers in those subjects, and check in frequently with my child to ensure he is not struggling. I also encourage my child to ask for help when he needs it.

She emphatically added:

As a mother, I fully understand that there is a close relationship between what happens at home and school, and I work towards having a good partnership with the teachers. I also try to understand how my child perceives the relationship between home and school and how that might affect his academic and social development.

In explaining the critical role teacher/parent partnerships play, Tiffany said during her interview, "Educational system was challenging because I did not know how to support my children at school, and I relied a lot on the teacher's input and feedback." Tiffany continued to explain her parental involvement by saying, "I do much chaperoning during field trips. I embark on much parental involvement at school." Charity explained the importance of parental involvement by citing her shortcoming on involvement when she said:

To determine if my children were performing on grade level in math and language, I relied on feedback from their school or teachers. I did not know precisely how they were performing until the pandemic when my children were home with me. I then realized their skills and performance levels.
During the focus group, Jonathan felt the need to harmonize school and home when he said, "I think it is important to have that connection and communication between home and school and have some type of program where we could invite parents or just communicate with parents and assist them." Rose agreed with Jonathan on this point during the discussion adding, "And the students also need to know that parents and teachers are working together and as a village or as a community, because if they think that their parents do not know, or we do not know, it is a disconnect and it needs to be a connection." Counselor Frasier said that hopelessness found in schools in low-socioeconomic communities could be addressed by teacher/parent partnerships when she wrote:

Teachers/parents' teamwork becomes a critical necessity to change the trajectory of these students' personal and academic lives. The parents will need to update the teachers of any drastic changes in the home like potential separation or divorce, major or terminal health issues scaring the child's future hopes and dreams for a better future.

Writing to parents, psychologist Olivia advised the parents:

It is important to be involved and participate in the academic experience of your child by showing up in school events, parent–teacher conferences, as well as reaching out to teachers and getting updates on academic progress. It is important to encourage your children in their academic endeavors by noting interests in certain areas of study and providing opportunities and resources where possible for them to develop these areas.

Psychologist Edith agreed with this in her letter when she wrote:

One of the ways you can become more proactive in advocating for your child is by becoming very involved at the school. Get to know the teachers, the school counselor, the
principal, and other administrative staff. Ask questions about the child's challenges, strengths, or areas that need improvement.

Social worker Emma agreed with psychologist Edith when she wrote, "Support from parents is the key to helping your child to do well academically and socially in school." She wrote a list of things that parents could do, such as building relationships with teachers, visiting the school, creating a structure, ensuring attendance, reading with their children, and running an organized life. She concluded her letter by writing, "The better the partnership and collaboration, the more fulfilling and beneficial the learning experience."

**Sub-Theme: Communication**

Communication is critical because it is how both parents and teachers get to be on the same page. Teachers must communicate regularly, especially at the beginning of the school year to set the tone for the year. Parents need to be informed of the expectations, the curriculum, and the resources available to them. Penny, convinced of the importance of communication, stated in her interview, "I call my parents every week just to stay in touch, and the parents love it." She continued:

Parents tend to withdraw or recent calls from the school, but their approach changes when they know that I am just calling to keep in touch. I call to say something like, "Angela was very good at school today, and I am so proud of her work." The parent then responds, "Wow! this is the best news for me today."

There are various ways to communicate, such as emails, calls, ClassDojo, and influential agenda books. Communication must be positive if parents will stay engaged throughout the year. Jonathan confirmed this point when he said:
Parents take me seriously because I rarely call. However, if I must call, I tell them the whole truth. I tell the parents that I am a parent and I care about the child because, at school, the child bears my name.

*Sub-Theme: Trust*

The teachers need to equip parents with strategies they can use at home. Some parents are not involved because of poverty and ignorance, and others may be illiterate. The parents also must value and respect the teachers. Counselor Frasier in her letter wrote, "Parents need to look at the teachers as their best allies in raising their children." When parents trust teachers, they will be free to ask for academic advice from the teachers. Maggie agreed with Frasier in her interview when she said: "Children learn to trust and whom they can trust by the early relationships they form. If a child feels loved and cared for, they will learn and feel safe in the environment."

Brittney believed that children need to feel protected for them to trust when in her interview she said:

In my experience parenting, there have been many challenges and triumphs. Most notably, during the year 2020, when faced with the worldwide pandemic and civil unrest in the country, spurred by the death of George Floyd, it was hard to protect my boys from some of the harsh realities that they will be faced with in this world, being Black men. Brittney also felt that parents could build trust with their children as they did shared activities when in her interview said:

We cook together; we like the park, we ride bikes. We love going to eat on a regular day or for a treat. We watch movies together. They spend much time at his auto repair shop with their father. They also frequent the racetrack to watch car races, and he cooks for them a lot.
Sub-Theme: Openness

Parents of young Black children must be open with their teachers, especially children dealing with trauma. Teachers as caregivers need to be aware of how students respond to traumatic events to support students' road to recovery. Frasier, agreeing on the importance of openness, wrote, “The parent will need to update the teachers of any drastic changes in the home such as separation, divorce, central or terminal health issues scaring the child's future hopes and dreams for a better future.” Much violence and other vices affect young Black children, and openness will alert the adults to provide the proper support that children may need. Jonathan agreed with this during the focus group when he said, "When a child has a traumatic situation like one parent shooting another, the teacher should know some of this information." Maggie emphasized the importance of openness in that same discussion when she stated, "Parents and guardians need to know they should be honest about what is going on in the lives of their child. Teachers can only support what they are aware of. These are just good practices."

Theme 4: Building Confidence

Students without a good home life live in a shell, and it takes time to reach them. They are afraid to speak for themselves. External factors associated with low-income neighborhoods, such as drugs and violence, primarily affect the social life of the students. Traumatized children find it hard to focus on school. During the teacher focus group, Penny said, "Most Black children are at a disadvantage at birth due to race and socioeconomic status." Maggie agreed with Penny in the discussion and said:

Black students sometimes experience many adverse events in their young lives, such as abuse, neglect, homelessness, food shortage, incarceration of parents, mental illness of
caregivers, and domestic violence. The only way to help students find balance in life and
recover from trauma is to have the support of a nurturing adult.

Considering these factors, co-researchers viewed building confidence as an effective strategy for
helping students academically and socially. In addressing how a teacher could advise a young
parent, Matilda said during her interview:

I would share the importance of strategies that nurture young children's academic and
social development by telling them that their child's life depends on them spending
quality time with their child, teaching them beyond the classroom by creating
experiences, speaking positively to them, and building their confidence.

*Sub-Theme: Daily Affirmations*

Both teachers and parents must become cheerleaders for students giving them a sense of
worth. Believing in students' abilities boosts their self-esteem. Maggie suggested affirming
young Black children in her interview when she stated, "Affirming Black children through
curriculum, especially books would be great. When they see children who look like them in
books, they can relate.” Teachers and parents need to make the children feel important every day
and give children opportunities to express how wonderful they are. Teachers need to affirm the
students daily because they spend more time with students than parents. In her interview, Matilda
stated, "If students lack a nurturing teacher, they end up spending most of their time with
someone who does not care about their development." Regarding affirmations, psychologist
Olivia in her letter wrote: "Parents should strive to use affirming language regardless of the
child's performance because this is a major determinant in the child's self-esteem and belief in
their abilities."
*Sub-Theme: Encouragement*

Every child needs to be allowed to feel successful in one way or another. For example, if a child is struggling academically, he or she needs to be given an easy problem to solve so that the child can feel successful. Teachers and parents should always encourage students to do their best. Children should be encouraged to express their emotion and their way of thinking. They need to be assured of love when they make mistakes, and as Rose said in her interview, "Celebrate even the small victories and listen to their feedback." Matilda added a working strategy for success in her interview: "I try to make everything I do and say in the presence of children positive. Staying positive gets us all through the day without having a mental breakdown." During her interview, Maria stated that a child feels encouraged when she said:

I always make sure my child understands that he can ask for help from family and friends any time, visiting family and friends, making sure he is connected to our church community, visiting other countries with him, and making sure he gets to meet my family members and interact with them.

During her interview, Penny agreed that positive communication encourages both the parents and children when she said:

To motivate the unmotivated, I talk to the children individually. When I see them, I tell them I see doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc., and those who think they are not brilliant, I assure them that they will succeed with my help.

School counselor Frasier agreed that encouragement is needed. In her letter she wrote:

In most cases, when families struggle, always fighting and arguing, lacking food, proper sanitation, necessary medical care, children barely thrive. Working hard but not achieving good grades as expected or based on their potential leaves them frustrated, discouraged,
helpless, and hopeless. In some cases, this leads to truancy, lousy behavior, rebellious spirits, unexplainable anger.

Writing about the role encouragement plays in Black children, psychologist Olivia wrote:

Black children may be dealing with racial stress and other trauma that impacts their self-esteem and capacity to engage well academically. It behooves teachers to be sensitive to the impact of trauma and racial stress and refrain from perpetuating racial stress by using stereotypes or engaging in microaggressions. Instead, offer specific praise to Black children when they perform well and encouragement when not. Teachers should engage in trauma-informed instructional approaches that would enable them to understand a child's behavior and the impact of trauma.

**Sub-Theme: Validation**

All students need to feel important and validated. Every child needs to be motivated, and this happens when the adults give children individualized attention, showing patience and compassion so that the vulnerable ones can be free to share their struggles. In his interview, Jonathan spoke of validation when he said, "Right now, what I am doing is build students' confidence so that they can start learning from somewhere." He continued to share an example of validating students when he said:

I show them pictures of the children of the royal family who dress up in uniform while going to school. I explain to them that these children learn multiplication just like the children in developing countries. I show them clips of happy but disabled people to help them understand that a person is more important than things.

When children are experiencing difficulties, the adults must deal with them in a non-confrontational way and avoid disciplining children when they are angry. During the teacher
focus group, Matilda stated the importance of paying attention to the culture of the children: "Bringing their culture into the classroom allows for them to make connections to learning that may not otherwise have happened." In her interview, Maria stated that validation was critical when she said:

One of my goals is to continue reassuring my child that he can talk to me about any issues. I like spending time with him, asking him how his day was, and sharing some experiences I have had myself so he can feel validated. My method involves checking in with my child, making sure he knows that I am passionate about anything that concerns his welfare.

Penny explained how struggling children could be validated when she said in her interview:

At the beginning of the year, I identify the troublemakers in class and conference individually. I tell them that they are leaders and leaders carry themselves in a certain way. I tell them how they have great potential, and all of them turn around. I target troublemakers and give them roles to relate and reach them.

Penny also shared that sharing success stories with the children helps them change their mindset that they are doomed to fail just because people have given up on them. Penny concluded about the mindset when she advised, "Deprogram the negative mindsets and what they believe about their limitations."

**Theme 5: Educational Resources**

Schools in low-socioeconomic communities lack many resources. Economic disparities have always been present in Black communities, and the problem of racial inequalities and poverty prevent the young Black children from receiving what they need to acquire quality education. During the focus group, Penny said, "To help combat these disadvantages, it is
important that Black children are enrolled in high-quality educational programs early in their academic careers." The schools need to be run by qualified administrators who know how to use the funds allocated to Title I schools so that the children can benefit. Maggie warned during the focus group discussion:

There is constant change and progression in the strategies that best nurture and enable growth. As educators, we must stay abreast with any new developments and strategies that we can use to enhance learning and growth in our classrooms further.

During the focus group discussion, teachers agreed that it is essential to be a resource through a liaison or a parent workstation. Rose added her comment in the discussion saying, "I also think I agree with them that a parent liaison in the schools will help parents as well to give them those additional resources they may need to help their children at home."

**Sub-Theme: Planned, Thoughtful, and Purposeful Instruction**

Teachers need to be intentional when planning for the instruction of young Black children, and teachers will ensure that the children are given educational experiences necessary for them to thrive. During the teacher focus group, Maggie said that each teacher needs to "know and cater for each student's learning style and modalities." The teachers must reach students from where they are based on authentic assessment and lift them from there. Teachers need to give young Black children extensive exposure, even if this will be done using virtual field trips. In his interview, Jonathan explained how he executed thoughtful instructions among the Black children when he said, "I break down instruction as if the child knows nothing, making sure I explain every unfamiliar word. I explain all academic vocabulary." The learning should be developmentally appropriate, modeled, culturally diverse, actively engaging, and rigorous, with the teacher being just a facilitator. In his interview, Jonathan gave a reminder that "all children
are given the same standardized tests and are expected to perform the same." In the focus group, Matilda stated, "Watching students struggle in a grade level led me to the conclusion that they need a better learning environment where they can absorb information and knowledge more efficiently and effectively."

Supporting the idea of well-planned instruction during the teacher focus group, Penny said, "It is essential to have content that is relevant, meaningful, and interesting to students. The students are bright, and you see it when they are interacting with technology." She added, "What the students are learning should lead to life skills." In the same discussion, Jonathan agreed that “Learning should be engaging to children, and this calls for teachers to embark on continuous professional development because we live in a dynamic society.” During the focus group discussion, Penny said, "I give a ticket out of the door so that I can use the universal weakness of the class to reteach the following day."

**Sub-Theme: High-Quality Curriculum**

The lessons should capture and retain students' interests. The content should be relevant and meaningful to young Black children. Instructions must be standards-based so that young Black children can perform well on the standardized test just like the others. During the teacher focus group, Maggie complained about the curriculum when she said, "The same curriculum is rolled out to all the children including the Black children who have no exposure. The young Black children are expected to perform on the same standardized tests just like all the others.” Life-skill lessons would make students aware of other ways to make money in life.

Regarding homework, the curriculum could include a critical thinking component. During the focus group, Brittney explained how she helped her children with homework when she said, "I ask them 'why' very often. I ask them follow-up questions and have them elaborate
on their thought process when making a statement or seeking clarity." Tiffany agreed with Brittney in the discussion when she said, "I request them to critically think through all the decisions they make in life, including evaluating peer pressure and the consequences that follow." The high-quality curriculum should be balanced, where academics and social life are given equal time. During the focus group, Jonathan explained the imbalance when he said:

If we have some more non-academic time, it will lead to social interactions. Because academics tend to be, come in, have a seat, and this is our standard, and we go, go, go.

The students do not have time to interact, and recess is 10 minutes and go, go, go.

The curriculum ought to include exposure because many Black children have no idea of the possibilities around them. Rose emphasized exposure at the focus group discussion when she said, "I think as educators, we need to expose them to the world through virtual field trips when there are real field trips. However, I think exposure is the key." Maggie supported Rose in the discussion and said:

You brought up a good point, and teachers do not want to be bothered with field trips and stuff like that, but we are doing our Black children a great disservice when we do stuff like that. Field trips, we should bring that back.

Exposure may also include teaching Black children about the many options for success besides games and entertainment. Contributing to the focus group discussion, Maggie added, "There are so many other ways that you can make money legally and just do better for yourself. I think as teachers, we need to give our children ideas on whatever else is available out there." Maggie was emphatic when she continued and said:
I have to say that I think it is our job as educators to plant the seed. I know we may not live the lives they live, but it is our job to make sure that they are aware of what other possibilities are for them.

Rose put a stamp on Maggie's idea of the seed when she quoted what one of her White teachers told her as she worked as a teenager. The teacher told her, "You need to let McDonald's go because that is not your future."

Sub-Theme: Learning Resources

Learning resources need to be of the kind that targets mastery. There is a need to get resources that address and support the emotional needs of the students. Games, manipulatives, and music resources are necessary for teaching young Black children. In her interview, Rose said, "Use technology to get a more concise way of identifying students' deficit skills." Building a parent workstation in the school is an excellent resource for educating the parents. Teachers need to be resourceful in identifying community and academic resources and connect the students to the available resources. In her interview, Brittney believed that there were inequalities regarding resources when she said:

Once my income improved, I moved my children from our predominantly Black neighborhood to a more racially diverse neighborhood. I decided to place them in an environment that I believed would provide them with more educational opportunities and resources. Also, I left an environment with less crime as I could better protect their innocent nature by limiting their exposure to violence and poverty.

Describing her experience of lack of resources in low-income schools, parent Brittney explained:

I attended a low-socioeconomic community school, and I realized the disparities between my educational experience and that of others once I attended college. Others had better
technology, more opportunities to travel, and have more exposure to the world around them. They had more programs to attend college classes or develop a skill. There seemed to be fewer distractions and more focus on academics instead of disciplinary actions. At our school, academics were not the top priority of many student populations. External factors associated with low-income neighborhoods, such as drugs and violence, were significant distractions. In our community, academics were not seen as the primary pathway to success in life. Sports and careers in entertainment were seen as golden tickets out of a mediocre life.

Tiffany had much to say regarding her experience in low-income schools. In her interview, she explained:

Low-income schools lack many resources. Children lack exposure outside their neighborhood community. There is a lack of parental involvement, possibly because the parents are poor and ignorant. They lack information on the importance of being involved at school because they think that education is teachers' job. Some parents are also illiterate, and they view school as a source of embarrassment. Most children come from single-parent households. The Black community has misplaced priorities because they attend games, cookouts, family reunions, and other social activities, but not teacher–parent conferences. Most work blue-color jobs, and their schedule deny them opportunities to focus on school. Violent neighborhoods traumatize children to the extent that they cannot focus on school while their families focus on safety issues. They lack good role models as families deal with drugs, alcoholism, prostitution, and other societal challenges. Grandparents raise most children, and this is very challenging.

Quoting the sources of academic resources during the parent focus group, Brittney said:
I find support by asking for advice from those more experienced at parenting or academics than me. Then take the advice and see what works for us. I also utilize resources available to us such as books, podcasts, websites, etc.

**Theme 6: High Expectations**

Teachers and parents ought to call out the potential they see in children. The adult's responsibility is to plant seeds of greatness in children and wait for them to germinate. When the adults set high expectations, scaffold instructions, and release the students, they live up to their expectations. Persuaded of the need to set high expectations, Penny stated during the focus group discussion, "If there is a will, there is a way." Students held accountable for their work will rise to the occasion. Maggie agreed with Penny in the discussion and said, "Set high expectations and hold students accountable. This shows them that you care about their achievement. Teach them and expect them to learn. Value what they bring to the table." Matilda held the same view and explained, "One of my most memorable teachers was one that she held me to a high expectation, and she held me accountable. I knew I could not slack." Matilda viewed student growth as achievable when she said:

The most effective way to ensure this growth is to ensure they have a good foundation. That foundation is a secure and efficient learning environment, where they do not need to feel scared or hesitant to learn, work or participate. I would convince my fellow educators to use nurture strategies because it is essential for their physical and mental health. It helps students to feel and become confident. It also helps them to feel competent, respected and included.

High expectations should also come from parents. Brittney expressed her view as a parent in her interview:
I encourage them to read daily. We take regular trips to the library, and they select a book that interests them to make it easier to engage in reading. They read restaurant menus, road signs, billboards, instruction manuals, nutrition facts. I also have them watch TV with no sound and read the subtitles.

During the parent focus group, Tiffany said, "I celebrate and encourage all effort telling them how smart they are. However, I also let them know I expect to see great things always. Tutoring is essential until you see the child excel."

**Sub-Theme: Data-Driven Instructions**

Accurate data on students' performance should be collected at the beginning of the school year. The school districts use several platforms to do this. The beauty of technology is the fact that the data can be concise. The teachers can use the learning continuum on the data to drive instruction. In the teacher focus group, Rose said, "I observe every action that my students make and their patterns in the classroom to make gains. Because they know I am attentive to their needs, they are more expressive academically and socially." In the same discussion, Maggie raised an alert that the expectations placed on schools make it hard to nurture students as teachers are driven by data and scores:

The way our public-school systems are being micromanaged, nurturing by teachers does not seem to be as impactful with students after second grade. Teachers' professional opinions do not matter. We are treated as human droids. The people "above us" tell us what they want, and we do what they say.

As the discussion continued, Matilda agreed with Maggie that pressure on testing denies teachers the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with students as teachers focus on scores:
Some of the struggles I have experienced in implementing strategies that nurture my students’ academic and social development are too strong to emphasize testing. The schedule I was made to follow often did not allow for time to properly nurture meaningful relationships with my students. I also felt there was more emphasis on getting students to pass the test than getting to know and prioritizing students.

Regarding data, there was grave concern in the teacher focus group that numbers had replaced children. Jonathan expressed his concern when he said:

This idea of departmentalizing children from kindergarten is crazy and harmful to the children all in the name of increasing the test scores. The number matters more than the child, and we must please the people at the top. There is CCRPI [College and Career Ready Performance Index] test score to worry about.

**Sub-Theme: Use of Technology**

The beauty of technology is that it allows students to learn at a pace best suited for their needs. Teachers and parents can use technology to reinforce the standards taught in class. Technology allows students to explore technical skills and exposes them to the world around them. They practice typing, which is a lifelong skill. In her interview, Matilda said, "Technology is the future." Jonathan agreed with addressing the issue of technology: "I use technology to reinforce what I have taught." Penny confirmed the use of technology in her interview when she said:

Technology has shaped my strategies by giving me a more concise way to identify students' deficit skills, and it lets the students learn at a pace best suited for their needs. Technology is efficient in facilitating learning, and it gives students opportunities to do catch-up work.
Maggie supported the importance of technology in her interview when she said:

Technology has become a part of my strategy to nurture students because they must be successful in navigating this tool to be academically prepared as they matriculate throughout school and life. Technology provides instant feedback and supports instruction. It allows students time to privately practice skills they may struggle with, giving them confidence as they improve. Students get to experience a device that may not be available to them otherwise. Technology has played a massive role in shaping the strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in low-income schools. The use of technology has afforded my students in low-income schools to learn technical skills and explore the world around them. I have used it to have students practice writing/typing, a lifelong skill.

Sub-Theme: Immediate Feedback

All students thrive on immediate feedback. Feedback identifies areas of deficit that need immediate attention. Feedback is also motivational as it keeps the learners going. Teachers individualize connections with students through feedback. In her interview, Maggie stated, "Technology provides instant feedback and supports instruction."

Research Question Responses

The following section is a snapshot of the responses to the research questions of this case study. The responses were based on the themes and the sub-themes that emerged from the data collected from all co-researchers. The co-researchers’ responses to the interview questions and letters of tips and insights were based on the strategies that teachers and parents were using to nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-
socioeconomic communities in the United States. The data from the responses helped to shape the themes that emerged in this case study.

**Central Research Question**

*What strategies do parents and teachers use to nurture young Black children's academic and social development in low-socioeconomic communities?*

There was a consensus among co-researchers that nurturing helps provide children with essential skills for well-rounded humans. Six themes emerged as critical from the study. The top theme was building relationships through genuine care, modeling, and individualized attention.

During her interview, Maggie explained:

> Building relationships with Black children I have served over the years has been the number one most important strategy that nurtures my students' academic and social development. It is always helpful to know your students. You will not teach your students until they know you care about them.

A safe and supportive learning environment is created as students are treated with dignity and worth in a community of learners that has room to make mistakes. During the teacher focus group, Matilda spoke of this kind of environment when she said:

> Making a safe learning environment is key, as students from diverse backgrounds may be hesitant to participate in learning. Make a connection with your students to open to your teaching and lessons. Show patience and understanding as students come from many different backgrounds, and what you may think is belligerence or a lack of cooperation might be that student's default way of interaction. Lastly and most importantly to facilitate all of these, create a safe and secure environment where all students are on a level playing field.
Teacher/parent partnerships established through communication, trust, and openness emerged as a great theme. Psychologist Olivia wrote:

It is important to be involved and participate in the academic experience of your child by showing up in school events, parent–teacher conferences, as well as reaching out to teachers and getting updates on academic progress. It is important to encourage your children in their academic endeavors by noting interests in certain areas of study and providing opportunities and resources where possible for them to develop these areas.

Building the confidence of young Black children is necessary because they have many societal disadvantages, and this is achieved by daily affirmations, encouragement, and validation. Educational resources may include planned, thoughtful, and purposeful instructions coupled with high-quality curriculum and learning resources. The sixth theme was setting high expectations for students through data-driven instructions, technology, and immediate feedback. Jonathan added classic advice during the teacher focus group: "Be present and give it all you got."

Sub-Question One

What types of resources would teachers need to promote the social well-being of Black children in the classroom?

Teachers need counselors to help them because young Black children are exposed to violence, drugs, and sexual content very early. During the teacher focus group discussion, Rose said, "Some days, most of my time is spent on discipline sessions with very little support from home." The teachers need effective partnership with parents so that they can be supported as need be. Stable functional Black communities would also help the teachers do their work effectively. Regarding behavior problems that inhibit teaching and learning, Maggie suggested, "We need somebody who can take that child and work with that child to find out the problem
because the teacher will not stop to look after one child when they have 20 other children."

Teachers also need to plan purposeful lesson plans, a high-quality curriculum, learning resources, and technology. Learning resources for young Black children may include books, manipulatives, and learning technology programs that would accurately provide diagnostic assessments which determine individualized deficit skills that teachers need to address to close the learning gaps.

**Sub-Question Two**

*How do the strategies used by teachers to nurture academic and social development positively impact their Black children's behavior in the classroom?*

Nurture strategies help the students feel loved and happy, leading to better social and academic focus and recovery from trauma. In her interview, Penny said, "When students are nurtured, it helps them to be more respectful, empathetic, self-disciplined, and socially responsible." The strategies of building relationships with students, creating a safe and supportive learning environment, fostering teacher/parent partnerships, building confidence, providing learning resources, and holding students to high expectations have a positive impact on student behavior. Students look forward to attending school where they are treated with dignity, validation, encouragement, and they are engaged in learning.

**Sub-Question Three**

*How do teachers who nurture the academic and social development of young Black children foster the intellectual growth of their students?*

The teachers foster intellectual growth by building confidence in students, which helps students tap into their potential. During the teacher focus group, Penny advised, “Provide a trusted space for students to learn and thrive. Provide a safe space to make mistakes and learn
from the mistakes they have made." Rose also commented during her interview that "once a child feels loved and celebrated, the academic portion will fall in place." In her interview, Maggie spoke of this when she said, “The most effective way to ensure growth is to ensure a good foundation. That foundation is a secure and efficient learning environment where they do not need to feel scared or hesitant to learn or participate.” Matilda agreed with all the other teachers during the focus group when she said, "Making a safe learning environment is key, as students from diverse backgrounds may be hesitant to participate in learning."

**Sub-Question Four**

*In what ways do Black parents effectively partner with teachers as active adults in their children’s lives to provide academic success?*

Black parents partner with teachers through communication, trust, and openness. There is collaboration and involvement at school through conferences and volunteering. Counselor Frasier wrote that hopelessness found in low-income schools could be addressed by teacher/parent partnerships when she said:

Teachers/parents’ teamwork becomes a critical necessity to change the trajectory of these students' personal and academic lives. The parents will need to update the teachers of any drastic changes in the home like potential separation or divorce, major or terminal health issues scaring the child's future hopes and dreams for a better future.

**Sub-Question Five**

*What play activities do Black parents use to display love and affection, strengthening positive relationships with their children before age 8?*

Play activities include games, shows, riding bikes, skating, and walks. In her interview, Tiffany said, "We go skating, and sometimes we ride bikes on the trail."
Sub-Question Six

What are some ways Black parents create psychological safety, enabling children to talk about their problems freely?

Black parents create psychological safety by shielding their children from exposure to crime and violence in their neighborhood and holding conversations about the complex topic of race. In her interview, Brittney talked about her Black children when she said, "As young Black children, they always wondered why there were no people of other races in our neighborhood." Charity also said that relationships are built through the display of love and warmth:

As I spend one-on-one time with my children, I display love and warmth through affectionate hugs and kisses, time for them to express their feelings and emotions, so they know that how they feel matters, and sometimes just giving in to doing what they want.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the co-researchers involved in this study and the strategies they use to nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. The teacher co-researchers’ descriptions included years of experience, their degrees, and areas of their certifications. The parent co-researchers’ description included their age and number of their children. The counselors, psychologists and social workers’ description listed the number of years they had worked with Black children. The chapter included the development of themes from the data collected as the data related to the central research question and the six sub-questions. The chapter broke down the findings of the interviews, focus group, and letters of counselors, psychologists, and social workers. The chapter examined the strategies that teachers and parents used to nurture the
academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to explore the strategies that teachers and parents use to nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. This chapter includes an interpretation of the findings, a discussion of the findings, and the implications for policy and practice. The chapter also includes the theoretical/empirical implications, delimitations, and limitations. It ends with recommendations for future research and a conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings are interpreted based on the empirical findings from individually interviewing educators with more than 10 years of experience and interviewing them in a face-to-face focus group. Individual interviews were also done face-to-face, which facilitated my data collection. The same method of interviews was applied to the parents. The school counselors, psychologists, and social workers were given the task, reflected on it, and wrote letters to teachers and parents. The interpretations are also based on my two decades of teaching experience and the literature review that I completed before getting into the field for research.

The school at which the study took place has been a low-income school since it was started 30 years ago. Much has changed in terms of its demographics, moving from a multi-racial to primarily Black population; for the last 25 years, the site has maintained a Black population of approximately 90%.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Three instruments were used for the data collection process. These included interviews, focus groups, and letters from counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Six themes
emerged when analyzing data from the viewpoint of all the co-researchers in this study. All co-researchers felt that using strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development would be beneficial. They felt that all the young Black students needed the adults in their lives to embark on using these strategies if success would be guaranteed in the lives of the children.

Six major themes emerged from the research. Building positive relationships with young Black children topped them all. Positive relationships are built through genuine care, modeling, and giving Black children individualized attention. Providing a safe and supportive learning environment could be done by dignifying every child with human worth, giving them room to make mistakes, and create a community of learners to acquire a sense of belonging. Teachers and parents create a functional partnership through communication, trust, and openness. Young Black children need adults who build confidence in them because race and the history of slavery make them think they are second-class citizens. Confidence comes from daily affirmations, encouragement, and validation. Lack of adequate educational resources necessitate that teachers execute planned, thoughtful, and purposeful instruction. Holding students to high expectations may be facilitated by data-driven instruction, use of technology, and immediate feedback.

**Interpretation #1: Building Relationships with Young Black Children**

Building positive relationships with students, which is a critical factor in nurturing young Black children's academic and social development, was a view held by an overwhelmingly large number of co-researchers. The teachers believed that knowing students personally, acknowledging them daily, and having heart-to-heart conversations to check their emotional well-being was prioritized. The co-researchers agreed that positive relationships thrived when genuine care through active listening, celebrations of efforts, and victories, as well as adults
being present, would help establish authentic interactions. Positive relationships occur as adults create a safe space where children can be vulnerable about what is taking place in their lives. There was a consensus among the co-researchers that adults needed to model what they desired the young Black children to do. Respect for others, caring for others, the process, and the product of learning needed to be modeled. The adults are to be cheerleaders through encouragement, understanding the culture of the students, and providing a sense of belonging. All co-researchers agreed that individualized attention given to children during activities such as reading, playing, displaying love, warmth, and attention, and getting involved in what interested the students would cause young Black children to thrive. The co-researchers also noted that students’ basic needs had to be met, and the adults needed to avoid embarrassing children at all costs.

Teacher co-researchers expressed their struggles in establishing relationships as departmentalization of grade levels from kindergarten to fifth grade took place in their school to raise scores of standardized tests. The test scores are the driving force of most low-income schools. The rationale is that departmentalization enables the teacher to be an expert in one content area. However, in this context each teacher teaches 60 young Black children each day as they rotate from class to class. The rotation makes it impossible for the teacher to know the students well, let alone establish relationships. The teacher is under extreme pressure because her job depends on the test score. Each teacher’s data are displayed before the whole school for everyone to see on data days. If for any reason, the students fail to perform as expected, the responsible teacher feels blamed and demoralized. The teacher has no time to "waste" on a child whose father was shot and killed a few weeks ago or on students with some other form of trauma.
**Interpretation #2: Safe and Supportive Learning Environment**

Creating and maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment emerged as a significant theme emphasized by co-researchers. Due to the racial stressors and neighborhood traumas experienced by young Black children, the co-researchers strongly agreed on the importance of providing a safe and supportive environment as a foundation that resulted in academic and social growth. The desired environment is created when young Black children are given room to make mistakes, and adults demonstrate patience and understanding, protection against bullying, fair treatment, and welcoming classrooms. The children are also provided with structure and openness to talk about complex issues such as race that stand in their way of dignity and worth. A safe and supportive environment provides young Black children with a sense of belonging and the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their academic levels. Treating children with dignity and worth includes simple things such as pronouncing their names correctly, listening to understand, and celebrating the effort and victories of each child, big and small. If a student has behavior challenges, the adults view the challenges as a cry for help and put interventions in place.

**Interpretation #3: Teacher/Parent Partnerships**

Most co-researchers believed teacher/parent partnerships are critical to the success of young Black children. They expressed the need for parents to view teachers as allies in their children's education. Parents must be involved in the education process by positive modeling, providing stability at home, attending teacher–parent conferences, and other helpful meetings at schools such as curriculum night and parent/teacher associations (PTA). Parent/teacher teamwork will harmonize home and school and build a positive relationship. Effective and regular communication through emails, agenda books, or ClassDojo will create trust and
openness as resources, expectations, curriculum, updates, and changes that impact children are shared.

Most of the co-researchers agreed that poverty, violent neighborhoods, family dysfunctions, coupled with mental illness, keep most parents away from school. Many parents cannot deal with their problems, let alone involvement at school. A school then becomes an excellent holding place for their children while they get a break. A few of them are illiterate, making it difficult even to help the children with homework. Poor administrators also keep parents away from school by poor communication and silently eliminating PTA. Some co-researchers felt the need to make parental involvement mandatory in low-income schools to start enhancing partnership in one way or another. Since different family members raise many Black children, the family can designate one person to represent the family at school. There could be incentives to encourage parents and free education on helpful parenting tips as parents come to school.

Interpretation #4: Building Confidence

Co-researchers agreed that external adverse experiences found in low-income school settings wear down the confidence of young Black children. The impact of drugs, violence, poverty, neglect, homelessness, incarceration of fathers, abuse, mental illness of caregivers, and other such factors all harm young Black children. The co-researchers suggested daily affirmations, encouragement, and validation as critical tools for building confidence in young Black children. Daily affirmations would boost self-esteem and make each child feel important. Adults encourage children by staying positive and speaking life as they call out the potential in young Black children. Validation is offered through individual attention, reassurance,
deprogramming of wrong thinking, and sharing success stories of Black people who overcame adverse circumstances.

**Interpretation #5: Educational Resources**

All co-researchers agreed that young Black children are shortchanged by economic disparities and racial inequalities that have always existed in the United States since slavery. They agreed that for young Black children to thrive, the teachers must utilize planned, thoughtful, and purposeful instruction using a high-quality curriculum and the available learning resources. Most co-researchers agreed that Black children lack the exposure necessary to make them aware of what is available to them. The suggestion to expose children through virtual field trips if physical field trips are not possible was highly recommended during the teacher focus group. Lack of exposure leads to limited vocabulary acquisition. Teachers will have to be intentional and pay attention to students' learning styles and modalities. The teachers will need to teach content vocabulary while breaking down instruction as they teach relevant, meaningful, interesting, rigorous, and engaging instruction which is standard based. Students' mastery of content will make them competent in standardized tests. Some co-researchers proposed continuous professional development for teachers to make them competent in assessing, teaching, and reteaching.

Some co-researchers proposed that the high-quality curriculum for the young Black children may need to include life skill lessons to have options to succeed in other areas besides academics. Critical thinking skills must be included in both classwork and homework. Many co-researchers agreed that technology is helpful for accurate assessment of students' skills especially identifying deficit skills that spelled out academic gaps that needed to be closed. The technology could also give students exposure, individual practice, and mastery of the content taught.
Teachers are also an excellent resource for parents. Resources for young Black children may include manipulatives and music.

**Interpretation #6: High Expectations**

Many co-researchers agreed that planting seeds of greatness through high expectations held students accountable for high performance. Teacher co-researchers acknowledged using technology to identify learning gaps as data exposed deficit skills. Technology provides immediate feedback, which motivates students to perform better and reach the expected growth levels as they close the learning gaps. Teachers agreed that technology is a great tool to individualize students' learning pace, reinforce instructions, practice mastery, and gain exposure to new content.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

The purpose of this case study was to explore the strategies that teachers and parents use to nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. Previous studies in the literature emphasized the important role that nurture plays in young Black children's academic and social development (Schunk, 2019; Sravanti, 2017). This qualitative study explored strategies on how teachers and parents nurture young Black children's academic and social development. The study also included the input of school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. The results of this study add to the existing studies discussed in Chapter Two regarding strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development. Previous studies mentioned the importance of building relationships with students without emphasizing it as a key component to students’ success. This study highlighted building relationships with young Black children as critical to their success. Also, building the confidence of young Black children is of greatly
emphasis because of the racial disadvantages faced by young Black children. Co-researchers who participated in this study used strategies for young Black children’s academic and social development. Teachers and parents used nurturing strategies to help young Black children develop academically and socially, such as building relationships, creating a safe and supportive learning environment, fostering teacher/parent partnerships, building confidence, utilizing educational resources, and holding students to high expectations.

**Implications for Policy**

It would be helpful for policymakers to consider and include the input of educators as they roll out different policies that govern teaching and learning. The policymakers need to lessen the pressure of standardized tests so that educators can have meaningful relationships with young Black children. The educators should be trained and equipped with educational resources that will allow them to create a safe and supportive learning environment where young Black children’s confidence is built, and children are held to high expectations. Teacher/parent partnerships should be encouraged and supported by policies made. Knowledge of child development is what should govern early childhood practices. The culture of threats based on test scores is not healthy for administrators, teachers, or students, and that culture may be responsible for the acute teacher shortage experienced in low-income schools.

**Implications for Practice**

Teachers and parents should do whatever it takes to build relationships with students. Positive relationships may result in confidence-building and high expectations that adults accord to young Black children. A safe and supportive learning environment at school will help the students only if the students are coming to class from safe neighborhoods. There is no safe place for a child who is traumatized and is not getting psychological support to recover from trauma.
This observation was proven to be true when many children could not function academically because of what they had gone through during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school district requested the teachers to put academics on hold and focus on the social and emotional well-being of children. Many of the problems faced by young Black children stem from society. There is a need to have community dialogue on how home life affects the academic life of young Black children. Educational inequalities need to be addressed by society so that schools in low-socioeconomic communities can be given extra support.

**Theoretical and Empirical Implications**

The relationship between the findings in this study and the theoretical and empirical literature is discussed below.

**Theoretical Implications**

Vygotsky's (1934/1986, 1978) sociocultural theory suggests that caregivers, peers, and the culture are responsible for developing higher-order functions believing that nurture plays a more significant role in cognitive development than nature. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory stresses the role of social interaction in the development of cognition as he firmly believed that the community plays a central role in making meaning (Bakken et al., 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). This allows for a deeper understanding of strategies that teachers and parents use to nurture young Black children's academic and social development in schools in low-socioeconomic communities. The co-researchers in this study believed that effective nurture strategies include building relationships, creating a safe and supportive environment, fostering teacher/parent partnerships, building confidence, using necessary educational resources, and setting high expectations for young Black children.
According to sociocultural theory, human learning is cultural because intellectual growth occurs in a social context. The study confirmed this as the co-researchers agreed that the children's home life extends to school and determines failure or success. This theory also relied on the principle that all knowledge builds upon previous knowledge, and it is the integration of all knowledge that equates to authentic learning (Vygotsky, 1934/1986, 1978). This makes extensive exposure to the world and the academic content necessary for young Black children. Teachers should provide the support necessary to ensure students reach their maximum development. Teachers determine students' background knowledge, and students build on this knowledge as they learn new content. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development stresses gradual release to responsibility so that students can problem solve on their own and independently apply skills taught (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers model the process and the product they expect from their students. The findings also revealed how an individual tends to be a product of his or her environment. This fact made Vygotsky's sociocultural theory appropriate for studying strategies that nurture the academic and social development that teachers and parents could use to help young children in an urban setting.

This case study sheds further light on building the confidence of young Black children as an effective strategy. Prior studies found that more than 60% of Black children face the unavoidable challenge of dealing with adverse childhood experiences (Priest et al., 2013). The diversity of adverse childhood experiences includes psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, mental illness, suicide, violence, physical and emotional neglect, parental separation and divorce, homelessness, bullying, discrimination based on race, poverty, parental incarceration, and community violence, all of which suggests that no single strategy will be adequate (Bethell et al.,
They intentionally endeavored to know the children to personally deprogram wrong thinking and mindsets.

**Empirical Implications**

This study extends previous research on the topic of how adults nurture the academic and social development of children by focusing on strategies that teachers and parents use to nurture young Black children's academic and social development in low-socioeconomic communities. The findings gave a voice to co-researchers and allowed them to share their experiences with young Black children. This study diverges from previous research because it focuses on strategies that primarily work for young Black children instead of strategies that work for all children regardless of their race.

The co-researchers nurtured young Black children by building a relationship first. Positive relationships were built through genuine care, modeling, and individualized attention. They also created a safe and supportive environment by dignifying the children, creating room to make mistakes, and building a community of learners. Teacher/parent partnerships were established through communication, trust, and openness. Teachers and parents built the confidence of young Black children through daily affirmations, encouragement, and validation. Teacher co-researchers expressed how intentional they were in their instructional planning and teaching as they held students to high expectations while using the available learning resources, especially technology. This confirmed what was stipulated in prior research that much of what children acquire comes from more skillful associates such as parents and teachers through guided participation, a process that may be highly context-independent or in day-to-day activities as the expert provides support and encouragement (Langford, 2005; Miller, 2011).
The findings of this research study also add to the prior research by focusing on young Black children in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities. Teachers reported that forming relationships with young Black children became increasingly challenging as schools departmentalized grades from kindergarten in the site where the study took place. Teachers raised concerns that they had no time to know the students let alone establish meaningful relationships. Lack of time also interfered with building confidence in young Black children. The findings of this research study shed light on specific strategies that teachers and parents could effectively use. Previous research has not explicitly focused on young Black children and issues that inhibit learning sometimes stemming from their communities. By focusing specifically on young Black children, these findings bring about a new understanding of the strategies that teachers and parents can use to nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-income schools. The novel contribution the study adds to the field is a unique way that the nurture of young Black children should take, given the disadvantages that face them racially and economically. The study strongly confirmed the sociocultural theory in that social interactions play an essential role in learning.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of the study included using co-researchers primarily from the same race. Although the co-researchers came from different backgrounds, they may have a racial bias in viewing various aspects of society. Also, the research was conducted in the same school district with co-researchers who had experience working with young Black children. It may be difficult to generalize these findings to other teachers’ or parents’ experiences. The location of the study was also a limitation. This could have been different if all the races in the United States contributed to the study, basing it on their racial perspectives. Delimitations included using
teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience in elementary schools located in low-
socioeconomic communities. The purpose of this was to get the most experienced teachers who
may have weathered a plethora of challenges found in schools located in low-socioeconomic
communities. These co-researchers could justify their endurance and the intrinsic motivation that
keeps them going.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research on strategies teachers and parents use to nurture young Black children's
academic and social development should be conducted in non-Title I schools. It would be helpful
to see teachers' experiences who serve a different population of students. Also, it would be
helpful to learn other strategies in empirical research. This study was primarily conducted with
teacher and parent co-researchers in a departmentalized setting. Future research needs to be done
in schools that have not gone into this mode of educational administration. Future studies could
also employ observation as a data collection method. This would help the researcher observe
strategies in action. This study needs to be replicated to examine students' perspectives and
which strategies they feel are most helpful in nurturing their academic and social development; it
should also rate the adults on how they implemented the strategies. Conducting student
interviews will allow researchers to gather rich data on this topic from the point of view of the
students involved in low-socioeconomic schools.

For future research, I would recommend that studies be done on the effectiveness of these
strategies based on how young Black children became productive members of society.
Psychologically supporting Black parents would be a significant area of research and practical
ways of encouraging parental involvement in low-income schools. The process of including
educators on the boards of policymakers so that they have a voice on the choice of
administrators, curriculum, and learning resources would be a great area to investigate. I would recommend the demographics of other races be studied to explore strategies they use with their children and compare them with those of the Black communities used in the study. There is a need to explore timeless strategies that may work for all children regardless of race and other external factors. The designs for such study many need to be mixed methods that would allow the researcher to research natural life settings and have quantitative data for comparison purposes.

**Conclusion**

This study explored strategies that teachers and parents used to nurture young Black children's academic and social development in schools located in low-socioeconomic communities in the United States. Participants included five teachers, four Black parents, two counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Data were collected through interviews, focus groups, and letters by counselors, psychologists, and social workers. The findings indicated that teachers and parents use a variety of strategies to nurture the academic and social development of young Black children. Students grow academically and socially when teachers use specific nurturing strategies. Teachers and parents used the strategies of building strong, positive relationships with students, creating a safe/supportive learning environment, fostering teacher/parent partnerships, building confidence, providing education resources, and holding students to high expectations. Despite the challenges of teaching in departmentalized grade levels, teachers and parents used strategies effectively to nurture young Black children's academic and social development.

Bearing in mind that early childhood experiences provide a critical foundation for the lifelong progress of children, co-researchers believed that using the nurturing strategies listed
above may be part of the solution to the education of young Black children. It was clear from the study that nurturing strategies provide self-regulation that controls cognitive systems, behavior, and emotions essential for life both at home and school. As nurture helps young Black children build trust, empathy, and compassion capacities, they will become the very citizens that will create the kind of society optimum for human survival and the desired Black communities. School administrators may consider having one teacher for Grades K–2 for the purpose of nurturing children.
REFERENCES


https://prism.ucalgary.ca/handle/1880/106617


October 7, 2021,
Naomi Karaya
Gail Collins
Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY21-22-154 A CASE STUDY EXAMINING HOW TEACHERS AND PARENTS PROVIDE STRATEGIES THAT NURTURE THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG BLACK CHILDREN IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Naomi Karaya, Gail Collins:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: October 7, 2021. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office
APPENDIX B: Recruitment Letter for Teachers

Dear Teacher,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am researching as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to examine how teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-income schools. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be teachers with at least 10 years of experience in a low-income school. If you are willing, you will be asked to be interviewed (45-60 minutes) and participate in a teacher focus group (1 hour). I will also ask you to review the transcripts of your interview and your part of the focus group to check for accuracy (15 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but you will be assigned a pseudonym so that the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please complete the screening survey below and return it to me electronically; after reviewing the survey, I will contact you to let you know if you have been selected, and I will provide you with additional information at that time.

A consent document with additional details about my study is attached to this email. If you are selected to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign and return the consent document to me either in person or via email prior to the interview.

Sincerely,

Naomi Karaya
4th-grade Teacher
APPENDIX C: Teacher Screening Survey for Eligible Participants

Name: ____________________________________________

Preferred Email contact _____________________________

Please mark all that apply:

☐ African American
☐ White
☐ Asian
☐ Hispanic
☐ Other: __________________________________________

1. Are you a teacher who has at least 10 years of experience in low-income schools?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

2. Which day[s] of the week is suitable for a one-on-one interview with the researcher and the focus group with other teachers?
   ☐ Monday
   ☐ Tuesday
   ☐ Wednesday
   ☐ Thursday
   ☐ Friday

3. What timeframe works best for the interview?
   ☐ 9:00am – 12:00pm
   ☐ 12:00pm – 3:00pm
   ☐ 3:00pm – 5:00pm
4. What timeframe works best to participate in the focus group with other teachers?

- 9:00am – 12:00pm
- 12:00pm – 3:00pm
- 3:00pm – 5:00pm
- 5:00pm – 7:00pm
Name: ____________________________________________

Preferred Email contact _____________________________

☐ Please mark one:

1. Teachers need to be sensitive to young Black children’s physical, emotional and economic needs for academic success.
   - Agree
   - Disagree

2. Nature and nurture both play an important role in the academic and social development of young Black children.
   - Agree
   - Disagree

3. Teachers model appropriate behavior to young Black children.
   - Agree
   - Disagree

4. Young Black children have different learning styles.
   - Agree
   - Disagree
APPENDIX D: Recruitment Letter for Parents

Dear parent,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am researching as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to examine how teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-income schools. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be Black parents of a child (or children) enrolled in a low-income elementary school. If you are willing, you will be asked to be interviewed (45-60 minutes) and participate in a parent focus group (1 hour). Parents will review transcripts of their interviews and their parts in the focus group to check for accuracy (15 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but you will be assigned a pseudonym so that the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please complete the screening survey below and return it to me electronically; after reviewing the survey, I will contact you to let you know if you have been selected, and I will provide you with additional information at that time.

A consent document with additional details about my study is attached to this email. If you are selected to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign and return the consent document to me either in person or via email prior to the interview.

Sincerely,

Naomi Karaya
4th-grade teacher
APPENDIX E: Parent Screening Survey for Eligible Participants

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Preferred Email contact __________________________________________

Please mark all that apply:

1. Are you a Black parent of a Black child in a low-income school?
   - Yes
   - No

2. Age of your child(ren):
   - 0 – 5 Years
   - 6 – 9 Years
   - 10 – 15 Years

3. Which day[s] of the week is suitable for a one-on-one interview with the researcher?
   - Monday
   - Tuesday
   - Wednesday
   - Thursday
   - Friday

4. What time works best for the interview?
   - 9:00am – 12:00pm
   - 12:00pm – 3:00pm
   - 3:00pm – 5:00pm
   - 5:00pm – 7:00pm
5. Which day[s] of the week is suitable for you to participate in a focus group with other parents?

☐ Monday
☐ Tuesday
☐ Wednesday
☐ Thursday
☐ Friday

6. What time works best to participate in the focus group?

☐ 9:00am – 12:00pm
☐ 12:00pm – 3:00pm
☐ 3:00pm – 5:00pm
☐ 5:00pm – 7:00pm
Name: ____________________________________________

Preferred Email contact _____________________________

☐ Please mark one:

1. A parent is the first teacher in a child’s life.
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Disagree

2. Partnering with your child’s teacher is important for both academic and social
development of a young Black child in a low-income school.
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Disagree

3. Exposure to early literacy is important for academic and social development of young
   Black children.
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Disagree

4. Village-like support benefits young Black children at school.
   ☐ Agree
   ☐ Disagree
APPENDIX F: Recruitment Letter for School Personnel

Dear counselor, psychologist, or social worker,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am researching as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to examine how teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-income schools. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be a counselor, psychologist, or social worker and have experience working with children enrolled in a low-income elementary school. If you are willing, you will be asked to kindly take about 30 minutes to write a letter to teachers and parents explaining the importance of using strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development in a low-income school setting. The letter will only be used for the research. Using your professional knowledge and experience, write a paragraph to the teachers and a paragraph to the parents giving them strategies and tips to help students succeed (30 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but you will be assigned a pseudonym so that the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please complete the screening survey below and return it to me electronically; after reviewing the survey, I will contact you to let you know if you have been selected and provide you with additional information at that time.

A consent document with additional details about my study is attached to this email. If you are selected to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign and return the consent document to me either in person or via email.

Sincerely,
Naomi Karaya
4th-grade teacher
APPENDIX G: School Personnel Screening Survey for Eligible Participants

Name: _________________________________________________

Preferred Email contact _______________________________

Position: _____________________________________________

Please mark all that apply:

1. Are you a counselor, psychologist, or social worker with some experience in low-income schools?
   □ Yes
   □ No

2. Years of working in elementary schools:
   □ 0 – 5 Years
   □ 6 – 9 Years
   □ 10 – 15 Years
   □ 15 – 20 Years
   □ 20 – 25 Years
   □ 25 – 30 Years
Name: ____________________________________________

Preferred Email contact _____________________________

Please mark one:

1. It takes a village to raise a successful young Black child in a low-income school.
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Disagree

2. Early intervention could mitigate challenges faced by young Black children in low-income schools.
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Disagree

3. Social development may even be more important than academic success to young Black children in low-income schools as a predictor of success in life.
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Disagree

4. Family stability supports young Black children academically and socially.
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Disagree
APPENDIX H: Acceptance/Rejection Email To Selected Participants

Acceptance Email

Dear co-researcher,

Congratulations, you have been selected to participate in a research study to increase our understanding of how strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development can be used to improve educational practices to improve student academic achievement.

The consent form is attached to this email. If you still wish to participate in this study, please review the consent form, sign it, and return it to me through email or my mailbox within seven days if possible. After I receive your signed consent form, you will be identified as a co-researcher in this study. I want to thank you in advance for helping me to complete this research.

Thanks!

Naomi Karaya

Email to participants who completed the survey but were not selected for the study

Dear co-researcher,

I wanted to thank you for taking your busy schedule to help me with the survey geared toward my research on strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in a low-income school setting. I know the work was not part of your everyday responsibilities, but your assistance was invaluable in helping me get everything done promptly.

Your expertise and enthusiasm were both appreciated during a time when life can be stressful for all concerned!

I sincerely appreciate your efforts and thank you for sharing some of your time, and no further help with research is necessary.

Best regards

Naomi Karaya
APPENDIX I: Consent for Teachers

Title of the Project: A Case Study Examining How Teachers and Parents Provide Strategies that Nurture Young Black Children’s Academic and Social Development in Low-Income Schools in the United States.

Principal Investigator: Naomi Karaya, Ed. S., Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a teacher with at least 10 years’ experience working with young Black children in a low-income elementary school.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to examine strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-income schools. The strategies aim at improving instructional practices, which in turn may improve the academic achievement of students.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an individual interview. This participation could take 45-60 minutes. I will audio record the interview to help me with my transcription later.
2. Participate in a recorded audio and video focus group with other teachers of young Black children teaching in low-income schools. This should take about one hour.
3. Review the transcripts of your interview and your part from the focus group to ensure accuracy. This should take about 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

There are no anticipated direct benefits to participants. However, participants may benefit by participating in a collaborative conversation with other teachers in the focus group.

Benefits to society may include getting involved in creating a better future for the generation to come as we raise well-rounded children with premier academic and social development as they prepare to be productive citizens of a diverse country like the United States.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study include are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. As a teacher, I am a mandatory reporter of child abuse.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you
is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be confidential. Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms. Interviews and focus groups will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Hard copy data will be stored in a locked cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and paper copies will be shredded.
- Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other focus group members may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or [redacted]. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you apart from focus group data will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Naomi Karaya. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her. [redacted] You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gail Collins.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.
☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

____________________________________
Printed Subject Name

____________________________________
Signature & Date
APPENDIX J: Consent for Parents

Title of the Project: A Case Study Examining How Teachers and Parents Provide Strategies that Nurture Young Black Children’s Academic and Social Development in Low-Income Schools in the United States.

Principal Investigator: Naomi Karaya, Ed. S., Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. You must be a Black parent of a young Black child(ren) in a low-income elementary school to participate. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to examine strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-income schools. The strategies aim at improving instructional practices, which in turn may improve the academic achievement of students.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an individual interview. This could take 45-60 minutes. I will audio record the interview to help me with my transcription later.
2. Participate in a recorded audio and video-taped focus group with other parents of young Black children in low-income schools. This should take about one hour.
3. Review the transcripts of your interview and your part from the focus group to ensure accuracy. This should take about 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

There are no anticipated direct benefits to participants. However, participants may benefit by participating in a collaborative conversation with other parents in the focus group.

Benefits to society may include getting involved in creating a better future for the generation to come as we raise well-rounded children with premier academic and social development as they prepare to be productive citizens of a diverse country like the United States.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study include are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. As a teacher, I am a mandatory reporter of child abuse.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.
Participant responses will be confidential. Participant responses will be kept confidential through pseudonyms. Interviews and focus groups will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Hard copy data will be stored in a locked cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and paper copies will be shredded.

Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other focus group members may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or [redacted]. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you apart from focus group data will be destroyed immediately and not included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Naomi Karaya. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her. [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gail Collins.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.
APPENDIX K: Consent for School Personnel

**Title of the Project:** A Case study examining how teachers and parents provide strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development in low-income schools in the United States.

**Principal Investigator:** Naomi Karaya. Ed. S., Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

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**Invitation to be part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a counselor, psychologist, or social worker with some experience working with young children in a low-income elementary school. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

**What is the study about, and why is it being done?**

The purpose of the study is to examine strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children in low-income schools. The strategies aim at improving instructional practices, which in turn improve the academic achievement of students.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Write a letter to teachers and parents sharing strategies that nurture young Black children’s academic and social development in low-income schools. One paragraph will be addressed to the teachers, and one paragraph will be addressed to parents. The letter will be used in research. This will take about 30 minutes.

**How could you or others benefit from this study?**

There are no anticipated direct benefits to participants. Benefits to society may include getting involved in creating a better future for the generation to come as we raise well-rounded children with premier academic and social development as they prepare to be productive citizens of a diverse country like the United States.

**What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study include are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. As a teacher, I am a mandatory reporter of child abuse.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be confidential. Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms.
• Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Hard copy data will be stored in a locked cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and paper copies will be shredded.

### Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or [redacted]. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

### Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Naomi Karaya. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her. [redacted] You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gail Collins.

### Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email Dr. Gail Collins.

### Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

______________________________
Printed Subject Name

______________________________
Signature & Date
APPENDIX L: Interview Questions for Teachers

1. Please describe your educational, career backgrounds and teaching experience of young Black children. CRQ

2. Please tell me about your understanding of strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young Black children familiar to you. SQ2

3. Reflecting on how teachers nurtured you when you were a young child, how have you borrowed and used strategies they used in your classroom? SQ1

4. Why might you think that those strategies are significant and still relevant for your use today? SQ1

5. Experts suggest that nurture in early childhood is a predictor of an individual's success in life. Do you agree with this suggested prediction? Why or why not? SQ3

6. Describe how you are using strategies that nurture academic and social development this year. SQ2

7. What has sharpened your awareness of the importance of using strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in low-income schools? SQ1

8. What timeless strategies that nurture young Black children’s academic and social development are you aware of? SQ2

9. Think about a friend who has been very successful in life. What strategies do you think were used by their teachers early in life? SQ2

10. Tell me about the struggles you have experienced in implementing strategies that nurture your students' academic and social development. SQ1

11. Some research has found that teacher-nurture plays a critical role in early childhood. Why do you believe that this statement is true or false? SQ3
12. If you were to meet a 19 year old who is getting ready to be a mom, how would you share the importance of strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in early childhood? SQ2

13. Imagine you getting interviewed at a teacher conference in front of thousands of educators. Why and how would you convince them to use strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in a challenging school like yours? SQ3

14. I would like to ask you a question that will prompt you to put everything together. Based on your life experience of dealing with young Black children, what advice do you have for educators to develop strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in the classroom? SQ2

15. This next question is unique in that it will invite you to reflect on your experiences. How has technology shaped your strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in low-income schools? SQ1

16. We have covered much ground in our conversation, and I appreciate the time you have given to this. One final question is, what else do you think would be vital for me to know about strategies that nurture the academic and social development of young children in low-income schools? CRQ
APPENDIX M: Individual Interview Questions for Parents

1. Please tell me about yourself and your experience of parenting a young Black child?
   CRQ

2. How do you display love and warmth as you spend one-on-one time with your child?
   SQ4

3. What routines do you have in place to establish stability for your child? SQ6

4. What activities would you consider to constitute bonding moments with your child? SQ4

5. What activities do your children do to help them think outside themselves to develop responsibility? SQ6

6. How have you created a village to strengthen the support your child may need from others to develop socially? SQ5

7. What do you do to determine if your child performs on grade level in math and language arts? SQ5

8. What are some strategies you use to encourage critical thinking at home? SQ6

9. How do you support literacy at home? SQ5

10. What has made you aware of the importance of using strategies that nurture young children's academic and social development in low-income schools? SQ6
APPENDIX N: Focus Group Questions for Teachers

1. How can teachers partner with parents to lay a firm foundation for early literacy? CRQ
2. How could teachers assist young Black children to build healthy social and emotional skills in their classrooms? SQ2
3. Why is fostering a supportive environment that promotes strong relationships among teachers, students, and parents vital? SQ1
4. How could teachers implement meaningful, engaging instructional practices that develop students' ability to self-regulate? CRQ
5. How do teachers use habits, skills, and appropriate mindsets that build students' social, emotional, and academic competencies? CRQ
6. How do teachers model appropriate social behavior in the classroom? SQ1
7. How can teachers address barriers that hinder the implementation of strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development in low-income schools? SQ2
8. Why do teachers always need to remain sensitive to children's physical, emotional, and academic needs? CRQ
9. How have you set up your classroom to create an emotionally supportive environment? SQ1
10. According to some research, play is integral to the academic environment. How do you provide consistent structure with play in your teaching practices? SQ2
APPENDIX O: Focus Group Questions for Parents

1. How have you celebrated the small victories of your children? CRQ

2. How have you found support in providing strategies that nurturing your children academically and socially? SQ5

3. What activities do you do to build a strong relationship with your child? CRQ

4. What have you done to ensure that you are not only doing what is suitable for your child but what is best for your child? SQ6

5. How have you resisted the temptation to rescue your children from academic challenges and struggles to enhance critical thinking and the value of hard work? SQ6

6. How have you partnered with your child's teacher to enhance the nurture of your child? SQ5

7. What has been your greatest challenge you face while trying to meet the academic needs of your child? SQ6

8. How have you managed your anxiety to help your child cope with the uncertainties and academic or social struggles your child faces? CRQ

9. In what ways have you been vulnerable with your children to help them understand that struggle is typical to all humans? SQ4

10. What affirmation statements do you give to your children to ensure them that they are destined for success? CRQ
APPENDIX P: School Personnel Letters to Educators and Parents

Dear school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker,

Kindly take about 30 minutes to write a letter to teachers and parents explaining the importance of using strategies that nurture young Black children's academic and social development in a low-income school setting. In the letter, explain to teachers and parents your views about education as a partnership between home and school and how you feel about shared knowledge in helping the child develop or grow holistically, socially, and academically. Using your professional knowledge and experience, write one paragraph to the teachers and another paragraph to the parents giving them strategies and tips to help students succeed.
### APPENDIX Q: Researcher's Reflexive Journal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3/21/2020</strong></td>
<td>Schools have shut down abruptly due to the pandemic, I’m teaching second graders with nothing but my phone through the ClassDojo. The few working chrome books have been given to fourth and fifth-grade students to prepare for testing. There is not a reading series that we could send home with the children. From March to May, no one knows what to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8/28/2020</strong></td>
<td>Teacher nurture strategies will be of critical use as children deal with the trauma of COVID-19. The teachers will have to be tenderly caring and friendly to ease the children's emotional turmoil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8/30/2020</strong></td>
<td>When the school opened in August, the ordered chrome books took two months before they could be delivered. This prevented the lower grades from holding virtual classes. Teachers called parents on the phone and sent assignments on the ClassDojo. The parents could use a good reading series to support the children. When teachers complained, they were told to use YouTube as a resource. Frustration is an understatement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/3/2020</strong></td>
<td>My school district denied permission to proceed with my proposal. It is suggested that instead of focusing on teacher strategies that I reword my topic to include parents’ strategies and resubmit after three months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12/12/2020</strong></td>
<td>Resubmit the proposal to the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1/28/2021</strong></td>
<td>My research proposal was approved by the department of Research, Data and Evaluation of implementation in the school district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3/28/2021</strong></td>
<td>Many children from low-income schools come from fatherless homes, which denies them the privilege of enjoying male role models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4/30/2021</strong></td>
<td>Nurturing kids is not a one trick pony. Individual assessment is key to progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7/6/2021</strong></td>
<td>I had to transfer the whole manuscript to the new template. This whole process delayed my progress, and the new template was not released by the university at the time promised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8/29/2021</strong></td>
<td>School district suspends academics to cater to the social emotional needs of the children. The teachers realized that the students are too traumatized to function. Many students just sit mute and absent in thoughts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/15/2021</strong></td>
<td>What happened to the first-grade child that has alerted the whole school with her constant crying and screaming?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/19/2021</strong></td>
<td>“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”—Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/27/2021</strong></td>
<td>It is also useful to explore your own beliefs, or biases, about race and ethnicity. Sometimes we carry biases, without even being aware of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/21/2021</strong></td>
<td>“Children are great imitators. So, give them something great to imitate.”—Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/22/2021</strong></td>
<td>Today, I nearly fell in the parking lot chasing a stranger who dropped off one of my students whose parents will not connect with school in any way. When I asked the grandmother of this child to connect on the ClassDojo, she began to sob, overwhelmed by chaos surrounding this lovely and very brilliant boy. She</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
explained to me that the parents were not functional to be caregivers of the boy. The lady I was chasing was a sister to the mother of the boy, and when we talked about the instability surrounding the child, she calmly said, "Somebody just has to take care of him because the mother is not functional." At lunch, the boy's father came to school to drop me some bottled water that I had requested my parents to buy. He requested to greet his son, and I was eager to see him too for the first time. He explained that he could not connect in-ClassDojo because he had no phone. He explained that he had come to find out how the son was going home because whoever dropped him at school did not communicate with him. Luckily, I had an answer for him from the lady.

10/5/2021
Set aside uninterrupted time for your child to ask questions. Explore your child's feelings about what they may have seen or heard. You can use examples in your own life or in your community that you think your child may understand.

10/9/2021
Sometimes current events can bring increased attention to racism in our society. News coverage of protests, police brutality, and discussions about social inequality can lead to questions from your children and provide an opportunity to talk about racism.

10/17/2021
“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.” — Fred Rogers, television personality

10/18/2021
My worst day of research was when I went to thank a teacher for agreeing to be interviewed. Outside another class was a child sitting in the hallway. I recognized him because he was the only biracial child in my first-grade class last year that I had taught virtually. I had been made aware by Maggie that his father, who interrupted all virtual classes regularly because he was unstable, had been killed by the police a month ago. I was furious with the teacher who had put him out, and I walked up straight to him to ask if he was aware of the child's home life. He told me he was aware, but he had no tools to constantly deal with the boy who disrupted the class. Besides, the child rotated from class to class with three different content teachers and non-academic teachers such as physical education, music, art, and drama.

I took the boy for a walk, and we had a conversation. He was not aware of what he had done to deserve to be put out in the hallway. Discussing how he was coping with his father's demise, he told me that he wanted to scream most of the time. At that point, I learned that his mother had died earlier, which was the reason why I never met her in my virtual class the previous year. Although I promised to support him and told him that he could come to visit my class when he wanted to scream, I was so angry that the school had nothing to offer him in terms of support. The boy is only in second grade and now in foster care. There is no stability in his life, and he just represents many others like him. Due to teacher shortage, the school counselors have other assignments that keep them from attending to such children. One school psychologist is assigned to three schools, and the workload makes it impossible to attend to all the cases they need to attend.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/25/2021</td>
<td>Racism is the belief that some people are inferior, and others are superior based on their race, ethnic group, or the color of their skin. This leads to treating certain people as if they are worth less than others. Racism can cause problems at school, work and in relationships. It can also lead to problems with getting access to basic needs like health care, housing, and food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/2/2021</td>
<td>During the teacher focus group session, two teachers disagreed on the issue of attending to the social, emotional well-being of students instead of academics. One threatened to leave the session while the other decided to be silent during the discussion. The new light that the study shed on the topic was that nurture cannot just be generalized and assumed that if given, all the children will respond the same. It was clear that there was no one size fit all, and what one may think is a nurturing strategy may not work based on other external factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/4/2021</td>
<td>Are women better nurturers than men in an elementary school setting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/15/2021</td>
<td>Do parents really understand how their children are affected by custody battles?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX R: Audit Trail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/21/2020</td>
<td>Proposal submitted to the school district for permission to conduct the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/3/2020</td>
<td>Response letter sent from the district requiring some changes to the topic to include both the teachers and the parents and not the teachers only. Proposal was to be resubmitted in three months for a second review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/9/2020</td>
<td>Proposal resubmitted to the school district for the second time for permission to conduct research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28/2021</td>
<td>Permission to conduct research approved by the district superintendent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/10/2021</td>
<td>Proposal approved by Dr. Collins and Dr. Kaefar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/25/2021</td>
<td>Proposal defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/30/2021</td>
<td>IRB response to make some edits of the proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/7/2021</td>
<td>Edits submitted to IRB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/7/2021</td>
<td>IRB approval to collect data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/17/2021</td>
<td>Pilot study completed and its helpfulness noted in chapter three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18/2021</td>
<td>Recruitment surveys with consent forms hand-delivered and a few emailed to 12 teachers, 10 parents, four counselors, four psychologists and three social workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19/2021</td>
<td>Instructions were emailed to counselors, psychologists, and social workers who signed consent forms on how to complete their letter-writing task. A kind request was made to complete the task within a week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19/2021</td>
<td>Emails sent to four parents who responded but were not selected for the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21/2021</td>
<td>Emails sent to the teachers who responded but were not selected for the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22/2021</td>
<td>Interview with Penny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/24/2021</td>
<td>Interview with Tiffany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/25/2021</td>
<td>Interview with Matilda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/25/2021</td>
<td>Transcription sent to Penny for member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/26/2021</td>
<td>Interview with Rose and Brittney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/28/2021</td>
<td>Interview with Maggie and Marie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/28/2021</td>
<td>Transcription sent to Tiffany for member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/29/2021</td>
<td>Interview with Jonathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/29/2021</td>
<td>Transcription sent to Matilda for member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/29/2021</td>
<td>Email sent to teacher co-researchers to confirm availability for focus group on Tuesday, 11/2/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30/2021</td>
<td>Interview with Charity followed by parent focus group as the other three parents joined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30/2021</td>
<td>Transcription sent to Rose and Britney for member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30/2021</td>
<td>Email sent to psychologist Frasier and social worker Sophia to turn in their letters as they were the only ones who had not completed the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/2/2021</td>
<td>Teacher focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/3/2021</td>
<td>Transcription sent to Maggie and Marie for member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/4/2021</td>
<td>Transcription sent to Jonathan for member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/5/2021</td>
<td>Transcription sent to Charity for member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/6/2021</td>
<td>Transcription sent to parent focus group for member checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/7/2021</td>
<td>All letters received from counselors, psychologists, and social workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/8/2021</td>
<td>Transcription sent to teacher focus group for member checking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>