PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON COLLABORATING WITH SCHOOLS TO SUPPORT THEIR
TRANSGENDER CHILDREN

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Abstract

While social acceptance of transgender people is expanding, transgender youth continue to be a vulnerable population. Emerging research in this area has examined how the environmental contexts of a young transgender individual’s life, mostly the home and school environments, impact the individual’s psychosocial development and well-being. Until now, research has separately examined the impacts of the home system and the impacts of the school system. Influenced by Bronfenbrenner’s concept of the mesosystem, meaning the interaction between two Microsystems, the current study explored the nature of partnerships between families and schools to support transgender youth from the perspective of parents. The sample was composed of 11 parents of transgender and gender non-conforming children and adolescents. The parents participated in semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed and systematically analyzed. Phase one of the analysis sought to discover emergent themes about the nature of the collaboration between home and school, as perceived by parents. Data showed that parental interactions with schools to support their transgender children were impacted by specific factors related to the three stakeholders involved in the collaborative process: the school factors (e.g., readiness signals, principal communication style), parent factors (e.g., cultural capital) and child factors (e.g., gender identity, personality, academic and/or social-emotional needs). Phase two of the analysis sought to assess whether interactions between parents and schools to support transgender students adhered to Conjoint Behavioral Consultation, a widely-used, 4-stage model of home-school collaboration. Levels of occurrence were based on the number of participants who indicated exposure to aspects of each stage. Analyses showed that there was some occurrence of stage one (needs identification), stage two (plan development), and stage four (plan evaluation), while there was common occurrence of stage three (plan implementation).
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Introduction

In 2014, the cover of TIME magazine called the Transgender Movement, “America’s next civil rights frontier” (Steinmetz, 2014). Due to increased visibility of transgender individuals in entertainment and transgender-related political battles, the concept of transgender identity has received widespread public attention in recent years. As a result, more people are breaking free from the traditional gender binary of masculinity and femininity, which dictates how people dress, behave, and identify based on their assigned sex at birth (GLAAD, 2017). Societal shifts in awareness and understanding of gender have allowed individuals to come out as transgender or gender non-conforming in their youth, which is occurring at younger ages and in larger numbers than ever before (Floyd & Bakeman, 2006; Russell & Horn, 2017). While awareness has brought greater social acceptance, the prospect of coming out is often governed by a fear of rejection (Lev, 2004). Those who come out in their youth face the challenges that come with gender transition, on top of the typical developmental challenges of childhood and adolescence (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2006).

Ecological models of psychology examine how environmental contexts shape human lives. For children, the most pertinent environments are family and school (Kuvalanka, Weiner, & Mahan, 2014). These two environmental contexts shape youth educational and developmental outcomes (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). In the past decade, research has separately examined the impact of home acceptance and school support on the experience of transgender youth; however, there has been a gap in research on how the mesosystem, or the interaction between the microsystems of home and school, works together to support this population. Despite the ample research on the most effective models of home-school partnerships for positive youth outcomes, these models have not been applied to supporting transgender youth. The current study addresses
the research gap on home-school collaborative support of transgender youth through its investigation of parent perceptions of their first contacts and subsequent meetings with schools to support their transgender children.

**Terminology and Larger Social Context**

According to the Human Rights Campaign Glossary, *gender identity* is one’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither (Human Rights Campaign, 2018). *Gender expression* is the external appearance of one’s gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice. *Transgender* is a broad term used for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. While transgender is considered an umbrella term, it is often associated with people who identify and express themselves as the opposite gender from their assigned gender (e.g. a born biological male who identifies as a female). *Gender non-conforming* is a term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender. People who identify as gender non-conforming may be *non-binary*, meaning they do not fit into the socialized conception of male or female, *gender fluid*, meaning they do not have a fixed gender, or they may be *agender*, meaning they do not associate with any gender. In contrast to a transgender person, a *cisgender* person is a person whose gender identity matches his or her assigned sex at birth (Human Rights Campaign, 2018).

According to the GLAAD website, formerly the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the terms transgender and gender non-conforming are often used interchangeably; however, not all transgender people identify as gender non-conforming; and not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender (GLAAD, 2017). On the one hand, there are many people who have gender expressions that are not conventional and do not identify as transgender.
On the other hand, there are many people who do identify as transgender and have conventional masculine or feminine gender expressions. Appropriate term-use is based on self-identification by the individual (GLAAD, 2017). The current study will use *transgender* as an umbrella term, while ensuring sensitivity to an individual’s self-determined labels when necessary.

Also, of significance to the study is the term *transition*, which is complex and multifaceted. A *social transition* is when a transgender individual makes other people aware of their gender identity, usually through a change in gender expression, such as changing one’s name, pronoun, hairstyle, or clothing (GLAAD, 2017, Human Rights Campaign, 2018). A *medical transition* is when an individual receives a gender-affirming medical procedure, such as administration of cross-gender hormones, breast augmentation or removal surgery, or genital reassignment surgery (GLAAD, 2017, Human Rights Campaign, 2018). In the current study, the term *transition* will include either or both a social or medical change, while making distinctions when appropriate.

It is important to note that the literature reviewed for this study includes research that has grouped together transgender subjects with lesbian, gay, and bisexual subjects (LGBT). While sexual orientation and gender identity are two distinct types of self-identity, the groups share a common experience of victimization. Past studies have shown that youth victimization can be due to perceived gender non-conformity, regardless of the true sexual orientation or gender identity of the individual (GLAAD, 2017). For example, a male student who behaves in a way that is perceived as gender non-conforming may be victimized as gay or transgender, regardless of whether he has self-identified as either (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2012). As a result of this common experience, the groups have been linked together, from a civil rights and also a research framework. While commonality exists, it is important to recognize that the experiences of LGB
people can be vastly different from those of the T people. In the current sociohistorical context, the process of undergoing a physical transformation or changing one’s name can be a vastly different lived experience than revealing attraction to people of the same sex (Macapagal, Bhatia, & Greene, 2016).

LGBT people have gained cultural visibility and political liberties over several decades. The 1980s AIDS crisis brought widespread visibility to the gay community (Jonsen & Stryker, 1993). With the rise of the internet, the gay rights movement flourished in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage was legal in all 50 states, a major symbol of victory for LGBT people as accepted members of American society. As is the historical pattern of civil rights movements in the United States, the LGBT movement has been met with resistance by groups that believe same-sex attraction and transgender identities are at odds with their values (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009). The media has long documented the disapproval of LGBT status within organized religion (Mason & Rosenholtz, 2012). As a result of strict beliefs about sexual orientation, gender identity, gender roles, and marriage, many politicians and other influential leaders have continuously attempted to prevent LGBT people from gaining civil rights. Since the vast majority of schools are public institutions, they fall under federal and state rule and are directly impacted by the values and subsequent political decisions of lawmakers (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2012).

As the LGBT movement continued to grow throughout the 1990s, the pervasiveness of harassment and discrimination faced by LGBTQ youth started to become apparent to educators, as well as researchers in the fields of education and mental health (Sadowski, 2016). The early stages of research focused on the detection of risk factors, such as sexual risk behaviors and suicidal ideation, and mostly examined the experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual youth
(Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2009). On the coattails of the gay rights movement, the transgender movement gained dramatic visibility over the past two decades, leading researchers to examine the risk factors associated with gender transition in childhood and adolescents. With research suggesting that transgender youth face the same, if not greater, risks than their gay and lesbian peers, scholars began to expand their research to further understand this growing population (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016). Recent research has shifted the emphasis to contextual factors that impact transgender youth and protective factors that promote healthy development (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2012, Floyd & Bakeman, 2006, Olson, Durwood, Demeules, & Mclaughlin, 2016). More specifically, researchers have begun to look at the impact of family dynamics and school environments on transgender youth and how their experiences within these contexts impact their psychosocial well-being into adulthood (Hatzenbuehler & Keyes, 2013, Hill & Menvielle, 2009, Kull, Greytak, Kosciw & Villenas, 2016, McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2010, Russell & Horn, 2017).

**Supportive Practices at Home**

Family acceptance, particularly parental acceptance, is shown to play a critical role in the psychosocial development of transgender youth (Erich, Tittsworth, Dykes, & Cabuses, 2008; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; McGuire et al., 2010). Studies show that positive parenting practices in homes with transgender children are associated with lower rates of suicidality, lower rates of substance abuse, and higher self-esteem (Bouris et al., 2010; Kuvalanka et al., 2014). Specifically, the positive parenting practice that is shown to have a strong impact on mental health outcomes is the allowance and support of a child’s social transition. Current research suggests that many of the negative emotions and behaviors that are typically associated with a
child’s knowledge of their own gender nonconformity are alleviated once they receive familial support to change their name, clothing, or hairstyle (Ehrensaft, 2012; Kuvalanka et al., 2014). By supporting the social transition, parents demonstrate that they support their child’s true gender identity. In a 2016 study, Olson et al. surveyed 73 transgender children and their parents and found that socially transitioned, prepubescent transgender children showed similar rates of depression and only slightly elevated rates of anxiety compared with population averages.

In response to research demonstrating the significance of parental support on the psychosocial well-being of transgender individuals, organizations, such as The Family Acceptance Project, help to educate families on how to best support their LGBTQ children. In a published booklet from the organization, The Family Acceptance Project provides a list of family behaviors, which include advocating for your child when they are mistreated because of their identity, supporting your child’s gender expression, and believing your child can have a happy future as an LGBT adult (Ryan, 2009). They largely base these recommendations on their own research, which uses a range of methods including in-depth individual interviews, case studies, and surveys (Ryan, 2009).

Supportive Practices at School

In 1999, the Gay and Lesbian Education Network (GLSEN) published the first National School Climate survey, a biennial survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) middle and high school students. The biennial survey offers a perspective of the prevalence of anti-LGBT language, discrimination, victimization, and the impact that these experiences have on LGBTQ students’ educational outcomes and well-being. The survey samples are obtained through online outreach to various advocacy organizations, as well as online advertisements on social networking sites, such as Facebook. While the samples are limited given that the online
recruitment methodology may cause an underrepresentation of LGBTQ youth that do not have access to online resources or those who are not comfortable sharing their identity online, the GLSEN report remains the most comprehensive snapshot of the LGBTQ student’s well-being in the United States.

The first report released in 1999 was the first time researchers, educators, and policymakers had concrete evidence of the pervasiveness of LGBTQ youth victimization in schools. Results from the second survey conducted in 2001 showed that 84.6% of students heard homophobic remarks in school, 68.6% felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 45.7% felt unsafe at school because of their gender expression. The survey showed that 83.2% of the youth surveyed had been verbally harassed and over one-third had some experience of physical harassment (Kosciw & Cullen, 2002).

According to Kosciw et al., (2018) there has been a reduction in homophobia and transphobia in schools over the past decade, as well as an increase in LGBTQ-inclusive supports, such as supportive educators and Gay Straight Alliances (Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong, 2018). Unfortunately, the most recent GLSEN survey, conducted in 2017 and published in 2018, indicates that progress is slowing, and many schools have become even more hostile towards transgender and gender non-conforming students (Kosciw et al., 2018). After years of decline, the frequency of verbal harassment based on gender expression increased from 2015 to 2017. In 2017, 83.7% of transgender students in the sample reported being bullied or harassed at school because of their gender. The most recent survey (2017) continues to show that hostile school environments negatively impact the psychosocial well-being of LGBTQ students. LGBTQ students who experienced high levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization were nearly twice as likely to report they do not plan to pursue post-secondary education. Also, LGBTQ students who
experienced high levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination had lower GPAs, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of depression than their cisgender and heterosexual-identifying peers (Kosciw et al., 2018).

The 2017 survey data shows that schools with supportive and inclusive policies have students who feel safer and perform better academically (Kosciw et al., 2018). Similarly, in a study of 7,040 LGBT students in 2,952 unique school districts, Kull et al. (2016) found that in districts with anti-bullying policies that include specific protections for sexuality- and gender-based harassment, LGBT students reported greater school safety, less victimization based on their identity, and less social aggression than students in districts with generic policies or no policies. In a study of 31,852 11th grade public school students in Oregon, Hatzenbuehler and Keyes (2013) found that inclusive anti-bullying policies were significantly associated with a reduced risk for suicide attempts among lesbian and gay youths even after controlling for sociodemographic characteristics and exposure to peer victimization. Unfortunately, there continues to be a dearth of these important policies across the country. While there was a slight increase in the amount of comprehensive and inclusive school policies from the previous survey in 2015, only 12.6% of students in the 2017 survey reported that their school had a comprehensive policy (i.e., one that specifically enumerates both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression; Kosciw et al., 2018).

Beyond official school policies that protect civil liberties and promote safety are practices that promote inclusion and positive school climate. Although some schools around the country have implemented supportive practices for decades, scholarly research on the implications of such practices has only recently emerged. One of the most researched school practices is the Gay Straight Alliance. Gay Straight Alliances, usually referred to by their acronym GSAs, are
student-led organizations that are intended to create a space for LGBTQ students to feel supported, socialize with one another, learn about LGBTQ-related issues, and learn how to become advocates in their school and community (Griffin, Lee, Waugh, & Beyer, 2004; Poteat, Calzo, & Yoshikawa, 2016; Russell, Muraco, & Subramaniam, 2009). Students in schools with GSAs report fewer experiences with verbal harassment, lower mental and physical health concerns, greater overall well-being, less drug use, less truancy, and greater perceived school safety than students in schools without GSAs (Kosciw et al., 2018; Poteat et al., 2016). Other studies have found GSA members attribute instances of personal growth and empowerment to their GSA involvement (Russell et al., 2009). The 2017 GLSEN survey indicates that number of GSAs continues to grow throughout the country, with more than one half of students surveyed reporting access to a GSA or similar student club (Kosciw et al., 2018).

In addition to GSAs, other LGBTQ supportive practices include annual staff trainings and LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum (Porta et al., 2017; Russell, 2005; Sadowski, 2016). By training school staff on gender and sexuality issues in school, teachers and administrators can learn how to effectively intervene in harassment towards LGBT students, as well as increase their ability to handle questions and concerns from parents and the community (Sadowski, 2016). Students in schools with more supportive educators report feeling safer, have higher GPAs, and are more likely to pursue post-secondary education than students who report less supportive adults in their schools (Kosciw et al., 2018). When schools adopt LGBT-inclusive curricula, students are less likely to hear negative remarks about transgender people, less likely to experience harassment based on gender expression, and are more likely to feel a greater sense of belonging (Kosciw et al., 2018; Russell, 2011; Sadowski, 2016)
School policies and practices related to transgender students are rooted in federal law, specifically Title IX. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination in educational programs and activities (U.S.C. § 1681, 2012). In 2015, under the Obama Administration, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice released a “Dear Colleague Letter,” which summarizes a school’s Title IX obligations regarding transgender students (US Department of Education, 2015). The letter listed a series of obligations which the federal department urged schools to meet. The first obligation was that schools must be a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students, including transgender students. The recommended method of securing safety was through anti-bullying policies that specifically include protection for discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The enumeration of anti-bullying policies is often done at the state level, with room for interpretation at the local level. Another obligation under Title IX was that schools should treat students consistent with their gender identity even if their education records or identification documents indicate a different sex. In other words, schools are expected to rely on a student’s stated, self-determined gender identity. Moreover, students should be allowed to participate in such activities and access facilities consistent with their gender identity. This includes access to the restroom and locker room of the affirmed identity, as well as participation on a sports team of the affirmed gender identity. Title IX, along with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), requires that schools protect transgender students’ privacy. School records should be kept confidential to protect the status of a student’s gender identity. In February 2017, President Donald Trump rescinded the Obama-era guidelines (Peters, Becker, & Hirschfeld Davis, 2017). Many districts around the country continue to adhere to those standards and interpretations of Title IX despite the 2017 withdrawal of the “Dear Colleague Letter;” however, a lack of clear
guidelines certainly perpetuates the existing confusion about what rights transgender students have in schools (Peters et al., 2017).

Gender Spectrum, an organization devoted to supporting LGBTQ students in schools, published a gender support plan template that can be downloaded for free on the organization’s website (www.genderspectrum.org/articles/schools-in-transition). The plan documents the following items: parent/guardian involvement, measures to maintain confidentiality within the school community, measures to support student safety, a comprehensive plan for adjusting names and pronouns in the community and on student records, a comprehensive plan for use of facilities, a comprehensive plan for extracurricular activities. Additionally, the template has a space for “other considerations,” such as social dynamics, siblings, dress code, academic curriculum, staff training, and any other questions, concerns, or issues. The template includes a section on how the plan should be reviewed and revised over time, including a chart to document actions items, who is responsible, and a timeframe. The Gender Spectrum website has a 25-minute video to provide guidance to educators on how to effectively conduct meetings and properly use the support plan template (Gender Spectrum, 2019).

**Ecological Theory**

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Bioecological Model of Development is a widely-used developmental theory that focuses on how multiple environments interact and influence an individual’s life. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory examines the interconnected relationships of environmental contexts in order to understand the individuals that participate in them. Bronfenbrenner calls the interaction between systems, the mesosystem. Since adults manage the systems in which children exist, the relationships between the adults from the
different systems, as well as the relationship between adults and children, is significant to youth development (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

Research focusing on collaboration between home and school is not new. There have been decades of research focused on the benefits of strong partnerships between parents and educators on student development (Bean, Barber, & Crane, 2006; Elias & Gordon, 2008; Frauenholtz, Mendenhall, & Moon, 2017; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999). Early research, starting around the 1990s, focused on the impact of home-school collaboration on learning outcomes. Specifically, the early research provided evidence that family involvement improved grades, attitudes towards school, behavior, work completion, and attendance (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999). As the field of education increased attention on ways to promote the social-emotional well-being of students (Elias & Gordon, 2008), scholars have begun to assess the impact of home-school collaboration on mental health outcomes. There is growing evidence that parental involvement in school supports adolescent mental health (Frauenholtz, Mendenhall, & Moon, 2017; Pomerantz, Ng, & Wang, 2006). Specifically, positive parental engagement with school and school-related communication between parents and their children have been linked with improved self-esteem, emotional self-regulation skills, and self-perceived academic competence (Bean, Barber, & Crane, 2006; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Shumow & Lomax 2002; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2013).

Schools often act as a bridge between child, family, and community (Allen-Meares, Montgomery & Kim 2013). The frequent encounters education professionals have with children and adolescents provide a crucial opportunity to promote positive mental health, early identification of children experiencing distress, and access to intervention.
Existing Research on Trans-Supportive Collaboration

Through survey data and qualitative interviews, the limited studies from the past decade regarding the experiences of parents of transgender youth have documented the common and diverse challenges faced by this population (Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Riley, Clemson, Sitharthan, & Diamond, 2013). Recent research has broadly examined the range of parental experiences from paths to acceptance to concerns about legal issues. The topic of school involvement is mentioned briefly in each study, however, there is no mention of the characteristics of the collaboration between parents and school staff (Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Riley et al., 2013). For example, Riley et al. (2013) conducted an internet survey of parents of transgender children to discover common themes of experiences. One of the six themes was “political, government, and legislative support,” in which the authors quote a parent who felt she had an uphill battle in getting the support her family needed from her child’s school district (p. 189). Similarly, Sansfacon, Robichaud, and Dumais-Michaud (2015) interviewed parents of gender variant children in Montreal with the aim of gaining an understanding of the common issues and challenges experienced by this group. One of the themes that arose from the qualitative data was that most parents experienced challenges working with school to support their children. Specifically, the parents reported that gender identity and sexual orientation were still considered taboo in school and school professionals were ill prepared or insufficiently skilled to adequately address their children’s needs. While these studies provide helpful information about parenting a transgender child and touch on the experience of working collaboratively with school, they do not provide ample detail about the specific interactions between home and school to support transgender students.
In 2013, Slesaransky-Poe, Ruzzi, Dimedio, and Stanley published a case study about a collaborative effort between home and school to support a transgender elementary school student. Along with documenting the initial fear and worry of all people involved, the case study explores the nuances of the collaborative process, from the initial meeting between the mother, guidance counselor, and principal to the action plan, including professional development and organized communication between the mother and her child’s teacher. Martin, the child subject of the case study, had a positive experience in school as the first transgender student in the district. Martin’s mother and school staff attributed his success to the following ten C’s: collaboration, consultation, confidence, change, climate, courage, curiosity, community, compassion, and commitment. Overall, the parent in the study reported feeling understood by compassionate educators who engaged in a collaborative manner and were willing to enact changes. Changes included the implementation of staff development training with an outside agency and presentations by the mother to the staff to create a knowledgeable and transgender-affirming school environment. While the study paints a detailed picture of the journey from start to finish, it is limited as a single case study. It is unclear if the themes and events identified in the study have been experienced by a larger sample of parents.

Need for Greater Inquiry

Despite an expansion of studies in the area of home-school collaboration and mental health (Bean, Barber, & Crane, 2006; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Shumow & Lomax 2002; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2013), there remains a gap in research on the characteristics of home-school collaboration when supporting transgender youth. To fully understand the experience of transgender students and how to best support them, research must examine the interaction between the two most pertinent ecosystems of their lives: home and school.
As evidenced by a 2014 joint resolution between the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), mental health organizations are beginning to embrace methods designed to support gender and sexual orientation diversity. One of the listed support practices is the “promotion of cross-agency collaboration” (American Psychological Association & National Association of School Psychologists, 2014). GLSEN (2016) published a “Model District Policy on Supporting Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students,” which includes the following:

The parents and guardians of transgender and gender nonconforming students can play a critical role in establishing a safe and affirming school environment. Transgender and gender nonconforming students are coming out and transitioning at earlier ages. Schools should work with supportive parents and guardians whenever possible to establish healthy communication and ensure the needs of these often vulnerable students are fully met (p. 9).

Similarly, a 2017 book entitled Transgender People and Education, provides a list of best practices, which includes: “Procedure for supporting students who are transgender including in relation to disclosure, ongoing support, time off from school for gender-affirming appointments and support for families including siblings” (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017, p. 3). While the emerging recognition of home-school collaboration to support transgender students is significant, the statements do not include guidelines on how schools can foster effective partnerships with families.

Researchers and educators have noted that collaboration between home and school in supporting transgender students can be complicated (Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Riley et al., 2011; Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013). In 2015, the American Civil Liberties Union, in conjunction with several organizations, such as the Human Rights Campaign, created a pamphlet entitled Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Students in K-12 Schools. On the subject of home-school collaboration, the authors write:
Many are unfamiliar with the needs of transgender students and attempts to meet those needs can be fraught with emotion for all involved. Educators may have concerns about their own capacity to support their transgender students or hesitate to act because of personal feelings or fear of negative reactions from the larger community. Similarly, families and caregivers are sometimes uncertain about what support their child needs in school or question the school’s commitment to the well-being of their child. This dynamic can create an adversarial relationship among the very individuals working to support the student (Orr & Baum, p.1, 2015).

The statement indicating that educators are concerned about their capacity to support transgender students is corroborated by recent research. In a 2016 qualitative analysis study, 26 educators were interviewed about the barriers and supports they experience when working to create a learning environment that affirms transgender students (Meyer, Tilland-Stafford, & Airton, 2016). The research findings suggested that one barrier was the balancing act required to navigate complex issues with little training. Specifically, the participants felt that working with students, families, and colleagues on issues related to gender and sexuality put them in vulnerable situations with little guidance or clear support (Meyer et al. 2016). In the Slesaransky-Poe (2013) case study, the administrator stated that she felt intense anxiety and worry about her level of knowledge when the first student came out as transgender in her district. The worry of school administrators portrayed by these research studies further demonstrates the lack of guidelines within schools on handling youth gender transitions.

The unease of parents and educators going into the process of supporting transgender youth, as well as the lack of scholarly research on the process, can be attributed to a lack of protocol to the process. In other words, it is difficult to approach and/or analyze a process without a benchmark. There are evidence-based models of consultation in the field of school psychology that can be used as a critical lens to better identify the elements of an effective
partnership. Using a home-school collaboration model as a framework increases the precision of understanding the factors that contribute to high quality home-school interactions.

**Conjoint Behavioral Consultation**

Home-school collaboration is a process that falls under the umbrella of consultation, one of the foundational practices within the field of school psychology. Consultation is rooted in the idea that school psychologists cannot be successful in their work with students without collaboration with parents, teachers, and other service providers (Merrell, Ervin & Peacock, 2012). According to Merrell, Ervin and Peacock (2012), a collaborative consultative problem-solving process can be defined as “two or more individuals working together to apply the problem-solving process to improve outcomes for students” (p. 236).

Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC), developed by Sheridan and Kratochwill in 1996 and revised in 2007, is one of the most widely-used consultation models in both training and practice. The efficacy of CBC has been extensively researched. In a 2005 study of 18 different school-based consultation models, the Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) model provided the strongest evidence for producing significant school-related outcomes (Guli, 2005). A 2006 study explored the efficacy of CBC with 125 clients of varying racial and ethnic diversity and found that CBC yielded large effect sizes in positive behavior development regardless of the sociodemographic diversity of the students and families (Sheridan, Clarke, Knoche, & Edwards, 2006). In a 2012 randomized controlled study with 217 students from 82 classrooms, along with their families and teachers, results showed that participants in the intervention group had significantly greater improvements in social skills and adaptive behaviors than the control group (Sheridan et al., 2012). In a 2017 large-scale randomized controlled trial of CBC with 267 students, their parents, and 152 teachers in 45 Midwest rural schools, Sheridan and her research
team aimed for CBC to promote positive school-related social/behavioral skills and strengthen teacher-parent relationships. Results showed that the group who received the CBC intervention had students with fewer teacher-reported school problems and significantly different rates of improvement in the teacher-parent relationships than the control group (Sheridan et al., 2017).

**Description of CBC**

The following description of CBC is based on Sheridan and Kratochwill’s (2007) *Conjoint Behavioral Consultation: Promoting Family-School Connections and Interventions*. Underlying CBC is the Ecological-Behavioral Theory, which focuses on the complex behavioral interactions between ecosystems. Additionally, CBC relies on a Partnership-Centered Model. This model focuses on skill development of everyone involved in the problem-solving process. Instead of a quick-fix for a specific problem, CBC aims to strengthen ability and build capacity in order to create long-term improvements. Effective execution of CBC establishes a team of individuals who share responsibility, agree on common goals, empower each member, and strive for lasting change (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

The CBC process consists of four stages: needs (problem) identification, needs (problem) analysis and plan development, plan implementation, and plan evaluation (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). During the first stage, known as *needs identification*, the problem-solving team works together to identify and prioritize the student’s needs across the home and school settings. In this stage, the team will identify strengths of the child, family, teacher, and systems, define the concerns, explore environmental conditions that may be contributing to the problem, and determine a shared goal. The team conjointly decides on a target concern and derives a plan to collect baseline data on that specific behavior (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).
During the second stage, needs analysis, the team evaluates the baseline data, decides upon behavioral goals for the child, and analyzes the impact of various factors on the behavior. The team uses their findings from the data analysis to develop intervention plans. Intervention plans should be empirically supported and be consistent with the problem-solving teams’ beliefs and values. The plan should consider the skill level of all those who will implement it. In order to maximize the chances for success, the specific components of the plan should be jointly determined by school staff and parents (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

During the third stage, plan implementation, parents and school staff implement the agreed-upon plan in the home and school. During the implementation stage, the consultant, usually the school psychologist, ideally monitors the implementation for fidelity to the plan, as well as assesses a child’s immediate response to the delivered intervention (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

During the fourth stage, plan evaluation, the consultant collects data to determine whether the plan was effective across settings and the need for continuation, modification, or termination of the intervention based on the child’s progress toward his or her goal. Data are usually collected through direct classroom observations and interviews with children, parents, teachers, and other people involved in the intervention plan (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

**Applying CBC to Supporting Transgender Students**

CBC may have potential for systems-level change at home and at school by creating a process in which parents and educators are assessing and reshaping themselves and their environments to best support transgender students. Due to the potentially unique and multifaceted needs of a transgender student, school personnel may not follow each step, or the timeline of the process, exactly how it is prescribed by Sheridan and Kratochwill (2007);
however, the foundational concepts undergirding each step have important implications for effective home-school partnerships when supporting transgender youth and may serve as a benchmark for understanding quality interactions.

If CBC were to be applied to parent and school staff meetings about transgender youth, the process may appear as follows: In the first stage of CBC, parents and school staff come together and establish a team-based approach to supporting the transgender youth. The home-school team then reviews the family system, the school system, and the individual transgender youth for strengths and identify target areas of concern. Once target concerns have been identified, the team will incorporate elements of CBC stage two, specifically, creating an intervention plan that is consistent with the problem-solving team’s beliefs and values. If available, they will select an empirically supported intervention plan; however, given the nascent nature of this research area, the team may select an intervention backed by researched principles of best practices. An additional CBC component to be utilized is the idea that the support plan should consider the skill level of all those who will implement it. For example, the teachers involved in the plan should receive training on proper language, how to advocate for their student, etc. If needed, parents should be provided with resources on how to best support their child at home. Stage two of CBC makes it clear that the components of the plan should be jointly determined by school staff and parents.

Once school staff and families agree upon a plan, it needs to be implemented in one or both settings, depending on the specific systems-level changes addressed in the plan. Incorporating the third stage of CBC, schools would determine a point person for ensuring that the agreed upon components of the plan are being implemented in school. For example, a school psychologist might be the point person and would be responsible for following up on the plan’s
action steps, such as proper locker room usage. If the plan included changes to the home system, parents would be responsible for following up on those items, which might include allowance of their child’s social transition and seeking parent support groups. The fourth stage of CBC would include plan evaluation. While formal collection of data might not be necessary, this stage would include follow-up conversations between home and school, as well as consistent assessment of the transgender child’s feelings of being supported in the different systems.

**Research Questions**

Through interviews with parents of transgender youth, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

R1: What are parents’ experiences interacting with school to support their transgender children?

R2: As perceived by parents, to what extent does the nature of the home-school collaboration relate to parents’ social and cultural capital represented by their own gender, race, socioeconomic status, and professional/educational, employment backgrounds?

R3: How many parents had exposure to components of high quality home-school partnerships, as outlined in the CBC framework?

**Methods**

Given that the current study aims to understand how parents make meaning of their experience of interacting with schools about the needs of their transgender child, qualitative research based on parent interviews was the preferred study methodology. Qualitative methods allow for inductive reasoning to openly explore data, in this case, the subjective experience of parents. The interviews and subsequent analysis allowed for emergent findings and helped identify similarities and differences among participants’ experiences. This is especially needed in an emerging research area. Said differently, it would be premature to develop quantitative scales
with a narrow set of survey items and response options given parental experience of schools’
responsivity related to transgender children is underexplored at this point.

**Participants**

Participants included 11 individual parents of children that identify as transgender or
gender non-conforming. After 11 interviews, it was determined that themes were repeating such
that saturation was reached. During initial recruitment, approximately 15 potential participants
were given written information about the study. Information was provided in-person by the lead
researcher during a parent support group at Institute for Personal Growth (IPG), a private mental
health practice in New Jersey and two separate conferences on LGBTQ issues in New Jersey.
Out of the 15 potential participants, 7 reached out to the researcher with interest in participating.
Two of the seven ceased communication with the researcher before an interview could be
scheduled, despite no new information about the study being provided to them. Therefore, direct
recruitment resulted in five participants. Snowball sampling was used by asking the five
participants to share the research study with other parents of transgender children, who could
then reach out to the researcher if they were interested in participating. Snowball sampling
resulted in an additional six participants.

Geographically, nine parents live in the Northeast, one parent lives in the Mid-Atlantic
and one parent lives in the Southeast. Eight of the participants are White with White children,
thus the majority of the sample was White. One of the parents is Black with a Black child, one is
White with a biracial White and Black child, and one is White with an adopted Black child. Nine
participants reported a household income greater than $150,000, one participant reported a
household income between $100,000-150,000 and one reported a household income of $50,000-
100,000, thus a majority of the sample were in high income families. Parents comprised a sample
with advanced degrees with three parents holding a doctorate degree, four parents holding a master’s degree, and four parents holding a bachelor’s degree. The years in which the children of the interviewees started their gender transitions or non-conforming expressions in school ranged from 2009-2018 and the modal year was 2017. In terms of the level of school when the children of the interviewees started their gender transitions or non-conforming expressions, six were in elementary school, four were in middle school, and one was in high school. Thus, the majority of children were in elementary school when issues around gender identity or expression arose.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
<th>Race of Interviewee</th>
<th>Race of child</th>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Year child transitioned in school</th>
<th>Level of school when child transitioned</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>&lt;150</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>&lt;150</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mid Atlantic</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>50-100</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
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<td>Biracial</td>
<td>&lt;150</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>100-150</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>&lt;150</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>100-150</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Bachelors</td>
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</tr>
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<td>White</td>
<td>&lt;150</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure

Data was collected from parents over a three-month period from June through August 2019. The Rutgers University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the study for human subjects following successful defense of the proposal. Participants gave their written consent before the interview. The consent form explained the purpose of the study and ensured that all identifying information would be kept strictly confidential.
**Interview administration**

Parent participants were interviewed individually. Interviews were administered by the lead researcher by telephone. The average length of the interview was 60 minutes with a standard deviation of 15 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed, without the use of identifying information.

**Measures**

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed in order to collect qualitative data from parents on their experiences working with schools to support their children’s gender transitions and transgender identities (See Appendix A). In order to discover themes, while simultaneously considering the unique experiences of each participant, a semi-structured interview was used to maintain continuity between interviews, while allowing participants and the researcher flexibility to deviate from the interview protocol. The interview consisted of 15 questions, all of which contained probes to gain further information. The first six questions for this measure were designed to elicit broad and general information about the participants’ experiences. For example, “Can you provide me with a brief history of your child’s gender journey at home?” and “I am wondering if you can tell me what your experience has been interacting with your child’s school on this matter?” The open-ended nature of the questions was key for allowing emergent findings. The next two questions, while also open-ended, probed for specific topics. In order to gain information on the impact of demographical features on the home-school relationship, parents were asked if they perceived their partnerships with schools to be impacted by their social and/or cultural capital.

The last seven questions of the semi-structured interview were designed to elicit specific information about the degree to which the participants’ experiences aligned with the four stages
TRANS-SUPPORTIVE HOME-SCHOOL COLLABORATION

of Sheridan and Kratochwill’s Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) model (2007), which this study used as a framework for assessing quality home-school interactions. For example, in order to assess whether or not the school engaged in the first stage of the CBC model, needs identification, the interview included probes such as, “To what degree do you think the school was comprehensive in addressing needs and concerns?” Throughout the interview, questions aimed to gather both objective information (i.e., who attended certain meetings) and subjective information (i.e., did the parent feel respected by the school?).

After completion of each interview, the participants were asked a series of questions related to their demographics, so that information about their identities (ethnicity, religion, education level, socioeconomic status, age) could be used to further understand these data.

**Data Analysis Plan**

Transcribed interview data was analyzed in two stages. The first stage allowed for an expansive and comprehensive analysis of how parents make meaning of their experiences working with schools to support their transgender children. While the overarching theme being explored was the nature of this collaboration, the first stage of analysis allowed for themes to emerge—in other words, the data analysis allowed for the breadth of experience to arise without preconceived notions applied in advance. The second stage of analysis complemented the first stage in that it analyzed the data to further understand the nature of parent-school partnerships to support transgender children; however, the second stage sought specific themes based on an evidence-based model of home-school consultation in order to use a benchmark to assess exposure to quality of interactions.
Stage 1 Data Analysis

**Grounded theory data analysis approach.** All semi-structured interviews were transcribed. Transcripts were checked against the audio files to ensure accurate transcription and that all identifying information was removed. Grounded theory guided the stage 1 data analysis of the current study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory approach, developed by Strauss and Glaser in 1967, is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a particular phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Rather than analyzing data based on formulaic prescriptions, grounded theorists analyze and synthesize their data through qualitative coding, the process of breaking down data into segments and labeling the main ideas (Charmaz, 2014). Qualitative coding allows researchers to use an open mind to understand the experiences of the participants in their research (Charmaz, 2014). The current study used the parents’ responses to the semi-structured interview to formulate ideas and hypothesis about the nature of collaboration between parents and schools intended to support transgender youth. In this first stage of data analysis, findings emerged from coded data, not from preconceived hypotheses. Initial coding was based on open coding methodology in which transcripts were reviewed line by line to identify categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Charmaz (2014), line-by-line coding “sparks new ideas” for the researcher to pursue and reduces the likelihood that researchers “superimpose their preconceived notions on the data” (p. 125).

Line-by-line coding was reviewed to identify categories that were present in multiple transcripts. The categories were then used to determine themes. Transcripts were then re-reviewed to identify subthemes within each theme. Once subthemes were identified, a codebook was established with clear guiding questions to help determine the presence or absence of each
subtheme in the transcripts (See Appendix B). Each transcript was then reviewed again to
determine absence or presence for each subtheme.

Stage 2 Data Analysis

A priori data analysis approach. After coding these data for emergent findings using a
grounded theory approach, the second stage of analysis drew on the pre-established CBC
framework. This analytic approach complemented the grounded theory approach and helped
determine if the CBC framework has utility in deepening an understanding of the home-school
collaboration around supports for transgender youth. Specifically, codes identified whether
parents had exposure to components of family-school collaboration that were (a) comprehensive
in identifying the youth’s needs, (b) systematic in developing a support plan, (c) faithful in
implementing the agreed upon plan and (d) iterative in evaluating or adjusting the plan as
needed.

Strengthening Credibility of Findings

For this study, data was analyzed through a constructivist lens. Given (2008) notes,
“Constructivist qualitative research studies typically emphasize participant observation and
interviewing for data generation as the researcher aims to understand a phenomenon from the
perspective of those experiencing it” (p. 119). In order to demonstrate credibility, several
common procedures in qualitative inquiry were used, including researcher reflexivity and
member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Role of the Researcher. Creswell and Miller (2000) note the importance of researchers’
acknowledging their beliefs and biases early in the research process to allow readers to
understand their positions, and then “bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the study
proceeds … individuals reflect on the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape their
interpretation” (p. 127). Reflecting on one’s own preconceptions related to the research throughout the analytic process may enhance the acuity of the research and contribute to more multifaceted results (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

As a White, cisgender, heterosexual individual, I am the lead researcher with a certain level of privilege and a lack of personal experience with bigotry, specifically as it relates to gender identity. This indicates an outsider view on the main topic explored in this study. However, there are aspects of my identity that created personal connections to the values discussed in the study. I have had social relationships with members of the LGBTQ community from a young age. I have a sibling that experienced academic struggles and peer victimization in school due to learning disabilities, so I saw firsthand the impact of school-based challenges on a student and the student’s family. I chose to pursue a doctoral degree in psychology, with a specific focus on supporting transgender youth and their families. My own ecological history, combined with my passion for research, clinical work, and personal allyship with the LGBTQ community, fostered a strong compassion for the participants, which was self-monitored throughout the data collection and data analysis processes to maintain objectivity.

The impact of my history of working in schools on the study was also considered. I possess an understanding of the bureaucracy of school organizations, which had a potential polarizing impact. On the one hand, I had to be aware of over-empathizing with the school based on knowledge of constraints within the system. On the other hand, I had to be aware of being overly critical of the school based on knowledge of best practices that were not employed.

**Member Check.** According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checks are “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” in a qualitative methods study (p. 314). In the current study, the researcher sent one participant a brief summary of the findings and conducted
a 60-minute follow-up conversation by telephone. Based on best practices stated by Creswell and Miller (2000), the researcher and participant discussed whether or not the themes made sense, if there was sufficient evidence to support the findings, and if the overall portrayal of parent experiences seemed realistic and accurate. The participant asked a few questions about these data, particularly when the finding did not match her experience. Upon receiving additional evidence from the researcher, she was able to understand and agree with the findings. Overall, the participant fully supported the findings and stated that the data realistically answered the research questions.

Results

Stage 1 Findings

Grounded theory data analysis was used to answer research question 1: What are parents’ experiences interacting with schools to support their transgender children? The data revealed that parents’ experiences were impacted by factors related to the three primary stakeholders involved in the home-school collaboration to support a transgender student: the school, themselves (parents), and their children. Results are organized in Figure 1 with factors divided into themes and subthemes that relate to each stakeholder.
School factors that impacted parent experiences with home-school collaboration

When parents discussed specific elements and characteristics of their children’s schools that impacted their collaboration experiences, four main themes arose: (a) the schools’ signals of readiness to support a transgender student, (b) the interpersonal relations with the principal, (c) the presence of supportive champions, and (d) the bathroom option provided by the administration.

Readiness signaling as a school factor. Data analysis of participant interviews revealed that parent experiences were impacted by signals sent by the schools indicating that they were
ready to support their transgender child. The readiness signaling factor is defined as parent perceptions of how school staff conveyed the school’s degree of preparedness to support a transgender student, which impacted the parent collaborative experience. Readiness signals took the form of staff knowledge of how to support a transgender student, experience supporting a transgender student previously, staff language related to transgender identity, and consideration of non-binary students.

Most parents (n = 7) felt that their children’s schools did not appear ready to support a transgender student in the first home-school collaborative meetings. Five of those seven parents attributed the lack of readiness to staff that seemed to have limited knowledge on the issue. One parent recalled, “They were basically relying on me to educate them.” Similarly, one parent shared, “Going into second grade, which was a new building, we had to educate them…we had to see if they could change the name in [the computer system]. We had to ask about bathroom use.” When the parent needed to proactively ask for certain accommodations, the school sent a signal that they were not ready to support a transgender student because they had not anticipated the specific needs prior to the meeting.

There were some parents (n = 3) that felt the tenor of the home-school collaboration was positive because the school signaled readiness through ease of language. In remembering her first meeting with the principal to support her gender non-conforming child, one mother said, “[The principal] seemed relatively comfortable with the ‘they.’ He was very, very relaxed and smooth about it.” In this case, the principal’s affect and confidence using the correct pronouns relayed the message to the parent that the school had experience with supporting gender non-conforming students. Similarly, one parent recalled that the director of her child’s school was “well-versed” when speaking about transgender topics.
Several parents discussed how their sense of the schools’ readiness depended on whether the schools had supported transgender students before their children. Five parents reported that they were not aware of students in their children’s districts that had gone through a gender transition at school before \((n = 5)\). One mother of a transgender 8th grader said, “They just really didn’t have a trans child before, so they didn’t really have anything set up.” In contrast, one parent recalled, “It eased my mind a bit the fact that I knew they had done this once before.” Knowledge about a school’s previous experience supporting a transgender student sent a signal about readiness.

The data revealed that the issue of readiness is quite complex. Within the transgender community, there seems to be readiness for some and not others. Six parents discussed how their children’s schools seemed ready to support male-to-female and female-to-male students, but not non-binary students \((n = 6)\). Specifically, schools demonstrated a lack of readiness to support non-binary students through physical spaces, classroom language and practices, and school events. One mother stated, “They have other trans kids there, but they don’t have any nonbinary kids. They were very good with people who were in the binary, but it was the nonbinary piece that people didn’t really get. It was very confusing and they didn’t buy into it.” This indicates that school policies and practices intended to support transgender students may still be rooted in a gender binary and therefore, create challenges for students whose identities do not fit the binary. The statement that the school “didn’t buy into it” indicates that staff members used language which signaled apprehensiveness regarding the validity of non-binary gender identities.

**The principal as a school factor.** In every interview \((n = 11)\), the principal was the most discussed school staff member who had the largest impact on parent experiences. The principal factor is defined as parent perceptions of the impact of the principal’s behavior on the parent
collaborative experience. When mentioning the principal, parents brought up several characteristics that impacted their experience, including but not limited to, listening to parent concerns, demonstrating openness to change, connecting the principal’s personal values to their decision-making, and “walking the talk.”

Related to “school readiness” above, several parents \((n = 4)\) discussed how principals could demonstrate support by listening to the parents’ concerns and needs, even if they and their teams lacked readiness. For example, one parent stated that the school had no policies in place to support her child, however, “they were polite, they were professional, and they listened to my concerns.” Similarly, another parent described the principal as being uneducated on the topic, but telling the parent, “I got your back, what do you need?” Another parent shared that the principal “felt concerned. Not like he was worried about coming off as the perfect expert, which can also be annoying, but just was good at listening.” One parent described the principal as being less open-minded based on personal beliefs, but still open to support. She recalled, “She wasn’t warm and fuzzy, but she listened to what we were asking for and she accommodated it…so she was fine.” In many of these examples, the principal’s listening behavior created a supportive tone, whether or not the administration was fully prepared to support a transgender student.

It was problematic for many parents \((n = 5)\) when the principals could not put aside their personal values and used them to dictate decisions about their children’s rights in school. One mom of a gender non-conforming elementary school student was fighting for approval for her child to use a single stall bathroom. The principal told the mother she went to the board and the request was not approved. The mother shared, “It took me going back and forth four or five times for her to admit that it was never the school board involved to begin with. It was her that made the decision.” One mother told a story about her transgender daughter and an overnight
chorus trip. Her child was set to go on the trip, when the former principal unexpectedly left, and a new principal was hired. The new principal told the mother that her daughter was only permitted to go on the trip if she were chaperoned by a parent in the hotel. This change in decision, when a new principal started, indicates that the decision was not grounded in school-based policy, but instead based on the new principal’s personal values.

Another subtheme that parents discussed in relation to the principal was “not walking the talk.” This means that principals were often supportive to the parents in conversation, but did not implement the action items to affect real supportive change for the transgender student ($n = 4$). One parent stated, “Verbally the school was responsive, but in action it really did not measure up to what was needed.” When one parent contacted her child’s school regarding a bullying incident, she felt the principal was not “walking the talk.” She recalled:

[The principal] would say all the right things, but do nothing. I’m saying to them, ‘What intervention was had with the kids?’ That’s when I knew I was up against a gaslighter. She was telling me to my face everything I wanted to hear, and doing nothing.

In this case, the principal would voice support to the concerned mother, but would not execute any follow-up action to educate the students that were bullying this gender non-conforming child.

“Supportive champion” as a school factor. Every parent ($n = 11$) discussed a “supportive champion” in the school, whether that staff member was working in conjunction with a supportive principal or having to work around a resistant one. The supportive champion factor is defined as parent perceptions of the impact of specific supportive staff members on the parent collaborative experience. The most commonly brought up staff members were teachers, counselors and nurses. These staff members showed their support in many ways, such as communicating support to the parents, being the contact for parents when issues arose in school,
being a point person for the child throughout the school day, and acting as an advocate in home-school meetings.

Many parents \((n = 7)\) discussed teachers that played positive roles in their children’s school experience. When one participant did not feel supported by her child’s school principal, she decided to “focus [her] energy on the class and the teachers in the classroom.” That same parent recalled an openly gay teacher telling her, “I’ve got my eye on [your child], don’t worry.” Despite an uncooperative principal, the mother said, “I feel like I have people in the school who really care” because of the teachers that overtly voiced and demonstrated their support for her child.

School counselors were often brought up as the supportive champions \((n = 5)\). When a high school student was hospitalized for mental health issues, their mother shared that the counselor “was a great resource before [my child] left school. She was my contact while they were out of school if there were any concerns. She is an amazing advocate.” When a transgender student was transitioning from elementary to middle school, her school counselor from elementary school joined the middle school support plan meeting. The parent shared:

Our elementary school counselor joined the middle school meeting because they were always very supportive with knowing who our child was, knowing who she felt she was. They were very close and supportive of our family, our situation, and so they wanted to be able to shed light, and share experiences from the standpoint of somebody who was already very supportive of our child, and kind of had been with her on her journey so far from a school standpoint.

The nurse was the other school staff member that was discussed several times as the “supportive champion” \((n = 3)\). When one child was having a particularly difficult time with his gender transition, the mother recalled that “the nurse was fantastic. He would go there four or five times a day just to get some psychological safety.” That same mother referred to the nurse as
a “life raft” in a school with an unsupportive administration and shared that the nurse took time to educate herself on transgender children.

The bathroom as a school factor. Every parent shared that the bathroom was a discussion point in the initial collaboration meetings with their children’s schools (n = 11). The bathroom factor is defined as parent perceptions of how communication and actions related to the child’s school bathroom situation impacted the parent collaborative experience. When the topic of bathrooms arose in home-school meetings, parents were often told by school staff that their child had one option for the bathroom (if that child did not want to use the male or female bathrooms) (n = 7). That one option was often a faculty bathroom or the nurse’s bathroom. When schools provided only one option, they created discriminatory situations, particularly for students that identify as non-binary, gender fluid or who were in the middle of a gender transition.

One mother of a transgender high school student said:

The child who has to only use faculty bathrooms is somewhat isolated. Right?...Imagine you only have one bathroom that you can use in the whole place. That's unheard of. We would not expect that in America. But that's what you're telling my child to be okay with. Why is that okay?

Another mother recalled how the bathroom option provided to her middle school student was far away. She shared:

My child shouldn't have to run in the door when she gets home and first thing go into the bathroom and spend the next 20 minutes in the bathroom. Let's figure out ways, what can we be doing at the school to allow them to go to the restroom like everybody else?

Similarly, the parent of an elementary school student shared, “At one point, either the end of second grade or beginning of third grade, he wet his pants after school. We realized at that point, he wasn’t using the bathroom.”

The bathrooms proved especially difficult for students in the middle of gender transitions and non-binary students. One mother shared:
So, we shaved his head, and then he would go use the girl's room, and there were children that would just start screaming at him. "Get out, get out." He looks like a boy now… At that point he still didn't have a gender, he didn't want to say one way or the other.

One mother of a gender fluid elementary school student knew that her child’s rights were being violated and called a local LGBTQ rights non-profit organization to support her. She shared her story:

The school called me, and wanted them just to choose one bathroom. It would be easier for everybody if they just chose one bathroom. I said, ‘The policy says they can go into the bathroom which they identify with as their gender,’ and she said, ‘Yes, but that's one thing.’ I said, ‘No, one day it's a boy, one day it's a girl. You legally ...’ And I had talked with [a local organization], and I knew that they legally need to let them go into those bathrooms, whatever they identified with.

This parent emphasized the need for the school to be flexible with bathroom options for a gender fluid student. By insisting that the gender fluid student choose one of the gendered bathrooms, the school is denying the student the legal right to use the bathroom associated with their gender identity, since their identity is not fixed and can change over time.

Another issue that arose regarding the bathroom was the lack of comprehensiveness around the bathroom plan. When a middle school student was told he could only use a faculty bathroom, the mother questioned, “How do you disseminate that [information]…how will the rest of the staff react and behave?” When an elementary school student was told to use a single stall faculty bathroom, the mother questioned, “What if he’s told by somebody that he can’t…if somebody who is not in the loop calls him out for using the bathroom, and he gets in trouble, what happens then?” That exact scenario that mother worried about happened to another child of a participant. The parent shared:

He went to use that bathroom, and at that point, it was a teacher's bathroom. A teacher saw him coming out, and was like, "Why are you in our bathroom?" He
got confronted again by a [different] teacher. The next time he used it, he drew a picture of a teacher on a piece of paper to hold over his face so that people would think he was a teacher.

Child factors that impacted parent experiences with home-school collaboration

In parent interviews, participants described factors about their children that impacted their experience collaborating with schools. The most common child-related factors discussed were gender identity and expression, personality and desires, and academic and social-emotional needs (See Figure 1).

Gender identity and expression as a child factor. The gender identity and expression factor is defined as parent perceptions of how their children’s internal gender identity and outward expression of gender impacted the parent collaborative experience ($n = 10$). Parents reported that their children’s gender identities and expressions impacted peer acceptance, which influenced discussion points at collaborative meetings. One father shared that he and the school staff did not need to focus on social supports for his daughter in collaborative meetings because “she really presented so clearly like a girl that the kids just saw her as a girl.” Another parent shared that she did not have to work with the school on social support because her daughter “looks like a girl, she acts like a girl, and walks and talks like a girl. All those things are in her favor.” A mother of a high school student shared that her child identifies as non-binary with a more feminine gender presentation. As a result, the student feels comfortable using the female restrooms, which, according to the mother, “actually has taken a complete load off the school of having to deal with a neutral restroom.” In this case, the parent did not have to advocate for certain bathroom options for her child, since her child’s gender expression was not in conflict with the options already in place.
When students’ gender identities and/or gender expressions were more fluid or non-conforming, peer acceptance was challenging and, therefore, a focus for the parents in meetings with the school. One parent reported several contentious interactions with her child’s school due to the child’s fluid gender identity. She had to push for more community-wide education because “it became an issue of [kids asking] are you a boy or a girl?”

**Desire for advocacy as a child factor.** Most of the participants ($n = 9$) talked about how children influenced their parents behavior in the home-school collaborative meetings, even though the children were not physically present. The *desire for advocacy factor* is defined as parent perceptions of how their children’s input regarding the degree of parent advocacy impacted the parent collaborative experience. Some children wanted to exist “under the radar” and not provoke contention, while other children wanted to act as “pioneers” and felt adamant about fighting for their desired rights.

Participants whose children wanted to be “under the radar” talked about how they, as parents, were willing to advocate for certain decisions, but their children did not want them to create tension ($n = 5$). When a school administrator told a parent that her transgender daughter could only attend an overnight trip if she were chaperoned by her parent, the mother wanted to fight the school, but the daughter did not. The mother explained, “[My child] didn’t want to cause disruption and uproar, she just wants to live her life, and if it means missing a field trip for choir group, okay so what?” Similarly, a parent of a transgender middle school student was displeased with the school’s support of her child, but held back because her child “didn’t want to draw any attention to himself.” She went on to say, “I am caught in this place of really wanting to advocate for my kid, and being leery of doing anything that will upset him.” Another parent shared, “My kid, he doesn’t like to be the center of attention. He would come to me with things
that made me angry, where he’s like ‘I really don’t want you to say anything and get anyone in trouble, because then I’m going to be singled out.’”

In contrast to “under the radar,” some parents discussed how their children were “pioneers” by communicating very clearly what they wanted and being willing to advocate, both through their parents and by themselves \( (n = 4) \). One parent shared that she knew exactly what to ask for in the meeting with school staff because her child explicitly stated his desires. The parent said, “[My child] is full force, 100 percent confident in what he’s decided at the moment…He was like I want to use the boys’ bathroom and the boys’ locker room.” One parent described her non-binary child as a pioneer and activist for gender equality in their school. The parent described, “My kid is both really independent and outspoken, and articulate, but in a way that’s diplomatic enough that they’re very appealing. They are extremely, like they were in Model UN. They’re just really successful at winning people’s sentiments over.” Another parent of a high school student shared that her child not only insisted on attending the support meeting, but did most of the talking. She said, “[My child] insisted they wanted to sit down in person and talk to the school administration themselves.”

**Academic and social-emotional needs as a child factor.** The *academic and social-emotional needs factor* is defined as parent perceptions of how their children’s learning and mental health needs impacted the parent collaborative experience. Almost all of the parents \( (n = 10) \) discussed academic and/or social-emotional needs with the school over the course of their interactions. The specific factors related to academic and/or social-emotional needs that impacted the partnership were special education classification and the relationship between gender identity and other issues.
Five of the participants have children in special education and all five reported that having a special education classification for his or her child, either an Individualized Education Program or a Section 504 plan, created, or maintained, an already established line of communication between home and school. One mother shared, “because of the IEP he meets with the guidance counselor once a week. She and I have really good communication. We’ve been in touch with each other about certain things...mostly academics.” While most of this parent’s communication with school was regarding her child’s learning, the relationship formed with the guidance counselor as a result of the IEP created a clear point person for her to communicate with about her child, including issues related to gender. The special education documents also created a place for transgender-supportive accommodations to be clearly stated and seen by staff. Two participants shared that their children’s IEPs were to support anxiety and depression, however, they were able to include supports related to trans issues, such as the correct pronouns, bathroom usage, and counseling.

Out of the 10 parents that did discuss academic and/or social-emotional needs, seven reported that their children had known learning or mental health issues that presented prior to the children’s gender dysphoria. Two parents reported on the complicated nature of supporting their children when learning and/or mental health issues were presenting simultaneously to gender dysphoria. One parent of an elementary school student shared:

I don’t know that it’s gender related, but they are behind academically. In kindergarten, I didn’t push it because they were having so much social adjustment that I just decided I didn’t want to them to be super anxious. If I could get them socially okay, I can catch up on the academics.

In this case, the parent felt she had to prioritize one issue at a time with the school as to not overwhelm her child who was facing multiple issues simultaneously. Another parent said to her child’s teacher, “Look I’m seeing a lot of distractibility. I’m concerned about academics, but I
want to see how this year goes. Can you keep a look out for him, because I don’t know what is [a gender issue] and what really might be an academic issue?” The school followed up by doing a full Child Study Team evaluation and concluded that the child had attention issues and was classified with an IEP.

**Parent factors that impacted parent experiences with home-school collaboration**

In the semi-structured interviews, parents were specifically asked how their own identity played a role in their interactions with school. This prompt was designed to elicit responses that would provide information for research question one, as well as research question two: As perceived by parents, to what extent does the nature of the home-school collaboration relate to parents’ social and cultural capital represented by their own gender, race, socioeconomic status, and professional/educational, employment backgrounds? All factors expressed by the parents fell under the umbrella of “cultural capital” (See Figure 1). Cultural capital, a term coined by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986), refers to “certain cultural signals (such as attitudes, preferences, tastes, or styles) that either enables or limits entry into high status social groups, organizations, or institutions” (Carter, 2003, pp. 136-137).

**Cultural capital as a parent factor.** When discussing how their own identity and social positioning in terms of race, gender, and education impacted their experience collaborating with schools, many parents discussed similar types of cultural capital. The *cultural capital factor* is defined as parent perceptions of how their own social positioning and group membership (e.g., race) impacted their collaborative experience. Among the most common were race, socioeconomic status, and communication strategies based on education level. One father shared, “Being White and middle class, we were treated with maybe more respect than other groups might get.” Another parent shared how his White, upper middle-class identity impacted how his
family was perceived by the community. He said, “We just show up as a very normal, stable family, so I think that disarms people at the door.” This parent suggested his presentation as “normal” and “stable” may have increased White, upper-middle class school staff’s identification with him and his wife, thereby reducing potential distrust or skepticism of his parenting choices.

In addition to how the family’s visible identity may have impacted school perceptions, parents discussed other ways that their socioeconomic status impacted their involvement with the school. One parent discussed the fact that her high-powered job allowed her to take time off of work whenever she needed to attend a meeting at school. Another parent expressed that her status as a homeowner that pays taxes to the school district gave her a sense of entitlement to be respected during school meetings.

One participant, an African-American middle-class mother, felt that her experience as a member of a persecuted group sparked passion in her fight for her transgender child’s civil rights. She shared:

[Being transgender] is the same as being Black, as being female, as being religiously persecuted. It’s the same thing. We all have a right to survive and live and have a difference of opinion…equality is something that you deserve. It’s not something that people give out as a prize.

Many parents discussed their own education as the most important aspect of their cultural capital. Education was discussed as a matter of practical skills, not as a matter of prestige. One parent shared, “the ability to articulate in writing was useful in our case,” given she had to engage in e-mail communication with the administration. Another parent stated, “I have the privilege of having education, and the understanding of how to research literature, and how to access databases.” In this case, the mother felt her own education helped her collect high quality research to prepare for the initial school meeting.
Stage 2 Findings

In the semi-structured interviews, parents were asked questions designed to reveal whether they had exposure to Sheridan and Kratochwill’s (2007) four-stage model of collaborative consultation between school and home. In stage two of the data analysis, transcripts were coded with specific themes based on a CBC framework. Results are organized into Table 2 with factors divided into the four stages of CBC. For each stage, the measures of quality implementation when CBC is applied to supporting a transgender student are defined and the level of occurrence is indicated. The level of occurrence was based on the number of participants that indicated an experience with a particular component of a stage. Occurrence level was determined in the following manner: 0-2 participants was considered “little to no occurrence”, 3-5 participants was considered “some occurrence”, 6-8 participants was considered “common occurrence,” and 9-11 participants was considered “frequent occurrence.” The overall level of occurrence for each stage was determined by calculating the mean of the levels of occurrence for the components of that stage.
Table 2

CBC High Quality Factors and Findings from Parent Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CBC Stage</th>
<th>Conceptualizing high quality implementation for transgender students</th>
<th>Findings from Parent Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs Identification</td>
<td>Considers the whole child</td>
<td>Common occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foresees potential issues</td>
<td>Some occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discusses educating the community</td>
<td>Some occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall: Some occurrence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Development</td>
<td>Plan is specific to the individual</td>
<td>Some occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses resources on best practices</td>
<td>Some occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall: Some occurrence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Implementation</td>
<td>Written documentation</td>
<td>Common occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff compliance with the plan</td>
<td>Frequent occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall: Common occurrence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Evaluation</td>
<td>Assessment of support plan</td>
<td>Little to no occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up with child</td>
<td>Frequent occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up with parents</td>
<td>Common occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall: Some occurrence</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CBC Stage 1 Needs Identification**

When applying Sheridan and Kratochwill’s (2007) CBC model to the situation of supporting a transgender student, a quality needs identification process might include parents and school staff discussing **comprehensive needs**. A comprehensive needs discussion would consider the whole child (e.g., social, emotional, behavioral, gender identity), have foresight about potential issues, and include the idea of educating the school community.

**Common occurrence of discussing the whole child.** For all parents \((n = 11)\), similar logistical needs were discussed at the initial support meetings, including bathroom options, notifying staff of name and pronoun change, and updating the student’s name in the school online portal. When analyzing the data for the occurrence of discussing comprehensive needs, an
important distinction was drawn between discussions at scheduled planning meetings and discussions that occurred in reaction to challenging events. While most parents ($n = 10, 91\%$) discussed academic and/or social-emotional needs at some point with their children’s schools, seven of those parents did so proactively at a scheduled planning meeting ($n = 7$), while three parents had discussions on comprehensive needs in reaction to incidences, such as bullying or developing learning issues. Out of the seven parents that engaged in a proactive discussion around comprehensive needs, six of them had transgender children with prior histories of mental health disorders and/or learning issues. For those parents, scheduled planning meetings around gender support were either part of special education meetings or used special education documents to discuss the children’s academic and/or social-emotional needs. One father of a middle school student described how the grade was divided into teams. In a meeting with the school before the year started, the administration allowed him and his wife to pick the team of teachers, as well as choose three peers to be on the team with their daughter. This action was intended to surround the student with allies and the father shared that this supportive measure made his child feel socially supported throughout the year. Similarly, one mother shared that in the initial support meeting, the school agreed to ensure that her child was not in the same classes as another student who made her child feel uncomfortable. One school proactively supported a transitioning elementary school student by bringing in a non-profit organization to educate the other students in the classroom.

[The organization] decided what was going to be told to the children and how it was going to be told. They did it as part of their Character Ed lesson. And which classes were going to be told and how that was going to go.

This parent made it clear that the organization executed a structured plan that involved proactive social supports.
For four of the parents, their children’s schools focused on logistical needs and immediate concerns without a broader perspective on the student’s well-being. One of these parent’s said, “It was called a ‘support plan,’ but it really was a ‘safety plan.’” This parent was speaking to the idea that logistical needs (e.g. bathroom, name change) are important for student safety; however, true supportive measures go beyond safety and consider how to foster positive development in the student.

Overall, the finding that seven parents \((n = 7)\) discussed comprehensive needs at a scheduled planning meeting was the most indicative of the occurrence of discussing the whole child; therefore, there was common occurrence among participants’ experiences with this component of the needs identification stage.

**Some occurrence of incorporating foresight into potential issues.** Four parents indicated that their schools demonstrated foresight into potential issues \((n = 4)\). One parent reported that the school brought up the issue of sports teams in the first scheduled planning meeting, while another parent shared that the school, along with an outside training agency, helped teachers be prepared to answer difficult questions from students and other class parents.

The majority of parents discussed how more comprehensive needs were left out of scheduled planning meetings and only discussed reactively once issues arose \((n = 6)\). One parent stated, “The school was learning by things going wrong. You know what I mean? They weren’t learning by being proactive.” Two parents discussed how the issue of sports teams arose, but had not been discussed in the initial meeting. One mother recalled that when her transgender daughter entered the middle school, she was informed that she could not try out for the girls tennis team. Similarly, several parents discussed how overnight trips were not discussed in the initial meeting and only got discussed once the trips were approaching. One father shared,
“There’s the question of who she would bunk with, and how would that work. So, my wife and I had to kind of negotiate with the school.”

Three parents discussed a lack of proactive attention to problematic gendered school activities. For example, one parent shared that the yearbook imposed gendered attire on the senior class. In the interview, she said, “It’s fucked up because it’s binary. It’s also fucked because nobody else but the student should get in the business of policing gender expression…it’s so deeply personal and private that there’s absolutely no excuse for a school to impose that.” When the mother brought this to the attention of the school, she was told that her child could choose the male or female outfit, which indicated that the school did not understand that a choice between one side of the binary does not solve the issue for someone who identifies as non-binary. Parent interview data suggests that there was *some occurrence* to incorporating foresight into potential issues during the needs identification stage.

**Some occurrence of discussing the need to educate the school community.** In order to have a comprehensive needs identification process, the school not only needs to consider the needs of the child, but also the needs of the school community to create a supportive environment. Eight parents discussed staff training with school administrators and all of them were the ones to initiate that talking point in collaborative meetings. When the topic was brought up, there were a variety of responses from the schools. Five parents reported that the schools listened to and complied with parent requests for staff training (*n* = 5). Three parents expressed that their children’s schools complied with the parents’ requests to conduct a staff training with an outside professional. One father shared that going into the first meeting, “One of the goals was definitely to bring in some continuing education for the teachers. That was very important to us. We didn’t want to be the ones translating [our child] to the world.” Another parent shared
that an organization provided a comprehensive training to staff. She shared, “And so they came in, they trained the staff…everyone who had [my child] in class ever. Like the art teacher, the gym teacher, all those people.” This parent’s statement indicates the importance of training all staff members that come into contact with transgender students, not just the core academic staff.

Three parents reported that the school was resistant to their requests for training. When one parent suggested to the principal that a professional organization come in to train the staff, the parent shared that the principal “wouldn’t do it…she was really resistant and she resisted by just not answering emails and not answering questions.” Similarly, another parent suggested to her child’s school that they bring in a local psychologist who was renowned for training staff on gender identity. According to the parent, the school’s response was “Oh, we have our own people.” The parent went on to share, “They were just really all about not wanting me to roll my sleeves up in their business. I offered them all this stuff and they said no.” One parent shared that her child’s school did train the staff on the topic of supporting transgender students, but felt that the training did not include enough information on how to support non-binary students. The mother stated:

It took a lot of work in the summer because that principal, at first, she didn't believe it. She didn't buy into it. She was not supportive. She didn't really think it was a real thing, and I had to push and push and push and push and push. She finally came on board, which is good. I was really lucky she gave me a half hour of her first professional development workshop. [A trans-supportive psychologist] came with me, and we did a half hour on nonbinary, on [my child], on how to use they, them, and their. Seeing how kids actually can know, blah blah blah. I think that was really helpful.

This parents statement indicates that even when schools conduct staff trainings, the trainings may be too narrow and fail to incorporate information on the wide spectrum of gender identities and expressions.
Out of the 11 participants interviewed, three parents spoke about measures taken to educate the student community on the topic of gender identity \((n = 3)\). One mother shared that her transgender child worked together with the guidance counselor to create a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation on how to be supportive towards transgender students. The student gave the presentation in all of his classes. One parent shared that an outside agency who came to provide training to staff members, also “decided what was going to be told to the children and how it was going to be told.” Taking the community training a step further, the agency also hosted an event for parents in the district to come to the school and learn about gender identity. Taken together, findings suggest *some occurrence* of discussions around educating the school community during the needs identification stage. Averaging the levels of occurrence for each factor within the needs identification stage suggests that overall, there was *some occurrence* of needs identification, stage one of CBC.

**CBC Stage 2 Plan Development**

A quality stage 2 plan development process might look like parents and school staff working together to create a support plan that is specific to the individual student and uses resources on best practices.

*Some occurrence of developing plans that are specific to the child.* While four parents did not indicate an issue with the supportive options provided to their children \((n = 4)\), the majority of parents felt that provisions were offered by school administrations as “one size fits all” solutions. This was most apparent with the bathroom considering several parents \((n = 7)\) discussed that only one option was offered to their children. Several parents reported that the nurse’s bathroom was the option provided to them in the initial meeting. One father shared, “We had to ask about bathroom use, which they said she could use the nurse’s bathroom…When she
entered fourth grade, we pushed again and was given permission to use the girl’s bathroom.”

Another mother shared that her transgender daughter was also given the sole option of using the nurse’s bathroom. The mother went on to say, “She couldn’t participate in gym because of the boys and girls locker rooms.” In this case, the school did not provide the child with an option regarding gym class, but instead decided she could not participate. One mother’s gender non-conforming child was also offered the nurse’s bathroom as the only option. When the child was told about the option, “[my child] was like, no I’m not doing that. It’s far away, people barf in there, I’m not doing it.” The child’s reaction shows how the one option provided can be unacceptable to the student. Another parent shared, “There’s a classic default of course that was mentioned to us in the initial meeting…using the nurse’s bathroom, which is both stigmatizing and then chances are at least half the time incredibly inconvenient because not all your classes are around there.” This mother showed a great sense of awareness about the issues related to only one bathroom option for a transgender student. Especially when examining interview data related to the bathroom options provided, findings suggest that there was some occurrence of plan development that was specific to the child during the second stage of CBC.

**Some occurrence of best practice decision-making.** Three parents \( (n = 3) \) mentioned that the school staff had a tangible resource of best practices with them at the support meeting. One parent reported that the school brought a pamphlet on how to support transgender students to the initial meeting and referenced it during the discussion, while another shared that the school printed out the state legal guidelines around transgender individual’s rights in schools. One mother said, “They came at me, they had information from the Gender Spectrum website, and I was hopeful.” On the contrary, several parents \( (n = 3) \) revealed that their children’s schools had not done their research on the legal rights of a transgender student as evidenced by the parents’
need to seek counsel from LGBTQ activism organizations when they knew their children’s rights were being violated. Findings suggest that there was some occurrence of the factor of best practice decision-making within the plan development stage.

**CBC Stage 3 Plan Implementation**

A quality stage three plan implementation process might look like parents and school staff clearly defining a support plan through written documentation. Furthermore, a quality plan implementation would include administration ensuring that school staff adheres to the changes.

**Common occurrence of written documentation.** The slight majority of parents reported that there was some form of written documentation during home-school collaboration meetings 

\( n = 6 \). Out of those six parents, four parents reported that the support plan was part of special education documentation. The other two parents reported that there was a separate transgender support plan document. One mother said:

> [The gender support plan] works like an IEP, where it’s a plan that the students and the principal…the guidance counselor, various people sign off on it where it is a set of accommodations for the student in support of their gender identity including what they need to go by, what information to be divulged related to their gender and to whom, bathroom usage rights. Anything can go in there, but those are the standard things.

The other five parents 

\( n = 5 \) reported that, to their knowledge, there was no written documentation of the meeting whatsoever. One parent stated, “It wasn’t like there was a formal record like a recording or someone taking notes or anything like that, no.” One parent got creative and took notes himself. He said, “Well, I left and wrote up the notes about who’s going to do what, and what we agreed to, and sent it back to everyone.” Taken together, findings suggest that there was common occurrence of written documentation within the plan implementation stage.
**Frequent occurrence of staff compliance with plan.** All of the parents reported that most of the school staff members were in compliance with the changes discussed in the meeting, specifically changes to the child’s name and pronouns \( n = 11 \). One father said, “I really feel like overall, the key issues were respected and followed through on.” Another parent shared, “[My child] has never reported, like has reported zero issues with teachers and with students.”

Three parents mentioned some resistance among select staff members, even though, overall, staff was compliant \( n = 3 \). These parents shared that particular staff members had a difficult time understanding and accepting the concept of a gender non-conforming identity based on older generational views. One parent shared that in a support meeting, a teacher commented, “I’m from the 70’s, this stuff is new to me. I can’t figure it out.” That same teacher continued to misgender the child until the mother reported it to the school. The school and parent each directly spoke to the teacher and there was improvement with his language moving forward. Parent interview data suggests that there was frequent occurrence of staff compliance within the plan implementation stage.

**CBC Stage 4 Plan Evaluation**

A quality stage four plan evaluation process might look like as assessment of the impact of the support measures on the well-being of the child. This would be done through follow-up with the student and follow-up with the parents.

**Little to no occurrence of assessment of plan.** None of the parents \( n = 0 \) described a process of assessment of the support plan by school staff, therefore, it can be concluded that there was little to no occurrence of assessment of the plan in the plan evaluation stage.

**Frequent occurrence of follow-up with child.** The majority of parents mentioned that there was some degree of follow-up with their children \( n = 9 \). This mostly took the form of
counseling with a guidance counselor, either on a weekly basis or sporadic check-ins. This data suggests that there was *Frequent occurrence* of following-up with the child during the plan evaluation stage.

**Common occurrence of follow-up with parent.** Seven parents mentioned that there was follow-up communication between parents and the school ($n = 7$). One parent shared, “Because of the IEP, [my child] meets with the guidance counselor once a week. She and I have really good communication.” Findings suggest there was *common occurrence* of the action of following-up with parents during the plan evaluation stage.

Despite the majority of parents reporting the existence of a line of communication between home and school, none of the 11 parents reported a more formal assessment of the plan or scheduled opportunity to meet and discuss the success of supportive measures. Some parents realized the lack of plan evaluation in the interview. One parent said that she would speak to the guidance counselor, but it was never “a deep dive.” Another parent stated, “There’s been no follow up. We use points of contact for our concerns, but there’s been no planned, diligent follow up.” One father contemplated the idea of plan evaluation:

> I would say that [follow-up] was probably a little bit of a weakness. I don't think there was much. Maybe guidance could have been more involved. If I'm thinking of how a school might do that, I would say the guidance counselor in the new school should be checking in once a month with the kid, and doing a little report home, or asking the parents what they're seeing and what their concerns are. It was kind of left to us to communicate. Which we were comfortable doing, and we didn't really need to do it a lot. But in hindsight it would've been nice to have someone checking. We were checking at home, but also someone checking on her at school.

In sum, by averaging the levels of occurrence of the conceptualized high quality factors within each stage, it was determined that there was *some occurrence* of stage one (needs identification), *some occurrence* of stage two (plan development), *common occurrence* of stage
three (plan implementation), and some occurrence of stage four (plan evaluation). When averaging the occurrence levels of the four stages, one can conclude that, overall, there was some occurrence of a CBC framework during interactions between home and school to support transgender students.

**Discussion**

Findings from stage one analysis indicate that parent experiences interacting with schools to support their transgender children were impacted by specific factors related to the three stakeholders involved in the collaborative process: the school staff, themselves (parents), and their children. The current study fills a gap in the research by focusing on the interactions between home and school in great detail in order to discover the specific elements that create quality collaboration. The study discovered that the spectrum of parent experiences from negative to positive heavily relied on specific elements of the school, including but not limited to readiness signals, interactions with the principal, school staff supportive champions, and the bathroom options. The study aimed to specifically understand if parents perceived that their own identity features impacted their relationship with the school. With a sample of mostly White, high income, advanced degree participants, parents acknowledged their privilege and how it afforded them a certain level of successful advocacy. Since the collaborative process usually exists between parents and school staff, it was more surprising to find that factors related to the children impacted the collaborative experience. Aspects of the children’s gender identity, personality, and academic/social-emotional needs dictated what specific needs were discussed and the parental degree of advocacy for accommodations.

Stage two analysis sought to discover whether parent experiences and interactions with school reflected Sheridan and Kratochwill’s Conjoint Behavioral Consultation model (2007).
This is the first study to apply an existing, widely-used evidence-based consultation model to the scenario of supporting transgender students in school. By conceptualizing the manifestation of each stage for this novel scenario with specific factors, the study was able to assess participant interview data for the parental exposure to CBC. Findings indicated that there was some occurrence among parents of stages one (needs identification), two (plan development), and four (plan evaluation) and common occurrence of stage three (plan implementation).

Taken together, four issues deserve greater exploration in future research and require greater advances in school-based practices, including the need for schools to support the spectrum of gender identities, the importance of school readiness and growth mindset through staff training, the significance of a child-specific, multi-microsystem needs identification process, and the discovery that a CBC-style protocol to support transgender students provides benefits similar to the special education process.

**Validating and Supporting the Spectrum of Gender Identities**

Prior research, including this study, continues to group together diverse gender identities (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2012; Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Kull, Kosciw, & Villenas, 2016; Sadowski, 2016). Through parent accounts of their experiences working with schools, the current study highlights the unique needs of non-binary students. The study found that school-based challenges for non-binary students include, but are not limited to, access to physical spaces, staff level of knowledge and validation, peer acceptance, and gender-based school activities and events. Study findings imply that administrators who have supported a male-to-female or female-to-male student may assume that their school has established trans-supportive practices without recognizing that many of the practices continue to exist in a gender binary. Several parents shared their belief that staff members may need further training to understand how to use non-
binary pronouns and model more inclusive language in their classroom. Furthermore, interview data suggests that non-binary students and their families would benefit from stronger foresight into potential issues, such as bathroom usage and gender-binary dress codes. As society continues to understand that gender exists on a spectrum, rather than a binary, more young people are breaking away from traditional expressions of femininity and masculinity, regardless of whether or not they self-identify as transgender or non-binary. Future research might find that reducing school practices that uphold a gender binary will prove beneficial for many students in a school community, not just transgender students.

**School Readiness and Growth Mindset**

As the concept of transgender identity is fairly new to mainstream discussion, it makes sense that, over the past decade, schools would not have considered how to support a transgender student until they had one in the building. As indicated in Figure 1, a common theme that arose from participant interviews was that **principal openness to change** was an impactful factor on the parental experience of collaborating with schools. Many parents in the current study spoke positively about experiences with administration that admitted to being unprepared, but were willing to commit and do the work to become a more supportive community. This converges with prior research by Slesaransky-Poe, Ruzzi, Dimedio, and Stanley (2013). In their case study, different stakeholders, such as the parent, principal, and counselor, discussed their experiences supporting the first transgender student in their elementary school. The takeaway was that, even though the school was completely unprepared, all stakeholders had a positive experience because there was strong collaboration, openness to change, and commitment by all adults involved. Parents in the current study expressed that those same factors contributed to a positive partnership experience.
While there was strong convergence to the 2013 case study, the current study demonstrated more complexity when it comes to schools with a *weak readiness baseline*. Findings showed that parents were frustrated when the *staff level of transgender knowledge* was minimal, creating situations where parents had to educate the schools on supportive measures. Qualitative analyses indicated that parents in the sample often perceived the school to lack *foresight into potential issues*, which meant problems got addressed reactively, not proactively. Problems such as sports teams, overnight trips, social dynamics, curriculum, etc., created stressful situations that then needed to be resolved. While one cannot predict every obstacle that may occur, there is certainly a general set of foreseeable issues that could be discussed proactively at a scheduled support meeting. Additionally, when parents in the sample felt that schools were unprepared, parents witnessed *value-based decision-making* by school administrators, as opposed to decision-making based on research of best practices.

Furthermore, the current study showed that even when schools conveyed to parents that they had a *strong readiness baseline* to support a transgender student, it could present challenges. Qualitative analyses found that school administrators who felt prepared based on supporting a prior transgender student or having conducted staff trainings could lack *openness to change*, engage in “*not walking the talk,*” or be unwilling to adapt practices in *consideration of non-binary students*. In other words, thematic analysis showed that parents could perceive schools to lack flexibility and adaptability to shift their supportive measures to meet the needs of each unique transgender student.

Parents in the current sample discussed meeting with school administrators as far back as 2009. It has been eleven years since then and many parents indicated schools have made some progress. The implication is that schools have an obligation to proactively access resources to
establish a foundation of support. Data indicates that the home-school collaborative experience is more positive for parents when schools know their bathroom options, understand common needs and predictable issues, and conduct staff trainings. Parents in the current study indicated that, even when these essential protocols are preestablished, it is imperative that the administration maintains the mindset that practices and policies should be adjusted to meet the individual needs of students, as well as changes in research on best practices.

**Child-Specific Needs and Needs of the School Community**

Findings indicate that a comprehensive needs identification stage created quality interactions for parents in the collaborative process. Converging with Sadowski (2016), the needs identification process should include a discussion on how to promote overall well-being, not just how to keep a student safe. Qualitative analysis revealed that many parents who had preexisting relationships with school staff regarding academic needs had a more structured trans-supportive collaborative process, which included a more comprehensive needs identification discussion. Therefore, the findings suggest that it would be helpful for schools to include the topic of academics in all transgender support plan meetings, regardless of whether the student has a known learning issue. (e.g., Will they feel comfortable in health class? Will there be gendered language in Spanish class that may be problematic for a non-binary student?).

Qualitative analysis suggests that parents felt supported when social-emotional functioning was a discussion point in planned support meetings (e.g., Are there any students that may pose a threat to a student’s emotional or physical safety? Is the student on any medication that may make them vulnerable? Is the student aware of affinity groups, such as the Gay Straight Alliance?). Qualitative analyses of the current interview data indicated that a child’s personality and relationship with gender impacts the home-school collaborative process and should also be
considered. Some students have a strong sense of self-acceptance and pride, while others are struggling with aspects of themselves, as is the case for many adolescents. Findings imply that a quality component of home-school collaboration would be the school’s consideration of the student and family’s relationship with the student’s gender identity. The level of acceptance of the student and family may impact various factors about the support plan, such as how to educate the school community. For example, when a student wants to “fly under the radar,” the teacher will have to be trained on how to handle questions from other students without drawing too much attention to the transgender student.

Findings showed that, in addition to a comprehensive discussion about the student’s individual needs, some parents valued a discussion with the administrators about the needs of the school community. The need that was regularly discussed in parent interviews was staff training. Considering all of the parents discussed the importance of staff supportive champions, it seems essential that schools would conduct staff trainings to increase the number of potential champions and arm them with supportive resources. In addition to staff training, other school community needs from the parent perspective include, but are not limited to, gender neutral bathroom options, policies regarding overnight trips and sports teams, existence of LGBTQ student groups, antibullying policies that include protections for harassment based on gender and sexuality, and inclusive classroom language, practices and curriculum. Future research would examine how the needs identification stage would consider the needs of the home system. In other words, schools may provide resources to parents on how supports can be developed, monitored, and evaluated at home to support a transgender child.
CBC Helps Mimic the Special Education Process

While it is important to consider the variability in levels of occurrence for each component of each stage of CBC, overall, data revealed that there was some occurrence to the CBC model for the sample of parents in this study. Some occurrence means that the slight majority of parents did not have exposure to CBC, while some did. When examining specific quotes from parents indicating an absence of CBC components, it becomes apparent that negative parental experiences were often associated with a lack of exposure to CBC. Parents expressed frustration and indicated poor quality of interactions when needs were not comprehensive, plans were not adequately developed and implemented, and there was minimal follow-up. Therefore, one can begin to infer that CBC has utility in creating quality interactions for parents when supporting transgender students. Further research would gather more data on the association between levels of CBC exposure and parental levels of satisfaction with the collaborative experience.

One of the most striking themes that arose from the data is that when parents did experience components of CBC, it was likely due to the fact that their children were receiving special education services. When students had IEPs or Section 504 plans, there was already an emphasis on scheduled planning meetings and a direct line of communication between home and school. The needs identification process was more likely to be comprehensive because the child had known academic and/or social-emotional challenges that had previously been identified. Supportive accommodations were often documented in the special education plans, which were then disseminated to staff members. Follow-up was built into the process through mandated counseling and subsequent special education meetings. The takeaway is that schools need to have a structured protocol of supporting transgender students that is similar to the special
education process, even if the child does not require special education services. A CBC-based model for trans-supportive meetings would promote the same structure as the IEP/504 process, which would lead to gender support plans that are comprehensive, well-documented, and evaluated.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

**Limitations of sample.** The non-randomly selected sample was small and relatively homogenous. The majority of participants were female, White, high income, and advanced degree parents. Due to recruitment from advocacy organizations and a therapy center, parents possessed a certain degree of acceptance of their children’s gender identities and were already confident, or receiving support, to advocate for their children in school. Thus, the current study does not capture parents who exist on a spectrum of acceptance. Future research would gain a more diverse sample in order to reveal the breadth of experiences.

**Limitations of study design.** While the current study was explicitly designed to capture parent perceptions of the collaborative experience, the study design excluded the other members involved in the partnership, the school staff. Future research should aim to collect qualitative data from the school staff perspective in order to explore perceptions of the collaborative experience from the different stakeholders involved.

**Limitations of analysis.** Societal knowledge of the concept of transgender is quickly changing. In recent years, growth in research, laws, and best practices around how to support transgender children in school has been exponential. Analysis in the current study did not examine how experiences were impacted by the timeframe in which the child came out. Meetings that occurred in 2012 were not distinguished from meetings that occurred in 2018, which is a limitation considering schools had access to significantly more resources at the latter
date. Future research would seek to understand how advancements in public knowledge and research impacted the parental experience when supporting transgender students.

**Limitations of findings on student outcomes.** The qualitative analyses resulted in compelling themes, but no claims can be made about whether specific factors or aspects of CBC resulted in better student outcomes. In participant interviews, some parents mentioned that it was difficult to make causal inferences about their collaboration with schools and the impact it had on their children’s well-being. Future research would seek to establish methodology to collect data on the relationship between the quality of interactions in the home-school partnership and student academic and social-emotional functioning.

**Implications for Practitioners**

School psychologists, counselors, and administrators are trained to work collaboratively with parents and do so on a regular basis; however, their collaboration has traditionally been applied to learning or behavioral issues (Frauenholtz, Mendenhall, & Moon, 2017; Elias & Gordon, 2008; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999; Pomerantz, Ng, & Wang, 2006). As more school-aged children come out as transgender, schools are faced with a unique set of circumstances that often need to be addressed in conjunction with the students’ families. The study offered implications for school professional development based on parental experiences. Specifically, the study highlighted the importance of administrator communication and comprehensive staff training. The study provided insight into the specific elements that define quality interactions between home and school. Parents who had positive experiences tended to work with schools that followed a CBC-style model, where needs were comprehensive, accommodations were based on best practices, plans were well-documented and had good follow-up, thus suggesting that CBC is likely a useful framework for schools to develop and monitor their trans-supportive
protocols. Schools could use an already established gender support protocol, which might foster a CBC-style process. Using a support plan template, like the one provided by Gender Spectrum, would likely establish a home-school collaborative protocol in which comprehensive needs are identified, a detailed plan gets developed, an action plan for implementation gets documented, as well as a plan for follow-up.

Additionally, the study offered new insights into how privilege allowed parents to be successful advocates and influence change in a district. For practitioners, this finding implies that school administrators should maintain the same level of respect and commitment to supporting parents with diverse levels of cultural capital.

**Conclusion**

The current study provides new information on the specific elements of schools that impact parent experiences with home-school collaboration to support transgender students. Taking the findings together, the study showed that schools are the most supportive when they have administrators and staff that have established trans-supportive policies and practices, while maintaining an openness to change. Additionally, the study showed the importance of considering the unique characteristics of the parents and the students when developing support protocols. The study highlighted the importance of validating and supporting the specific needs of children depending on where they identify on the gender spectrum. Moreover, findings indicated that a student’s personality, specifically their confidence and self-acceptance, is an important consideration when drafting a support plan. This was the first study to use an evidence-based model of consultation as a benchmark for the collaborative process between home and school to support transgender students. Parent experiences revealed that Sheridan and Kratochwill’s CBC (2007) may, in fact, be a helpful framework for schools when conducting
gender support meetings with families. Specifically, CBC helps mimic the structured special
education process in that it fosters stronger communication, clear plan development, and greater
follow-through.
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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW (60 Minutes)

Framing the Interview:
Thank you for participating today. My study is called “Collaborating with Schools to Support their Transgender and Gender non-Conforming Children” I want to be clear that you can choose not to respond to any of these questions, and you don’t need to give me a reason why. Also - if at any point you feel that you need a break, let me know and I can pause the audio recording. All identifying information will be kept confidential and changed on all written materials.

For most of the interview, I am going to ask questions to understand your experiences working with your child’s school in relation to their gender identity. I have XX sections to cover, so I will move us along. First, I am going to ask you some background questions to learn more about your child and your family.

First Part – Open-ended
1. How old is your child now and what grade are they in currently?
2. What was your child’s sex assigned at birth?
3. What is their current gender identity?
4. At what age did your child show signs of a transgender or gender non-conformity?

As I mentioned, the focus of this interview is your working with schools to support your child. Before spending the bulk of our time discussing your interactions with school, I think it would be helpful to have some context about your child’s journey in terms of gender identity…

5. When was the first time your child’s transgender identity or gender non-conformity became relevant at school?

6. Over the past X months/years, I am wondering if you can tell me what your experience has been interacting with your child’s school on this matter?
   Probe:
   • Who was involved?
   • What was discussed?
   • Timeline of changes
   • If participant describes emotions, probe for event timeline
   • If participant describes events, probe for impressions/feelings
Second Part – CBC Focused

Now I am going to ask you some specific questions to really understand your experience and the process of collaborating with school.

7. [Pre-Meeting] You described that first meeting with school. I am wondering if you can reflect on what you did to prepare for that meeting?

   **Probe:**
   - *Did you go to the meeting with goals or needs in mind?*
   - *Did you have expectations for how the meeting would go?*
   - *Did you know if/how the school handled a prior student’s gender transition?*
   - *How were you feeling going into the meeting?*

8. [Needs Identification] Tell me what you can remember about what was discussed at this meeting in terms of supporting your child

   **Probe:**
   - *In terms of concerns, what areas were address?*
   - *Discussion about school’s capacity to support?*
   - *Were there clear goals?*
   - *Were goals related to academic needs?*
   - *Social needs? (Peers)*
   - *Emotional needs?*
   - *Did they bring up varying needs or concerns? Or, did you?*
   - *To what degree do you think the school was comprehensive in addressing needs and concerns?*
   - *Strengths?*

9. Tell me about anything that was discussed in relation to support of your child at home and outside of school

   **Probe:**
   - *Outside mental health support*
   - *Written resources*
   - *Community resources*
   - *Parental support*

10. [Intervention Plan Development] Tell me about the plan that was formulated

    **Probe:**
    - *Tangible document or defined plan?*
    - *Clearly defined roles?*
    - *Skills or training of those involved considered?*
    - *Did plan align with priorities?*
    - *To what degree did you leave the meeting feeling confident that changes were going to occur?*
    - *Did the plan include any changes to home support?*
11. [Plan Implementation] Now I am wondering if you can share what happened with the plan
Probe:
- *Degree to which the plan was followed*
- *How did you know whether or not the plan was being followed in school?*
- *What went well?*
- *What were the roadblocks?*

12. [Plan Evaluation] Tell me about any follow-up to the plan
Probe:
- *Did school update you on the progress of the plan?*
- *Did you have to remind them to do anything?*
- *How did the school ensure your child was feeling safe and supported?*

13. [Subsequent Interactions] Can you describe the interactions with school since that initial meeting?
Probe:
- *Experience with next level of schooling?*
- *In what ways did the contacts with school staff differ depending on the needs of your child given their age, grade level, or development?*

14. [Social/Cultural Capital] In what ways do you think your interactions with school staff related to who you are in terms of your profession, role in the community, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender, etc.? In other words, do you think your collaboration was impacted by aspects of your identity or presentation?

15. How do you think your interactions and partnerships with school staff impacted your child’s well-being and positive development at school?
Probe:
- *Changes to child’s functioning – emotional/academic/social*
- *Impact of specific elements of the collaborative plan*

To summarize your experience [summarize responses] Is there anything else you would like to add about your impressions/experiences of interacting with the school?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL FACTORS</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readiness Signals</strong></td>
<td>Parent perceptions of how school staff conveyed the school's degree of preparedness to support a transgender student, which impacted the parent collaborative experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff knowledge of how to support a transgender student</strong></td>
<td>Did the parent perceive the school staff to demonstrate familiarity with best practices of supporting transgender students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience supporting a transgender student previously</strong></td>
<td>Did the parent have knowledge of the school supporting a transgender student prior to his or her child?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff language related to transgender identity</strong></td>
<td>Did the parent perceive the staff to use language that indicated to the parents that they understand and validate gender diverse identities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consideration of non-binary students</strong></td>
<td>Did staff demonstrate preparedness to support a student whose identity does not fit within the gender binary?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal</strong></td>
<td>Parent perceptions of the impact of the principal's behavior on the their collaborative experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening to parent concerns</strong></td>
<td>Did the parent perceive the principal authentically “heard” their concerns?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Openness to change</strong></td>
<td>Did the parent perceive the principal demonstrated willingness to change aspects of the school community to meet the needs of the child?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Connection between values and decision-making</strong></td>
<td>Did the parent perceive the principal made decisions about trans-supportive measures based on the principal’s personal values?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>“Walking the talk”</strong></td>
<td>Did the parent perceive the principal communicated support, but then not follow through with actions?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supportive champion</strong></td>
<td>Parent perceptions of the impact of specific supportive staff members on the parent collaborative experience</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>Did the parent perceive a teacher to positively impact the collaborative experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counselors</strong></td>
<td>Did the parent perceive a counselor to positively impact the collaborative experience?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Nurses
Did the parent perceive a nurse to positively impact the collaborative experience?

### Bathroom
Parent perceptions of how communication and actions related to the child’s school bathroom situation impacted the parent collaborative experience

### One bathroom option provided
Did the parent perceive the school to only provide one bathroom option to their child?

### Comprehensiveness of bathroom plan
Did the parent perceive that the plan related to the child’s bathroom option was well-thought out in terms of protecting physical and emotional safety?

### CHILD FACTORS

#### Gender Identity and Expression
Parent perceptions of how their children’s internal gender identity and outward expression of gender impacted the parent collaborative experience

#### Peer acceptance
Did the parent perceive that their child’s gender identity or expression impacted the child’s acceptance by classmates, which then impacted the parent collaborative experience?

#### Desire for advocacy
Parent perceptions of how their children’s input regarding the degree of parent advocacy impacted the parent collaborative experience

#### Under the radar
Did the parent perceive that their child was cautious about parental advocacy for the child, which then impacted the parent collaborative experience?

#### Pioneer
Did the parent perceive that their child was supportive of parental and self-advocacy for the child, which then impacted the parent collaborative experience?

#### Academic, Social-Emotional Needs
Parent perceptions of how their children’s learning and mental health needs impacted the parent collaborative experience

#### Special education process impact on trans-supportive structure
Did the parent perceive that elements of the special education process impacted the parent collaborative experience?

#### Complicated relationship between gender dysphoria and other diagnoses
Did the parent perceive that the child’s co-existing issues impacted the collaborative experience?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Factors</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>Parent perceptions of how their own demographic features impacted their collaborative experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Did the parent perceive that their racial identity impacted the collaborative experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
<td>Did the parent perceive that their socioeconomic status impacted the collaborative experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication strategies based on education level</td>
<td>Did the parent perceive that their education afforded them effective methods of advocating for his or her child?</td>
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