"To Make the Powerless Parents Powerful": Examining a BIPOC Community-Driven Approach to Family Liaisons

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Abstract

School leaders continually seek innovative ways to engage with diverse communities. In this exploratory case study, I draw on the concept of community cultural wealth to explore how a Black and Latinx parent organization designed a family liaison role to support families with virtual learning during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings suggest that attention to the historical and cultural knowledge of Black and Latinx communities allowed for the family liaison position to be both supportive and emancipatory for the parents in the study. This research has policy and practice implications for leaders working with Black and Latinx communities.

Keywords: family engagement, Black parents, Latinx parents, qualitative methods, case study

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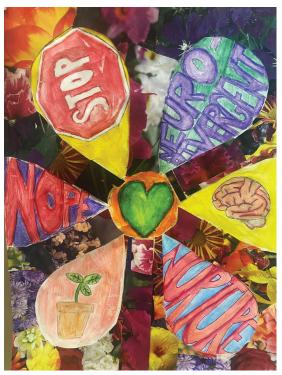
A crisis, such as a global pandemic, may act as a focusing event where the ideas of politically disfavored groups are able to emerge and take hold (Baumgartner et al., 2018). COVID-19 posed a wide swath of problems for public education and has elevated issues of educational equity to the public's consciousness. As education systems seek a way forward, perhaps they will become more open to innovations from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

This study examines an innovation created by Black and Latinx parents during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the summer of 2020, a Black and Latinx parent advocacy organization named *Helping Our People's Education* (HOPE)[1] formed a model of wrap-around family support. At the center of the model were family liaisons. Traditionally, family liaisons are school support staff who connect parents to school resources. HOPE employed Black and Latinx parents to act as a nonjudgmental support system for other families as they navigated the daily process of pandemic education. As schools around the country struggled to support parents in the wake of the COVID-19, it is notable that HOPE relied on a staff position schools have historically implemented. Many schools and school districts employ family or community liaisons; however, the role is often shaped to meet the needs of educators and not BIPOC families (Ishimaru et al., 2016; Martinez-Cosio & Iannacone, 2007).

Through exploratory case study methods, this study aims to understand a BIPOC community approach to the family liaisons position. Applying the lens of community cultural wealth (CCW; Yosso, 2005), I ask:

1. What was HOPE's family liaison model?

2. To what extent did HOPE's model draw on community knowledge and strengths?

3. How did parents experience HOPE family liaisons?

In the end, I found that an asset-based approach to BIPOC families was embedded in HOPE's organizational culture, the goal of the family liaison position, and the work of family liaisons. Par-

EMMA MORROW, MIKHAL CHERMOSHYNUK, LIAM KING,
AND LILLIAN BONEAU, 6TH AND 8TH GRADES

ents reported feeling deeply supported by their family liaisons, with some parents suggesting that working with a liaison increased their ability to address inequities within schools. This exploratory study of HOPE's community leadership has implications for school and district leaders seeking to adopt asset-based and community approaches to interacting with BIPOC families.

Literature Review

Family engagement is a critical strategy for supporting student learning and improving school policy (e.g., Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Warren et al., 2009). Unfortunately, school norms and politics often act as barriers to BIPOC families' full inclusion in school communities (Horsford & Sampson, 2014). For instance, family engagement standards are influenced by White middle-class norms, such as joining Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and fundraising (Dyrness, 2011). Low-income BIPOC parents may not have the time to join committees or have skills in fundraising (Posey-Maddox, 2016). Barajas-Lopez and Ishimaru (2020) found that "one size fits all" approaches may contradict leaders' community engagement efforts.

Furthermore, factors limit BIPOC involvement in traditional family engagement activities. When engaged in traditional family engagement activities, BIPOC parents may be excluded from positions of power or viewed solely as "helpers" (Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2018). For example, McCarthy-Foubert's (2020) study of PTA practices in one racially diverse school district found the input of the Black parents was only implemented when it aligned with the interests of White parents, school staff, and district leaders. The alienation of BIPOC families from school spaces hinders school improvement efforts. BIPOC families possess knowledge that could aid educational improvement (Warren, et al., 2009). However, BIPOC families' historical, cultural, and community knowledge is often ignored by school leaders. Scholars have linked the erosion of BIPOC community voices to low student outcomes and poor policy decisions (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Ishimaru, 2018).

To bridge the divide between school-based actors and BIPOC families, many schools and school districts have implemented a role focused on school–community relationships, known as *family liaisons, community liaisons, home school liaisons,* or *parent coordinators* (Jacobsen, 2003). I use

the term family liaisons throughout while recognizing these positions have various names across schools. The next section of this review provides details and evidence on the work of family liaisons.

Family Liaisons

Family liaisons—often BIPOC women—are tasked with connecting schools and families. For example, the work of family liaisons might include keeping families informed on school policies and programs, providing services to families of "at risk students," hosting school events, and offering translation. There is limited research on family liaisons, and the existing research on the effectiveness of the family liaisons position is mixed.

A subset of research indicates that family liaisons foster relational connections between families and schools (Howland et al., 2008; Sanders, 2008). For instance, in one urban school district, teachers reported that family liaisons aided teachers in building trust and communicating with families (Ingram et al., 2008). In another study of family liaisons within a single school district, family liaisons reported that their work fostered a welcoming environment for families (Dretzke & Rickers, 2014). Importantly, most studies on family liaisons draw on the experiences of the school staff but do not include the perspectives of the families working with family liaisons.

Other research suggests that there are limitations to the family liaison role as traditionally defined. First, school leaders may narrowly construct the role of family liaisons, requiring them to act as "institutional agents" tasked with fulfilling school goals and agendas (Ishimaru et al., 2016; Martinez-Cosio & Iannacone, 2007). For instance, in a study of family liaisons across three school districts, Ishimaru and colleagues (2016) found that family liaisons were tasked with explaining the schools' culture and expectations to parents. The authors also showed that family liaisons' approaches to family engagement was school-centered rather than emancipatory (Ishimaru et al., 2016). Centering schools' needs limits family liaisons' ability to advocate for parents (Martinez-Cosio & Iannacone, 2007).

Next, school leaders may not fully understand the importance of the family liaison position and task family liaisons with school support roles. Dretzke and Rickers (2014) found that family liaisons reported monitoring the cafeteria or covering classes. Furthermore, family liaisons expressed wanting more support from district leaders, such as professional development opportunities and inclusion in school events to increase the role's visibility. The value school leaders place on BIPOC communities may shape how much they prioritize and protect the time of family liaisons (Green, 2017; Ishimaru et al., 2016).

Taken together, these studies suggest that family liaisons may foster deeper and more trusting relationships between schools and communities. However, the research also indicates these relationships tend to be centered on the needs of schools, rather than families. There is little evidence that family liaisons aid BIPOC communities in building power to influence school decision-making and practice, suggesting the need to interrogate new and community-based family liaison models.

Theoretical Framework

This study applies the concept of CCW (Yosso, 2005) to the work of family liaisons. Yosso's concept of CCW is in the lineage of work on cultural capital, which argues that middle-class and wealthy families provide their children with cultural and social advantages which aid their children in school and perpetuate social inequality (Bourdieu, et al., 1977; Lareau, et al., 2016). Often the theory of cultural capital is used to justify White students outperforming BIPOC students in educational spaces. Yosso countered this deficit view of BIPOC families by considering how BIPOC culture may empower and nurture students' educational trajectories.

CCW is grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT). An aim of CRT scholarship is to give voice to the unique perspectives and experiences of BIPOC people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Yosso (2005) turned toward CRT to form an asset-based version of cultural capital. CCW details six distinct forms of capital—cultural knowledge skills, and abilities—which BIPOC families possess:

aspirational, social, familial, navigational, linguistic, and resistant (Allen & White-Smith; 2018; Yosso, 2005).

Aspirational capital is the capacity to erect and maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of barriers. *Linguistic capital* refers to the intellectual and social skills gained through the ability to communicate in more than one language or style. *Familial capital* is a sense of community, history, memory, and cultural leanings. *Social capital* is the networks and community resources that provide instrumental and emotional support. *Navigational capital* is the social and psychological skills to maneuver through social institutions which are not built for BIPOC communities. *Resistant capital* is the knowledge and skills to challenge inequality. Taken together, the research suggests that while CCW may be overlooked by the dominant culture, these capitals assist BIPOC communities in reaching educational success.

CCW is often used to analyze how students across the K–16 spectrum deal with unequal educational systems. However, scholars have also utilized CCW to illuminate the experiences of BIPOC teachers (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018), BIPOC school leaders (Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020), and BIPOC parents (Allen & White-Smith, 2018). Applying CCW to the work of family liaisons allows for the consideration of how family liaisons may draw on BIPOC cultural knowledge to support family engagement work.

Methodology

This research is part of a larger data collection effort focused on understanding the work of a parent advocacy organization during the first year of COVID-19. This sub-study employs a qualitative exploratory case study approach (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009) to examine the role of family liaisons.

Study Setting

The setting for this case study was a large urban city in the Western U.S. The case, HOPE, a parent advocacy organization, was started in 2016 by Black and Latinx parents concerned with educational inequity in their city. Through training and community organizing, HOPE aimed to empower Black and Latinx families to advocate for policies and reforms. HOPE officially became a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization in 2019 and is run by Black and Latinx parents and grandparents. At the time of the study, the organization had 14 full-time employees. Eight of the employees were Black, five were Latinx, and one identified as White-presenting.

Before COVID-19, HOPE did not have student programming. However, in response to pressing needs in the community, the organization created The Center, a virtual program. The Center offered K–8

TABLE 1.
PARTICIPANTS BY TYPE

Participant Type	Relationship to HOPE	Participants
Leaders	Full-time HOPE employees; Held various organizational leadership roles	7
Family Liaisons	Part-time or full-time HOPE employees; Worked directly with parents	5
Parents	Non-HOPE employees; parents of child(ren) enrolled in The Center	6
		Total: 18

academic and enrichment virtual programming and a variety of online family supports. Originally, The Center worked independently from local schools, but after HOPE received local and national recognition for The Center, school systems approached HOPE to collaborate. For example, local charter schools partnered with HOPE to enroll students in The Center. Further, HOPE and the local school district received a $900,000 grant to scale aspects of The Center, including the family liaison position, into six district schools. HOPE leaders credited the success of their program to family liaisons.

Data Collection

This study draws on multiple forms of data to provide a deep description of HOPE's family liaison model (Merriam, 1998). The data for this study include 18 semi-structured interviews. I interviewed three types of participants: (a) HOPE leaders, (b) HOPE family liaisons, and (c) HOPE parents (see Table 1). All interviews were conducted virtually, recorded, and transcribed.

Virtual observations and documents also informed the analysis (Table 2).

TABLE 2.
NON-INTERVIEW SOURCES OF DATA

Data Type	Number of Data Collected
Organizational Meetings	2
Press Conference	1
Organizational Documents	18
	Total: 21

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an iterative process guided by the theoretical framework (Miles et al., 2013). First, I created a 240-page case summary, documenting the narrative of the overall case and capturing preliminary patterns and themes (Bush-Mecenas & Marsh, 2018; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Next, I identified the interviews and observations pertinent to this sub-study on family liaisons. The 18 transcripts and three observational field notes were uploaded into Dedoose analytic software and coded using a set of a priori codes to identify patterns (Saldaña, 2016). Finally, I utilized analytical memos to guide an axial coding process where I identified patterns within the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I engaged in member checking and analyzed multiple forms of data to ensure trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2009).

Findings

HOPE's Center was a model of wrap-around family services to support BIPOC families during COVID-19 virtual learning. At the center of this approach was the family liaison position. Each family enrolled in the program received a family liaison. HOPE's executive director discusses the role:

> What made this Center so special is every family had a family liaison. So that was like the sauce, the secret sauce on everything … if you can call that parent and check-in and say, "Hey, your baby's not showing up, is everything okay, what's going on?" and they'd be like, "Oh, they had the computer on and they go in there and sleep." Like it's everything that you need for somebody to actually understand another parent and not be judging that parent for what they can't do. It's actually supporting that parent where they are.

The HOPE leaders saw the family liaisons as the "secret sauce" of The Center. Family liaisons offered non-judgmental support to parents as they navigated the daily process of accessing virtual education.

The caseload for HOPE family liaisons was between 15 and 25 families. The HOPE executive director argued that keeping the family liaisons' caseloads small allowed for them to have a greater impact:

> So, something like a family liaison is not this new concept, but the way we incorporated it in The Center, it's more effective than you, than you've ever even seen it in [schools], because the ways that family liaisons' … work in the traditional public school system you have like one family liaison for like 300 kids. What, 150 families. So, most of these type of roles that are supporting the community and the district, they're already set up for failure, because they're already set up where you're not going to really be able to meet the needs of your community. It's already, it's like a deficit model, right? And so we built this like a real growth and support model so each, you know, so each family liaison has no more than 25 families.

The executive director admits that the family liaison position is "not this new concept," but in the HOPE model, family liaisons have smaller and more manageable caseloads compared to those in school districts. She argues that a family liaison with a caseload of 300 students cannot meet the specific needs of communities. By reducing family liaisons' caseloads to 15 to 25, HOPE family liaisons had the capacity to develop deep relationships with their families.

All the family liaisons interviewed reported similar work-related tasks. For instance, family liaisons called each family on their caseloads once a week. Furthermore, family liaisons were also expected to help enroll students in Center classes, monitor attendance, administer surveys to families, and provide resources and information on Center and community programming. Family liaisons reported that their priority was to build relationships with families. As one family liaison described:

> Our main focus is to build relationships with our families. You know, if you can have a relationship with someone, everything else can kind of like smoothly, you know, transpire. … You'll always hear us talk about relationships, relationships, relationships. Because that's the most important thing to us.

At first, HOPE's approach to the family liaison role appears similar to how school districts traditionally implement the role (Dretzke & Rickers, 2014). However, HOPE's organizational culture, the goals of the family liaison position, and the work of the family liaisons promoted an asset-based orientation to aiding and sustaining families (Table 3). A review of the data suggests two types of community capital (aspirational and familial) drove HOPE's organizational culture. Another form of community capital (resistant) was the goal of the family liaison position. Finally, three forms of capital (linguistic, social, navigational) influenced how family liaisons approached their work.

TABLE 3.
COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH CAPITALS EMBEDDED INTO THE HOPE FAMILY LIAISON ROL

Organizational Culture	Family Liaisons' Goal	Family Liaison Work
Aspirational, Familial	Resistant	Linguistic, Social, Navigational

Organizational Culture Shapes the Family Liaison Role

Organizational culture is the values, assumptions, and routines that shape how organizations approach work (Hatch, 1993). Data suggest HOPE valued aspirational and familial capital as an organization. In turn, this organizational value shaped how HOPE constructed the family liaison role.

Aspirational Capital

HOPE's core belief was that all parents wanted the best for their children. As one family liaison noted: "You want your children to thrive … and you want to set them up for success when they leave high school and get into college." However, the organization also recognized that BIPOC families experienced systemic barriers to receiving a high-quality education. As another family liaison shared:

> [HOPE] is a parent-led group that has empowered parents from the most underserved communities to demand high quality for schools and to disrupt systematic inequality that exists in [our] public schools. You know, it's our mission to make the powerless parents powerful, so, and that's what we're doing.

HOPE saw its role as helping families obtain a quality education for their children even with the barriers before them. The role of the family liaisons was to connect parents to resources to aid parents' hopes and dreams for their children.

Familial Capital

HOPE's solution to systemic barriers in education was to bring parents together as a community to address them. As one HOPE leader shared:

> [HOPE leadership] knew that we needed to make change happen, and we couldn't wait on the system to make it happen. We needed to make it happen ourselves. And over a period of time, we just came together and started demanding that quality education was something that was going to happen for all kids. Not just for ours individually, but as we fought for our kids, we started fighting for others.

The community-based approach to school change influenced the family liaisons who saw their caseloads as a community. As a family liaison shared:

> We will ascend through education together as a family, as a community. … Every parent I speak to, you don't feel like you got enough power, I'm going to make you powerful. We're going to make you powerful.

Family liaisons worked to bring parents into a community-driven movement striving for educational quality.

Resistance as the Goal of Family Liaison Work

The goal of HOPE's family liaisons was for families to develop the ability to advocate for themselves at the school and system levels. For instance, family liaisons wanted parents to have the skills to speak up when they experienced an equity issue at their schools. As one family liaison described:

> The main thing for us is to be an advocate for families. It's important to help families develop their own ability to advocate for their children. In order to become their, you know, their own leaders in their kids' lives.

Family liaisons worked with parents to become "leaders in their kids' lives." The support they offered parents was in service to that goal.

Asset-Based Perspective of Families Driving the Work of Family Liaisons

Linguistic, social, and navigational capitals shaped the tasks that family liaisons performed in relationship with families.

Linguistic Capital

The Center served both Black and Latinx families. The organization ensured that Spanish-speaking families had the same access to The Center and programs as English-speaking families. Four of the family liaisons spoke Spanish fluently and worked with Spanish-speaking families. The family liaisons on the Spanish team emphasized that they continually presented information in both English and Spanish. One Spanish-speaking family liaison recognized that translation is time-intensive but essential:

> [HOPE is] always sending information, we always have to translate it. We always have to translate it if parents can't, are not able to do it themselves ... and also it takes longer. I think with us it takes longer. The Latino community needs a lot of support, and it takes time.

HOPE family liaisons recognized that parents possessed a multitude of communication and language skills and worked to remove any potential barriers to Spanish-speaking parents.

Social Capital

Across the study, participants expressed the stress of parenting both as a Black and Latinx person *and* during the pandemic. One parent shared her feelings of unpreparedness at the transition to virtual learning:

> I was just so overwhelmed. I was getting emails daily, multiple emails from the school. I just didn't know which way was up. Trying to navigate all the different platforms that they were giving [my daughter], like you know, she does Power School, Google this. It was just, it was so overwhelming for me that I can imagine that it was overwhelming for [her] too.

The overwhelming burden that virtual learning placed on parents was echoed by all the parents in the study.

A large component of the HOPE family liaisons' job was providing social and emotional care to parents. Family liaisons acknowledged that parenting was challenging and offered a sounding board. Family liaisons built relationships with families by drawing on their own experiences as Black and Latinx parents navigating the educational system. One family liaison explained her process: "Once I get to like telling my story and just opening up to them and letting them know, you know, they're not alone, and I, you know, we all relate in some type of way, and we come together."

Family liaisons also encouraged parents to have community with each other. For example, family liaisons heard from parents that the isolation of the pandemic was becoming a challenge:

> [Families shared] "virtual stuff is wearing me down too, and I need to—I need some social, I need to be social with somebody." So, they've been asking for like yoga classes and cooking classes and things where they can be engaged with the parents and stuff.

The family liaisons took that information back to HOPE leadership, and family liaisons began to facilitate a weekly virtual group for parents to engage in check-ins and activities such as yoga.

Navigational Capital

Family Liaisons provided families with support to navigate virtual school, public school policies, and the education system. First, family liaisons provided support to navigating The Center and virtual schooling in general, such as offering technical support and connecting parents to The Center-provided technological resources. As one family liaison described:

So, I work closely with families calling them, letting them know what we have going on, helping them set up their Zooms or, you know, just their emails, walking them through different things.

Next, family liaisons assisted parents in addressing school-based issues. For instance, one family liaison discussed how a student on her caseload was in danger of being left back due to her academic performance during the pandemic. As the student was a high-performing student before COVID-19, her mother and the family liaison found this unacceptable. The family liaison described how she supported the mother and her daughter (who the family liaison endearingly refers to as "baby"):

You know, but when you are a family liaison, and you communicate with a parent and the parent is telling me this, this is what they facing, you're like, "Oh, hell no. It's not going down like that. We need to, we need to fight. And if it takes me and you and a village too, we all going up to the school. We all going to be on that Zoom meeting, conference to see how we can make that baby thrives."

Here, the family liaison attended school meetings to support the mother and find a solution for the student.

Further, family liaisons assisted parents to navigate school systems. For instance, there was an open enrollment in the local school district where parents applied for traditional public schools and charter schools. Family liaisons expressed that the enrollment process was complicated and challenging for some parents. Therefore, family liaisons aided parents with the enrollment process. As one family liaison described:

If we have a parent that needs help navigating to find a good school, then we have to navigate. We have to walk them through the process, and we see what they need out of the school, and we see what the best choices we got for them with good schools, and we sit down and we go over it and let them make choices that they need to make for their kids.

Family liaisons saw their role as assisting parents to navigate all aspects of schooling, whether through The Center, schools, or educational systems.

Parents' Experiences of Family Liaisons

All the parents interviewed shared that their family liaison was a valuable resource in navigating The Center and traditional virtual school. Parents appreciated having someone staying in contact and informing them about the resources available at The Center. Further, parents knew that if they had a question or concern, it would be answered quickly. As one parent shared:

The best thing was, you can call any time. There was always a liaison to help you, they have tech support ... It was just wonderful. There wasn't ever a, "Well sorry, I don't know what to tell you" or "we'll get back to you." There was always an answer and helpful and just so much support.

Parents also valued the social and emotional support provided by family liaisons. One parent described the family liaison role as "an aunt or a best cousin that keeps in contact." Another parent shared that just knowing support was available was important. The parent explained: "When you're in a pandemic with kids and going through so much, to have somebody that really has your back, especially with academics and programs, it's so nice." During COVID-19, when families faced so many challenges, HOPE family liaisons reminded them they were not alone.

Lastly, evidence suggests that families were gaining skills in how to address inequality within their school communities. For example, one parent shared that her time in The Center and the support of her family liaison gave her the confidence to speak with her daughter's second-grade teacher about their experience in the virtual learning classroom. The mother reported: "I already sent an email to my daughter's teacher and [the teacher] kind of started to change a little tiny bit." The mother

also reported that if the issues persisted, she knew her family liaison would assist her in setting up a meeting with the principal.

Implications for Practice

In summary, HOPE, a parent advocacy organization instituted a family liaison position to support parents during the pandemic and facilitate equitable access to their virtual student programming. HOPE's organizational culture and family liaisons' tasks and goals were aligned with community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), an asset-based view of BIPOC communities. HOPE's theory of action was that when parents are supported and empowered, students experience positive outcomes. Through the redesign of the family liaison role, HOPE showed the power of community-based leadership. Ultimately, The Center had a daily attendance rate of 90%. Furthermore, according to HOPE-administered testing, 60% of The Center students in grades K–2 jumped two reading levels. These results are impressive given the challenges many school systems faced in the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. HOPE is an advocacy organization and not a school, yet there are lessons that traditional educators and leaders could learn from HOPE's community leadership.

First, school leaders should consider increasing the number of family liaisons within schools. A distinct feature of the HOPE model was that the family liaisons managed between 15 and 25 families. Traditionally, a school might have 1 or 2 family liaisons. In other cases, a central office might have a small number of family liaisons for an entire district. Large caseloads limit family liaisons from building deep and supportive relationships with families (Ishimaru et al., 2016). Investing more in family liaisons could reap benefits as trusting and deep relationships with BIPOC communities have been linked to school success (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Second, organizational culture matters for the treatment of diverse groups in school organizations (Kohli, 2018; Madsen & Mabokela, 2000). As an organization, HOPE had an asset-based view of Black and Latinx families. The organization's views of families shaped how family liaisons built parents' capacity to become self and community advocates. Overall, evidence from this study suggests that an organization's culture around family engagement will shape the work of family liaisons within that context. Therefore, how school organizations view families will shape how leaders design the role and scope of the family liaison position.

Leaders should evaluate their school's or district's values and assumptions about BIPOC parents. Indeed, leaders might consider developing asset-based and racially aware cultures around BIPOC families *before* instituting family liaisons roles within their organizations. In contexts where family liaisons already exist, leaders could consider how an asset-based view of families could sharpen or expand the work of family liaisons. Multiple resources are available for educators to develop asset-based views of BIPOC families for themselves and their staff (DeMatthews, 2018; Green, 2017). Family liaisons should be a part of an asset-based and community-focused approach to family engagement.

Third, HOPE family liaisons had a goal beyond The Center's outcomes. For instance, although the family liaisons checked Center attendance, the purpose of the position was not to ensure The Center could boast of a high attendance rate but to center the needs of families. School and district leaders might consider reframing the role of family liaisons. For example, rather than family liaisons focusing on supporting parents to meet school outcomes, family liaison roles could be reformulated to build parent capacity to interact with and thrive within educational systems. In the end, with parents taking the lead, schools might see an increase in student outcomes such as attendance and academic achievement.

Lastly, leaders who reframe the role of family liaisons to focus on family empowerment must be aware of the possibility of tension. Parents who are empowered might identify issues with schools and school leaders. In one view, empowering parents may cause additional work and headaches for educators. However, evidence suggests that some parents, often White and affluent, who already leverage their voice and wield advocacy skills (Evans, 2021; Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Leaders should consider how schools might improve if educators are required to attend to the advocacy of Black and Latinx parents at the same rate as White and affluent parents. If public education is part

of our Democratic institutions, all families should be involved in school governance and policy decision making. Asset-based models of the family liaison role could aid BIPOC parents to develop the capacity for advocacy and involvement with issues central to learning.

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Endnotes

[1] Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect anonymity

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