Handbook on
Family and Community Engagement

Sam Redding, Marilyn Murphy, & Pam Sheley, Editors
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Acknowledgements

Foreword

For a half-century, we have labored in the light of the Coleman Report's finding that families and communities strongly affect children's school success, our work inspired by the belief that these influences are malleable. Improving America's schools takes different paths in turn, as research and experience reveal promising organizational structures and professional practices. Always, family and community engagement receives a rhetorical bow, even as we have often tackled this work with uncertainty, sporadic attention, and sometimes disappointing results.

The knowledge, wisdom, and insights of this volume's contributors reflect the accumulated lessons learned by people who walk different paths in pursuit of a common vision—that all children might benefit from schools, families, and communities united in their behalf. Finding the right chemistry for relationships among school personnel, families, and community members remains a vision not entirely achieved. Our hope is that this *Handbook* will bring us closer to the realization of that vision.

Our desire in preparing this *Handbook* was to bring together the best minds on the various topics related to family and community engagement and produce a guidebook that is solid in its research footings, practical in its presentation, and useful to people in the field. To touch hearts as well as minds, we have sprinkled throughout the book several fictional vignettes to remind us of the everyday lives of parents, teachers, and the children they hold in their care.

This *Handbook* is intended to provide educators, community leaders, and parents with a succinct survey of the best research and practice accumulated over the years. More important, the *Handbook* gives us a guide—a lean and lucid roadmap with which we can travel to a new plain in our quest for each and every student's academic, personal, social, and emotional development. We offer the *Handbook* as a skeleton on which the body of good work in the field can be built. That work is extensive, and the people engaged in it are a special breed, firm in their commitment to enhancing the opportunities for our youth and wise in their understanding that schools cannot provide that opportunity alone.

Table of Contents

Part III: Families and Schools

Part IV: Suggested Practices

A key takeaway from these chapters is that there is a need for schools to create collaborative and coordinated systems for family and community engagement.

Introduction
Helen Westmoreland

This *Handbook* offers a broad definition of family and community engagement, seen through the lens of scholars and practitioners with a wide-ranging set of perspectives on why and how families, communities, and schools collaborate with one another. Taken together, the chapters in this *Handbook* sketch out the components of a theory of change for the family and community engagement field. What is family and community engagement ultimately in service of? What do families know and do differently when this work is successful? What educational policies and practices will help us realize these changes?

Throughout the chapters, we learn about the many goals and purposes of family and community engagement. In chapter 4, Lauren Morando Rhim argues that it should be used as a strategy to turnaround low-performing schools. Family and community engagement builds social capital and community, as well as provides additional resources and opportunities for young people, as Marty Blank points out in his description of community schools in chapter 6. In addition to these ecological or collective changes, family and community engagement also serves to impact individual students. As Amy Mart, Linda Dusenbury, and Roger Weissberg describe in chapter 5 and other contributors underscore, it helps promote students' social, emotional, and academic learning. Ultimately, it predicts students' college or career readiness, as Mary Waters and John Mark Williams point out in chapter 13. Whether through improved relationship skills, higher achievement, or better school or life transitions, students benefit when families, communities, and schools work together on their behalf.

In order to fulfill these visions, the contributors in this *Handbook* articulate a range of home and community outcomes which need to be addressed in family and community engagement efforts. As Herbert Walberg argues in chapter 9, influencing the "curriculum of the home," including all the roles parents play to support learning, is crucial to supporting student success. For example, in chapter 7, William Jeynes points out that we must increase families' capacity for more subtle forms of engagement, which fosters a family culture of high expectations, to have the largest impact student achievement.

Holly Kreider and Diana Hiatt-Michael, in chapters 11 and 12, respectively, summarize the importance of engaging family and community members in structured reading and literacy-promoting activities with children. Parents' learning support strategies at home also include monitoring and helping with homework, as Lee Shumow and Francis van Voorhis describe in chapters 10 and 16, respectively.

In chapter 1, Oliver Moles and Arnold Fege illuminate the tension in federal family and community engagement legislation of seeing families as individuals versus as a collective group of citizens that helps improve schools and holds them accountable. Speaking to the collective power of parents, in chapter 15 Anne Henderson and Sam Redding highlight how parent leaders engage in decision-making, organizing, engaging other parents, educating stakeholders, and advocating and connecting for change. These are just a few of the many roles that steer the family and community engagement strategies articulated by the contributors in this *Handbook*.

What will it take to see a change in these family and community outcomes? Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey summarizes in chapter 8 her and her colleagues' seminal research on what predicts family engagement, finding that strengthening self-efficacy is critically important. Programs and policies that encourage parents to have personal experience of success, see others' similar success, get verbal encouragement and persuasion, and feel a personal, emotional connection are most effective in changing families' behaviors in relationship to their children's education. Through many of the chapters in this *Handbook*, we see this theory in practice in examples of school districts, parent training programs, and schools across the country.

In its most practical form, this *Handbook* offers ideas for how family and community engagement can be implemented in your community or school. A key takeaway from these chapters is that there is a need for schools to create collaborative and coordinated systems for family and community engagement. For example, Sam Redding and Steven Sheldon, in chapters 2 and 14, respectively, describe the process of building a team of school staff and family and community members who work collaboratively to plan, implement, and continuously improve a school's

family and community engagement practices. These systems are needed not just within schools, but also across schools. In Chapter 22, Kate McGilly highlights common practices in these systems of family and community support in early childhood settings that successfully transition students to elementary school. Similarly, in Chapter 23, Mavis Sanders describes how schools can engage families during the high schools years by providing information to help them navigate and steer their children's education across teachers and into adulthood.

Across the chapters in this *Handbook* is also a keen understanding of the need for communication between families and schools. Heather Weiss and Elena Lopez highlight three key elements of successful communication using student and school data in chapter 3: access to comprehensible data, understanding of this data in the context of other information, and an action orientation so it is clear what families can do with the data. In chapter 5, Amy Mart, Linda Dusenbury, and Roger Weissberg offer "4 c's" of communication: child-centered by individualized student information, constructive by practical ideas for application, clear and concise by simple and direct language, and continuous by frequent and regular outreach. In these and other chapters, we see that the quality of communication is tremendously important in transforming the ways in which families, communities, and schools work with one another on behalf of schools and students.

In chapter 17, Patricia Edwards articulates how effective family engagement is differentiated for families, just as we differentiate instruction for students. We see this theme of "meeting parents where they are" throughout the topics in this *Handbook*. Whether for families of different languages and cultures (Patricia Gandara, chapter 18), minority families (Susan Paik, chapter 19), families in poverty (Ronald Taylor, chapter 20), families of children with disabilities (Eva Patrikakou, chapter 21), families in charter schools (Brian Beabout and Lindsey Jakiel, chapter 24), families in rural schools (Amanda Witte and Susan Sheridan, chapter 25), or Native American families (Pamela Sheley, chapter 26), family and community engagement must be responsive to the context and needs of the community. These contributors urge us to deepen

our own understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities of these diverse families and communities as a pre-condition of our partnership efforts.

In addition to the chapters, this *Handbook* provides short vignettes that illustrate the core concepts of the *Handbook*. Through these and other innovative strategies and promising practices brought to light by the contributors of this *Handbook*, we see how family and community engagement is successfully implemented. What, then, should we urge our schools and the school system to do to strengthen and scale these practices across the country?

Via "action principles" for State Education Agencies, Local Education Agencies, and Schools, the contributors of this *Handbook* give us a set of effective practices, which are compiled in Section IV. Across these recommendations are three commonalities. First, they call for building a broader awareness of family and community engagement among families, community organizations, schools, and state, local, and federal education agencies. Second, they urge school systems to articulate and monitor clear expectations for family and community engagement. As Oliver Moles and Arnold Fege elaborate in chapter 1, despite the long history of federal and local roles in this work, there is still a ways to go to develop and effectively oversee policies for family and community engagement. Lastly, these recommendations point to an urgent need to build the capacity of schools, themselves, to effectively reach out to and engage their community and their families. This capacity-building takes many forms—from providing professional development and technical assistance to hiring additional staff to distributing leadership through teamwork.

This *Handbook* represents years of experience in the family and community engagement field, and various perspectives on what should guide this work and how it should be carried out. Though family and community engagement is hard work, the *Handbook* helps ground us in what has been accomplished, and what is possible for the future.

Part I:

Framing the Discussion

The one historical constant is the research and practice links between low-income families engaging with their school, which leads to higher student achievement, greater social and political capital for families, and empowerment to demand high achieving education.
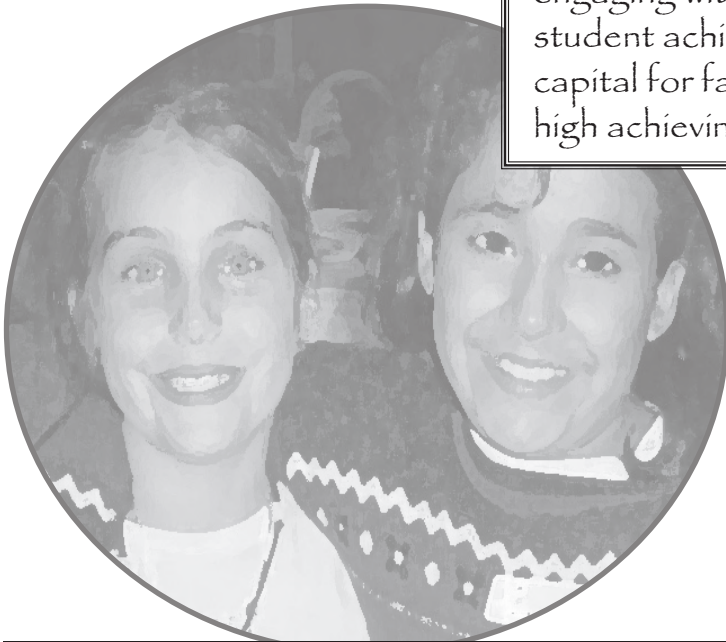
New Directions for Title I Family Engagement:
Lessons from the Past

Oliver C. Moles, Jr. and Arnold F. Fege

Chapter

1

Since the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, parent involvement (which has been expanded to include family engagement) has been recognized to be a component of social justice, equity, and quality education, but often an elusive and erratic component of ESEA and federal policy. For instance, the original ESEA Title I did not contain any parental involvement provisions, but was fundamentally a school-based bill designed to provide financial assistance to low-income school districts and to advance integration. Over the years and through seven reauthorizations, parental involvement has taken on many shapes and forms, from collective organizing, decision making, and training parents in working with their children, to promoting parental choice.

What lessons can be drawn from the 40-year history of Title I parental involvement that might inform policy in the current educational and political debates and might guide schools and districts in their current practices? The one historical constant is the research and practice links between low-income families engaging with their schools, which leads to higher student achievement, greater social and political capital for families, and empowerment to demand high achieving education (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Gold, Simon, & Brown, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Nye, Turner, & Schwartz, 2006).

On the other hand, many low-income parents send their children to schools which generally have the lowest levels of student achievement and the highest levels of families who feel disengaged from meaningful involvement and participation. In this chapter, we review major provisions concerning parent involvement since the inception of the Title I program and weigh different opportunities that might strengthen family engagement. We conclude with the need for strong federal involvement advocating for rights of low-income Title I parents. The following brief account of the evolution of family engagement requirements in the federal Title I program draws on recent reviews of these requirements (Fege, 2006; Moles, 2010a).

Parent involvement can refer to a wide array of activities in the home and in collaboration with the school. These may include helping with children's home learning activities, communicating between schools and families, attending parent meetings and educational workshops, helping to write school policies, organizing to demand better schools, and participating in decisions about the education of one's child including choice of schools. The term parent involvement is being supplanted today by family engagement in recognition that grandparents and other family members may also be responsible for the care and upbringing of children. Family engagement also suggests a deeper level of commitment and participation than involvement.

The Early Years: Parents as Advisors Holding Schools Accountable (1965–1980)

Although the original law contained no mention of parental involvement, it did become a matter of fiery discussion during the Senate debate on ESEA. Senator Robert F. Kennedy (D-NY), member of the Senate Education Committee in 1965, grilled Johnson administration officials about questions of accountability and parental involvement, thereby raising some of the first questions about the relationship between instructional quality, assessment data, and low-income parents using that information to demand improved public schools. Kennedy was relentless in his belief that poor parents had a right to decision making in those institutions, such as public schools, that are designed to serve them and their children, and that the federal government had a role to play in assuring that local school districts provided that opportunity. He believed that without sufficient data and parents holding schools accountable as a vital political force in "watch dogging," Title I funds would not reach the classroom (Fege, 2006; Halperin, 1978; Senate Subcommittee on Education, 1965).

The 1970s were known as the decade of "parents as advisors," strengthening both the role and power of Title I parents. From the federal perspective, the involvement of parents aimed to: (1) make the services delivered to the poor more responsive to their needs; and (2) integrate the bottom segments of the urban population into community life consistent with other programs constituting the War on Poverty and hold schools accountable (Davies et al., 1979). In

1974, P.L. 93-380, the Elementary and Secondary Amendments of 1974, was passed along with regulations requiring all school districts to establish parent advisory councils (PACs) *before* submitting their applications (Federal Register 45 C.F.R., 116.17(o)). In 1978, P.L. 95-561, the 1978 ESEA Amendments, was passed, creating the most far-reaching and comprehensive of any of the Title I mandates related to parental involvement.

Under the 1978 Amendments, local education agencies were required to involve the PACs in Title I program planning and implementation to:

- assure the PAC's composition was representative of Title I parents,
- assure that PACs had the information needed to make decisions and recommend programs to be addressed under Title I,
- give parents information in their native languages,
- evaluate parent and instructional programs,
- develop procedures to address parent complaints and grievances,
- provide funding to the PACs,
- provide parents the opportunity to approve or veto district Title I plan applications, and
- consider developing parent resource centers, liaison staff, and resources for home learning.

The Era of Deregulation and Push-Back (1980–1988)

In 1981, a confluence of "deregulation politics" brought in by the new president, Ronald Reagan, and the pushback by local school officials claiming the 1978 Amendments were too prescriptive stripped the mandated parent involvement provisions and PACs from the law and left it to the states and local school districts to determine how they wished to involve parents. As a result, ESEA was replaced with P.L. 97-35, the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, and Title I became Chapter 1 (Sunderman, 2009). The parent involvement language was reduced to a single requirement that schools and districts hold an annual meeting of Title I parents to inform them about the program. In most cases,

the repeal of the 1978 provisions led districts to abolish both district- and school-based parent advisory councils. A 1985 Congressional report concluded that "Chapter 1's weaker parental involvement requirements had a negative effect on parent involvement," and concluded "that to the extent that PACs mobilize parents and political action, that may be a good thing—it can lead to healthy democracy on the local level" (House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor, 1985). The PACs were also perceived to be the gateway in requiring school districts to pay attention to parental involvement (Bryk, 1997), although they were also seen to promote parent factions where parents tried to protect their own programs and funding (Mizell, 1979).

Parents Reemerge in Title I: The Search for Balance Between Federal Role and Local Flexibility (1988–2011)

It was apparent that local school administrators and school boards would oppose any new Title I mandates that would create an alternative parental power structure such as the PACs; but on the other hand, groups such as the National Title I/Chapter 1 Parents Coalition, Children's Defense Fund, National PTA, and the Center for Law and Education were pushing to reinstitute the parental involvement language lost in the 1981 reauthorization. What emerged in the 1988 Hawkins–Stafford Amendments, P.L. 100-297, were "requirements" that LEAs develop policies that ensured parental involvement in planning, design, and implementation of Title I programs, provide timely information to parents about the program, and provide parent information in a language and format they could understand. They were also encouraged to develop resource centers, liaison staff, and resources for home learning (D'Agostino, Hedges, Wong, & Borman,

> The term parent involvement is being supplanted today by family engagement in recognition that grandparents and other family members may also be responsible for the care and upbringing of children.

2001). However, the provisions lacked systemic monitoring and enforcement. These provisions also began the shift away from collective parent organizing and advocacy toward strategies of individual parents working with their children at home.

The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, known as IASA, P.L 103-382, was a signature reauthorization—it accelerated the change in ESEA and Title I from a civil rights and anti-poverty bill to one that assumed that poverty played less of a factor in influencing the ability of parents and schools to develop social capital and began the laser focus on standards aligned with assessments, consequences for schools that did not meet state expectations, and parental choice (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007). IASA continued the 1988 provisions for parent involvement in Section 1118 and added several important new provisions for funding and program development which continue to the present day. School districts receiving over $500,000 yearly in Title I funds must now reserve at least 1% of these funds for activities to involve parents. Each school is also required to develop with parents a school–parent compact describing the school's responsibilities for providing high-quality curriculum and instruction, the parents' responsibilities for supporting children's learning, and the continuing school–home communication needed to achieve high standards. By 1998, compacts were used in 75% of Title I schools, and most of these schools reported that parent involvement was strengthened by the compacts (D'Agostino et al., 2001) although their long-term impact was more questionable (Funkhouser, Stief, & Allen, 1998). The prevalence of compacts today is not known.

In addition, schools are also required to develop with parents a parent involvement plan and to make the plan available to the parents of participating children. Such a plan must include the input of parents in shaping school-level policies, shared responsibility for bolstering student performance, and build more capacity for parent involvement. As part of this, schools must hold a meeting each year for Title I parents in which the school explains the program and gives parents information on the school's progress toward meeting the performance standards of their state. Schools and districts are also required to

provide materials and training to help parents improve student achievement and training for school staff on reaching out and working with parents as equal partners.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, known as NCLB (Public Law 107-110, 2002), continued these requirements and strengthened them in its Section 1118. For the first time in the history of ESEA, parent involvement was defined. Its essence is "the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities," including the idea that parents play a key role in helping children learn and act as full partners in their child's education (P.L. 107-110, 2002, p. 1962). All of these ways of communicating, sharing responsibility, and fostering mutual respect are essential building blocks of successful partnerships, but dependent on the leadership, skills, and will of the state and local education agencies. Yet once again, without deep monitoring and enforcement provisions, parents had no recourse if school districts did not implement Section 1118. In essence, they were armed with legislation and information, but at the mercy of local school districts for implementation.

For parents, NCLB also added new roles and opportunities. Parents now have choices if their children are in a "failing school" and information to help them make choices. Annual school report cards, either sent to parents or posted on websites, must show several things: student performance on state assessments by subgroups in each school and district in Grades 3–8 for basic subjects, teacher qualifications[1],

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[1] In December 2010, Congress enacted a provision which made it more difficult for Title I parents to know if a fully prepared teacher (highly qualified) or a teacher-in-training (alternatively certified) was teaching their child. Congress overturned a 9th Circuit Court decision brought by parents (Renee v. Duncan, 2010) by adding to NCLB a regulation that had been struck down by the 9th Circuit Court. The regulation allows states to describe teachers as "highly qualified" when they are still in training—and, in many cases, just beginning training—in alternative route programs. NCLB gives parents the right to know when their child is being taught by a teacher who is not fully-certified and who has not completed training. But by labeling teachers-in-training as "highly qualified" as well as those teachers who are certified and fully prepared in Title I, Congress has made it much more difficult for parents to ascertain teacher qualifications of their child.

and graduation and retention rates for secondary schools. If the school is failing—lacking adequate state-defined yearly progress for two years—parents must be given an explanation, be given an account of how the school is working to remedy the problems, be "consulted" about the plan, and be given information on how parents can help address these academic issues. Parents may choose to transfer their children to another public school without having to pay transportation costs. If a school is failing for a third year, its students are eligible to receive free supplemental educational services (tutoring) after school hours. Districts are charged to conduct evaluations of the content and effectiveness of school policies for parent involvement each year. States are required to review these district policies and practices.

During the Bush Administration, the U.S. Department of Education focused its dissemination and monitoring work on parent choices and gave little attention to other parent aspects of Title I. Many channels were used to inform school systems and parents about these options, but little came of it. Based on the Department's FY 2008 Performance and Accountability Report, during the school year 2006–2007 only 14.5% of eligible students across the nation received supplemental educational services, and a tiny 2.2% chose another school (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Apparently, many parents were simply unaware of their options, school districts did not adequately communicate the information, quality choices or SES programs were not available, or parents chose not to exercise the options. Satisfaction with their child's school and its location were the principal reasons parents chose not to transfer their child. The most common reasons for not seeking supplemental education services were the parents' sense that their child did not need help, and tutoring times were not convenient for families (Vernez et al., 2009). There was little federal research or evaluation work on non-choice aspects of parent involvement during the Bush years, in contrast to the 1990s (Moles, 2010a).

Federal monitoring of activities under Title I is conducted in each state every few years as resources permit. Common findings from this monitoring regarding parent involvement and parent options paint a discouraging picture.

Parents often were not notified appropriately about their options, school and district policies on parent involvement were inadequate and poorly disseminated, and parents were not included in the development and review of school improvement plans. For a state by state evaluation, see the U.S. Department of Education Student Achievement and School Accountability site: http://www.ed.gov.

The Parent Information and Resource Centers

A major component was added to the 1994 ESEA Amendments, the Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs). Each state has one or more PIRCs. Their overall purposes are to help implement parent involvement policies and programs for improving children's achievement, to strengthen partnerships between parents and educators, to further Title I children's development, and to coordinate with Title I and other initiatives for parent involvement under NCLB. Training and support have gone to parents of children from birth through high school and to persons and groups that work with them. At least half of each project's funds must be used to assist low-income families. The PIRCs are also expected to help parents understand the accountability systems under Title I and parental options.

A very large number of parents and families have been served since the program's inception. In 2008–2009, large majorities of educators who received PIRC services reported changing their practices on family engagement, as did majorities of families on supporting children's learning. Sixty percent of Title I schools and 73% of Title I school districts reported receiving PIRC services (National Coalition of Parental Information and Resource Centers, 2010). (*Note:* The PIRCs will no longer receive federal funding after September 30, 2011.)

Strengthening Family Engagement in High Poverty Schools

The history and evolution of parental involvement in ESEA Title I, along with the emerging research and best practices, inform us about some fundamental next steps. Recall that NCLB defines parent involvement as regular, two-way, and meaningful communication to enhance student academic learning. Where such interaction

flourishes, partnerships of mutual respect, trust, and support can more easily develop a shared vision linking public education, parents, community, and policymakers. Working together, there are elements integral in undergirding the next phase of ESEA to assure that every child has a quality public education. Besides overall reform strategies, we also discuss some school-based reforms. These elements include:

1. Importance of a federal role
2. Collective action and organizing by families with a shared vision toward demanding quality education for all children
3. Promoting school capacity building and redesign of the "factory model school"
4. Local parent information and resource centers
5. Promoting school turnaround over parental choice
6. Strengthening of the school–parent compacts
7. Fully prepared school staff in working with parents
8. Ongoing personal communication
9. Home learning to build a culture of learning
10. Community coordination and support
11. Research for program improvement

The federal role. Federal policy can and does make a difference in providing resources, encouraging innovations, monitoring and enforcing parental provisions such as Section 1118, conducting ongoing and systemic research, and providing incentives for states and LEAs to respond to the needs of low-income parents and communities. There are still too many schools that shut parents and the community out of meaningful participation, and voluntary strategies by themselves seem not to work without federal pressure. Family engagement is a hugely local matter, and one size does not fit all, but family engagement should be a much more legitimate part of mainstream education policy, both from a democratic perspective and as instrumental to school improvement where school districts blend individual parental activities in working with their children to collective

engagement where parents can build social and political capital (Appleseed, 2007; Crew, 2007; Noguera & Wells, 2011).

Collective action and a shared vision. We learned from the PACs that organizing parents is an important function for school accountability and collective action, but parents should organize around a shared vision such as increasing the number of children ready for college or providing a quality education for all children, rather than around interests that often compete and divide parents. Whether Title I, English as a Second Language (ESL), or special education, among other programs, the school and parent visions should be aligned and a learning culture developed where educators and parents learn together. Parents should see the benefit of advocating for *all* children, as well as their own. Family engagement should not be an add-on or a program but should be interwoven throughout the school—its instructional program, planning and management, and other aspects of school life so that schools are places of connection and the center of the community. As families gain knowledge about what constitutes a high-achieving school, they will also feel ownership over advocating for change. Building on what UCLA professor and co-director of the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles Patricia Gándara calls "cultural capital," known as "bienes culturales" in Spanish (Gándara, 2008), the parents connect with the school, not because they are in competition with other parents, but because coming together strengthens the academic opportunities for children (Bryk et al., 2010; Clarke, Hero, Sidney, Fraga, & Erlichson, 2011; Comer, 1984; Crew, 2007; Griffith, 1998; Paredes, 2011).

School capacity building. This next phase of family engagement work should focus on implementation and building school capacity in responding to the needs of low-income parents. The current factory model school was not designed for partnership, involvement, or collaboration; it was designed for efficiency that did not value the input or participation of the citizen/consumer. In many cases, educators, parents, and the community have limited expertise and skills in knowing how to partner with each other; do not possess the necessary understanding of the cultural, racial, gender, and ethnic

9

differences that often do not relate to traditional middle class parent involvement; and educators and parents are not equipped to execute the federal and state parental involvement requirements. Schools need to help families build their knowledge and capacity and then help them to act using these new-found skills which result in change (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Trotman, 2001).

Local parent information and resource centers. As counterparts of the state-level PIRCs, school districts can take added steps to bolster parent and educator collaboration for student learning. Besides informing parents of school policies and activities as is commonly done, more intensive efforts can move parents and educators to joint action. Exemplary PIRCs have assessed local needs regarding parent involvement, trained parent liaisons, trained parents for leadership, and trained parents and educators to work as teams (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Parent choice. Parental choice options may not be as effective as turning around a low-performing school. Despite strong efforts to publicize the options, very few parents have chosen to move their children out of "failing schools." The strong pull of local schools suggests that parents will be engaged more productively in ways they can help strengthen existing schools. Advisory and policy making bodies concerning schoolwide issues with broad parent participation would seem the more appropriate move.

School–parent compacts. The school–parent compacts should be strengthened and implemented. These agreements are appealing in principle, and states have provided comprehensive compact models for their schools. An example of recommendations for constructing and using compacts can be found at ncpie.org/nclbaction/SchoolParent_Compact.pdf. While widely used, compacts rely on voluntary agreements from parents and educators without any necessary follow-up or implementation plan. Compacts could become the starting point of specific collaborative actions. Parent–educator discussions in creating compacts add to their potential for action.

Prepared school staff. Focus on training school staff on reaching and working with parents. Few colleges of education or school districts

devote any substantial time to helping educators prepare to work with parents beyond early childhood and special education (MetLife, 2006). Many teachers have negative views of parents and underestimate the importance of family engagement. Yet strong parent–teacher relationships are linked to various positive outcomes for students. Skills and practices like welcoming partnerships with families, building on family strengths, and positive communications can be folded into systems of training (Caspe, Lopez, Chu, & Weiss, 2010). The diverse students and families of the 21st century challenge the competencies of educators and call for new engagement efforts in a variety of community contexts such as those in some emerging programs (Dotger & Bennett, 2010).

Ongoing personal communication. One key to meaningful family engagement is personal communication. Partnerships are built on close collaboration and interaction. Continued two-way contacts in person or by phone allow for the free exchange of ideas that is a basis of partnerships. Early home contacts by phone or in person send a message that all parents and their children are welcome and important. Annual parent–teacher conferences, encouraged under ESEA, can be more productive when teachers urge parents to bring questions and follow-up plans are made and when teachers engage families in understanding data and the course work required to access college or a career. This requires more than the usual two parent–teacher meetings per year, but rather reinforces the need for continuous communications to understand the data. While many parents attend these conferences, contacts with those who miss them can open communication with them early in the school year. Finally, school meetings with parents should allow ample time for questions and comments to promote personal communication. All these modes of communication can be complicated by differences in language, so adaptations to cultural differences are also needed (Clarke et al., 2011; Davies, 1988; Gándara, 2008; Montemayor, 2011; Taveras, Douwes, & Johnson, 2010; Xu & Filler, 2008).

Home learning. Connecting the home and the school in a culture of learning not only enhances the skills of students and parents, but

also positive relationships between the parent and teacher. Material and training for parents, as ESEA requires, could be strengthened especially when coupled with strong two-way communication, but in formats and languages that parents can understand. When well crafted and made part of a continuing program, home learning activities can be a potent source of change. Field experiments over many years bear this out (Nye, Turner, & Schwartz, 2006). Another study examined academic progress from third to fifth grade in 71 Title I schools; making early and continuing phone contact with families regardless of student progress and sending home learning activities on a regular basis was more important than a number of other school reforms in schools with strong improvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). A testable framework based on this strategy has been developed (Moles, 2010b).

Community coordination and support. Schools and families need the support of and coordination with their community. Parental involvement alone is inadequate to improve the most difficult public schools. Community members must also be involved in and responsible for providing resources and funding, support services, parental assistance, political pressure, and accountability. It is not fair to ask parents by themselves to be the only entity that holds schools accountable, and community-based organizations should be part of the capacity-building process noted above (Adelman & Taylor, 2009; Cibulka & Kritek, 1996; Kugler, 2002; Public Education Network, 2001).

Research for program improvement. Developing and supporting a research-based family engagement framework is essential to determine when programs are working and how to improve them. Besides counts and percentages

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of parents or educators served, information is needed on knowledge and skills gained by them and actual changes in practices. Before and after data on participation in programs and comparison with matched non-participating groups make a much stronger case than one-time information on participants alone. Where possible, field experiments with random assignment make the strongest case for the effects of any practice or program.

Next Steps

If we have learned anything from the rocky past of Title I parental involvement, it is that effective education reform policy cannot ignore the essential partnership of the family in the academic as well as the developmental success of low-income children. Many communities and school districts are already engaged in this effort, but much of the real work of engaging and empowering parents—all parents—in their children's education lies ahead.

Parents are not and should not be part of the school bureaucracy. However, school leaders have a major role to play in enabling low-income parents to work with schools as engaged partners, to provide individual support for their children, and to build the social and political capital they need to demand change and improvement where it is not forthcoming. This requires building district capacity, teacher and administrator professional development, community involvement, funding, communications, mobilization, and parental decision making—all part of a coordinated policy in developing a whole child. To do this, the whole child needs the whole school, the whole family, and the whole community working in collaboration.

Experience over the years has demonstrated that, without a federal framework, low-income parents frequently do not receive the kind of attention or school priority necessary to make the seamless link and connection between the family and the teacher, and between the home and the community, which leads to better student learning and outcomes. Jeffrey Henig and S. Paul Reville conclude that "in polite education circles, drawing attention to community and other non-school factors is met with impatience, resigned shrugs, or a weary rolling of the eyes. … (but) the vision of future education reform is

simple: American schools won't achieve unless they attend to the non-school factors" (Henig & Reville, 2011).

Reauthorization of ESEA, then, needs to visualize a much broader concept of education to move beyond "schooling" and into areas of child development and parent empowerment. Educators and parents should be partners in this process, not adversaries. Whether school improvement, turnaround schools, parental choice, or schoolwide Title I, integrating parent involvement strategies and parent voices as a part of overall district improvement efforts should be a core element of reform, and not one that is marginalized.

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Strong school communities engender strong students. The school community's purpose is to ensure that each student acquires the knowledge, skills, habits, and attitudes necessary for success in school and in life.

The School Community:
Working Together for Student Success
Sam Redding

Chapter 2

Strong school communities engender strong students. The school community's purpose is to ensure that each student acquires the knowledge, skills, habits, and attitudes necessary for success in school and in life. Community begins with a focus on the success of each individual student. That requires many people working together. The work includes that done by the student and that done by teachers, administrators, staff, families, and volunteers in support of the student.

Academic, personal, social, and emotional learning are all part of this mix of essential attributes, inclinations, and abilities necessary for success in school and in life (Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). The school directly impacts the student's learning, but it is most successful when it functions as a community.

The word "community" is freely bandied about in education, often without precise definition, taking on various shades of meaning in different contexts. We are interested here in a community of the *school*. Especially, we are interested in that nexus between the home and the school where responsibility for students' academic, personal, social, and emotional learning is shared (Sergiovanni, 1999). But also the school community concerns itself with the roles and relationships of all of its constituents.

A "school community" consists of the people intimately associated with a school—students, their families, teachers, administrators, school staff, and volunteers—bound together by their common interest in the students served by the school (Redding, 2000, 2006). Their association with the school is intimate because, in the case of parents, the students are their own children; and in the case of school personnel, the students are the immediate beneficiaries of their vocational calling and professional endeavor.

A sense of community does not emerge automatically within a school, but is intentionally built by making every member feel welcomed and honored, and by ensuring that all are *connected* to the purpose of the school: students' learning (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). A school community is premised upon the shared belief that:

- all parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them;
- all teachers are inspired by professional standards and personal conviction to see that their students succeed;
- student success is bolstered when parents, teachers, and other members of the school community work in unison on their behalf; and
- school leaders are the prime movers in establishing and nurturing the processes and practices necessary to intentionally strengthen the school community.

In short, a school community rests upon mutual respect, strong relationships, shared responsibility, and focused attention to students' academic, personal, social, and emotional learning. When the school functions *as* a community rather than *in* a community, its constituents associate with one another and share common values about the education of children. A school community fosters social capital (Coleman, 1987), an asset that accrues to the student by virtue of the relationships among the people in that student's life. In articulating the purpose, beliefs, and goals of their school community, members of the school community affirm the common values that cement their relationships to one another. Their discrete but symbiotic roles rest upon this foundation of common values, aimed at *each* student's success.

A school community is built and continuously strengthened with six building blocks (Redding, 2000, 2006):

1. **Leadership** that is *shared* among its members.
2. **Goals and Roles** that guide its members in doing their part relative to student learning and in their relationships to one another.

In short, a school community rests upon mutual respect, strong relationships, shared responsibility, and focused attention to students' academic, personal, social, and emotional learning.

3. **Communication** among its members that is two-way and interactive and clarifies their roles and responsibilities.

4. **Education** of its members that builds their capacity to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

5. **Connections** among its members that enhance their personal relationships, strengthen their bonds to one another and to the school, and foster mutual pursuit of success for all students.

6. **Continuous Improvement** because a school community is never completely "built." It is always building its capacity for nurturing the ties among its members and achieving outcomes for its students.

Shared Leadership

A school community is organized to make decisions for the effective and efficient attainment of its goals. Most schools operate with decision-making bodies such as a Leadership Team—consisting of the principal and teacher leaders—and teacher Instructional Teams. A parent or parent–teacher organization sponsors events and may raise funds. Adding a School Community Council to this structure introduces a decision-making body focused on responsibilities and relationships among members of the school community as they strive to ensure that each student acquires the knowledge, skills, habits, and attitudes necessary for success in school and in life.

A School Community Council includes the principal, parent facilitator, counselor or social worker, representative teachers, and parents. The parents constitute the majority of the members, and they are the primary custodians for currently enrolled students and are not employed by the school. This or a similar composition of members ensures the significant contribution of the family voice. School Community Councils engage the parent or parent–teacher organization, faculty, and other groups in carrying out its plans and communicate regularly with them. The Council operates with a constitution or bylaws and meets regularly (twice a month is a necessity), with agendas, minutes, and work products.

Goals and Roles

Looking closely at the nexus between the home and the school where responsibility for students' academic, personal, social, and emotional learning is shared, we might list the kind of goals that a school community would aim to achieve. With the goals in mind, we can then consider the goal-directed roles that parents, teachers, school staff, volunteers, and the students themselves play.

In the academic realm, teachers carry a broad array of responsibilities. Limiting our consideration to the areas in which the home and the school carry overlapping responsibility, we would say, for example, that students learn to read at school, but their habit of reading is reinforced at home. The same is true for students' desire to learn and their self-direction in learning; teachers provide instruction and guide their students' ability to master content and manage learning strategies, while parents reinforce attitudes and habits of curiosity, inquiry, and disciplined study at home.

In terms of the student's personal development, including social and emotional learning, in many ways the family is the primary formative context, while the school both teaches and reinforces the necessary skills, attitudes, and self-perceptions. The school provides a broader social environment in which the student exercises self-respect, respect for others, and a sense of responsibility.

The goals of a school community might look something like this:

1. **Reading & Literacy.** Every student, and students of all ages, will learn to *read well, read often, enjoy reading, and achieve literacy* through a focused alliance of family support and powerful classroom instruction.

2. **Self-Directed Learning**. Every student will become a *self-directed learner* through teaching that incorporates study skills and learning strategies, homework practices that build effective study habits, and school and family guidance that encourages self-directed learning.

3. **Respect & Responsibility.** Every student will *develop a sense of responsibility and respect* for self and others that fosters social and emotional well-being through

consistent direction and support from the family and the school.

4. **Community.** The *school will function as a community* of its members—students, their families, teachers, administrators, school staff, and volunteers.

Children are most likely to become avid readers, skilled learners, and self-confident, socially adept, respectful, and responsible human beings when they are part of a community of people working together on their behalf. Such is the nature of a strong school community in which everyone plays a role.

Most schools have a Compact, a document that outlines the responsibilities of students, parents, teachers, and sometimes principals. The School Community Compact outlines these responsibilities related to the school community's goals, such as those listed above. Other documents such as homework guidelines, school and classroom visit procedures, and student report cards are vehicles for reinforcing goals and roles.

Communication

It is a commonplace in family engagement that communication between the home and the school should be two-way—flowing in both directions (Swap, 1993). This is certainly true in a school community, but the channels of communication in a school community are even more complex. The school community promotes communication among parents, teachers, administrators, staff, students, and volunteers. The school community's purpose and goals are the central topic of communication.

The School Community Compact is an important document if it is given due attention. A communication plan includes ways to facilitate discussion among students, parents, teachers, and staff about the Compact and the roles described in it.

Modes of communication are varied, and each is used for the purposes it best serves. Newsletters not only inform everyone of what is going on at school, they also include content provided by parents, students, teachers, and others. Internet sites provide information for all of the school community's constituents, including guidance on how best to support student learning. Telephone outreach from teachers to parents conveys positive messages as well as causes for concern. Parents are given instructions for how best to contact teachers and school officials. Parents are put in touch with each other with telephone and e-mail lists to which they have given consent for their inclusion. Happy-Grams are positive notes that teachers send home to parents and parents send to teachers.

Education

Why wouldn't "education" be a building block in a school community? After all, education is what schools do. In a school community, education is not limited to the students. Teachers receive professional development, including training on how to work effectively with parents. Parents attend workshops and courses to assist them in their important support at home for students' learning at school. School staff members learn effective ways to greet visitors and offer assistance to make the school a welcoming place. Volunteers are trained and guided in the roles they play. Training for leaders, including School Community Council members, helps them grow in their competence with decision making and team functions. All of this education must be carefully planned, well-administered, and held to the same high standards the school sets for the education provided to students.

For parent education, well-trained parents are often the best facilitators (Henderson, 2010). Other parents feel comfortable with them, the experience builds their leadership skills, and bonds of community are formed.

Connection

Society today is fragmented in many ways, by residence, workplace, and school enrollment boundaries. People in a school community need to know each other. Students benefit when their

> Children are most likely to become avid readers, skilled learners, and self-confident, socially adept, respectful, and responsible human beings when they are part of a community of people working together on their behalf.

parents are familiar with the parents of their schoolmates. Teachers understand their students better when they know their families, and parents become more fully engaged in their children's learning when they know their teachers. In fact, teachers themselves are more effective and derive more satisfaction from their work when they know each other well.

Connections are face-to-face interactions among members of the school community, planned and facilitated for a purpose. Again, the purpose is to share experiences and ideas relative to students' academic, personal, social, and emotional learning. Connections also build social capital.

Home gatherings, where a teacher meets in the home of a student with several parents invited to attend, are low-cost, easily organized activities that enable people to get to know each other. Preparing the host families and teachers for the experience is key. They need a simple agenda to guide the discussion and some ground rules for the conversation so that individual grievances can be channeled toward a later meeting with appropriate school personnel. Parents love to hear from teachers how the teachers plan their instruction, how children learn to read, and how study skills are built. Most of all, teachers and parents learn to appreciate each other's roles.

Home visits, by teachers or trained community members, provide another outreach to families. Again, the preparation and organization are essential. Explaining the purpose of the visits to the visitors and the families lays the groundwork. An introductory letter from the principal sets the stage. Providing the families with useful materials and information is a good idea. Inviting the parents to school events and parent education activities is a nice addition. Listening to the parents is paramount.

Open houses, family–school nights, and parent–teacher–student conferences are standard events in most schools. Including parent–child interactive activities during an open house or family–school night is always beneficial. Giving parents the opportunity to share how the family provides support for the student's learning at home should be included in conferences. Students can be guided to lead some of the conferences themselves. Always, the school uses these

occasions to inform the family about the school's programs and activities; it also initiates an ongoing conversation about how parents can best provide support for their children at home and solicits input from parents.

Continuous Improvement

Data—we use student learning data constantly in schools to understand what each student knows and needs to learn. Data can also guide the continuous improvement of the school community. What do parents think about the activities provided for them by the school? Do parents and teachers feel they have a voice in how the school functions? How do parents, teachers, and students think they are doing with the responsibilities outlined in the School Community Compact? Are teachers uniformly meeting the guidelines for homework? Are students completing homework on time and with good quality? What do parents need in the education (workshops, courses) they receive? What about teachers? What do people suggest to make the school a more welcoming place?

Surveys, focus groups, and participant evaluations provide data for continuous improvement. The School Community Council takes these data into account when making its plans.

Conclusions

A school community is strengthened with the building blocks described herein, and it nurtures students in their academic, personal, social, and emotional learning. Even more, a school community that is attentive to the relationships among its members—to their personal aspirations, their need for social connection, their shared visions and individual strivings—provides more than a welcoming place (Jeynes, 2011). It creates an environment in which everyone—students, parents, teachers, administrators, staff, volunteers—understands and finds satisfaction in the role he or she plays and appreciates the roles played by others. A school does not function as a community naturally; community is built intentionally.

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Resources/Websites

www.casel.org: Resources on academic, social, and emotional learning.

www.centerii.org: Resources on all aspects of school improvement.

www.families-schools.org: Resources for schools and parents and the new issues and archives of the *School Community Journal*.

We believe that investment in student performance data that is accessible, meaningful, and actionable to families is a core component of 21ˢᵗ century family engagement strategies.

Making Data Matter in Family Engagement

Heather B. Weiss and M. Elena Lopez

Chapter

3

We believe that investment in student performance data that is accessible, meaningful, and actionable to families is a core component of 21st century family engagement strategies. New data-sharing initiatives described here suggest that, equipped with student data, families can strengthen their roles as supporters of their children's learning and as advocates for school improvement. Their experience offers a warrant for carefully developing and evaluating such efforts to learn how to implement them under different conditions and to ascertain their value added as part of larger efforts to make sure all children have the skills they need to succeed.

States and school districts have spent over one billion dollars in the last decade to build and implement student performance data systems (Tucker, 2010a). In addition, with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, 38 states are planning to build data systems that track the achievement of students by individual teachers. Thirty-seven states are working to align K–12 data systems and higher education to produce longitudinal data for individual students (Kober & Rentner, 2011). As policymakers invest in data systems to drive decision making from the classroom to the legislature, families are important stakeholders. Research on family engagement repeatedly correlates family engagement with student achievement and is discovering more precisely what it is that families do that promotes learning and school success. Sustained family engagement in children's learning is linked with higher grades and test scores, motivation to achieve, social competence, and aspiration for and enrollment in college (Weiss, Buffard, Bridgall, & Gordon, 2009).

Unfortunately, many strategies and interventions to promote family engagement have been disconnected from any instructional goals and do not take advantage of available data to engage families in ways that support learning or school improvement. Family engagement often consists of separate and uncoordinated programs, a state of affairs that has been described as "random acts of family involvement" (Gill Kressley, 2008). The trend toward data-driven reform opens new possibilities for families to gain access to meaningful student data that can guide their actions to support children's learning and school success. Sharing individual student performance data with families—as well as drawing information from families about students' interests, behaviors, and challenges—can transform the way family engagement is organized. Rather than focusing on "random acts," family engagement elevates the strategies that support learning, continuous improvement, and successful outcomes. Collective data about student performance deepen parents' understanding of the quality of their schools. They help parents make school choices and enable parent and community leaders to take action with schools on improvement strategies.

A Data Pathway Toward College and Career Readiness

While the examples we note are grade level specific, they suggest that to get the full benefit of sharing data with families and also students, it is useful to envision and construct a birth through high school strategy built on shared responsibility for data use among family, school, and community stakeholders. A data pathway consists of measureable benchmarks for a child's learning that begins in early childhood and continues through the school years. A family can track progress over the short term (e.g., to improve reading) and over the long term (e.g., to advance through different grade levels). Through this pathway, families can help their children stay on the right track to graduation and college and career readiness, access an array of school and community learning resources, and gradually transfer responsibility for performance-based learning to the student. Our research on pioneering initiatives suggests three elements found effective for data sharing with families: access, understanding, and action (Weiss, Lopez, & Stark, 2011).

Access. Families want to know how their children are doing in school so that they can help them at home. They benefit from timely and relevant data on attendance, behavior, and academic progress and performance. Such data are being shared through parent–teacher conferences and, increasingly, through electronic media. Because not all families have computers or reliable internet connections, some schools

are providing parents access to computers and online student data by opening their computer labs to parents and extending hours of operation, others are working with community-based organizations to set up computer kiosks, and some school-community partnerships are refurbishing computers and giving them to families that complete a set of family-engagement and computer-learning workshops.

Knowing the circumstances of families helps school districts design effective access to student data. In New York City, for example, one school with a high number of children from a nearby homeless shelter set up a parent room with a washer-dryer, microwave, mini-library, and computers. Parent coordinators invited parents to use the room and encouraged them to learn how to use the online student data system and to understand their child's academic performance (Polakow-Suransky, 2010). Parents in New York City are also involved in testing the formats of online data systems in order to increase user accessibility.

Understanding. Families need to be able to understand the data and know what to do with it. They need to grasp what the data suggest in terms of their child's short- and long-term development and academic progress. Data are meaningful when placed in the context of school requirements and a student's learning goals. Attendance data, for example, become useful when families know the school's expectations about the number of allowable absences, the consequences of missed school days, and the differences between excused and unexcused absences. At the Washoe School District in Reno, Nevada, high school parent workshops and communication with parent involvement staff about the use of the online data system go beyond the use of technology to incorporate information about attendance requirements and resources where parents can seek help if their teen shows signs of truancy (Crain, 2010).

Understanding data so that they are meaningful takes time and regular communication. It begins with training parents—usually face-to-face—so they understand education terminology and student data within a framework of standards and assessments. In-person training can be followed by web-based tutorials about what students should know and be able to do in

the subject areas that are being assessed. Parent–teacher conferences are ideal for making student data a centerpiece of conversations during the school year. These meetings become the "essential conversation" for improving student progress on the pathway to graduation and college and career readiness. (See Appendix 3.1 for an example of online tools that help parents understand their child's assessments and ask teachers questions to support a child's progress.)

The Creighton School District (K–8) in Phoenix, Arizona has recreated the parent–teacher conference to focus on helping parents understand student data and take action to improve student progress and performance. Called Academic Parent–Teacher Teams (APTT), the sessions consist of three 75-minute parent–teacher group meetings and one individual parent–teacher meeting. Teachers volunteer to use this approach, and the number of classrooms using APTT has expanded since the pilot phase. During group meetings, a teacher explains learning goals for reading and math and presents data on aggregate classroom progress over the school year. Each parent receives a folder containing his or her child's academic data and learns to interpret the child's performance in relation to class learning goals and the overall standing of students. Teachers present the data in creative and concrete ways. For example, some teachers display a linear achievement line designating where the "average" child might score at different points in the year and then ask parents to chart where their own child falls. Teachers work with parents to set 60-day learning goals for their child based on academic scores. Parents also practice teaching skills modeled by the teacher and receive materials that they can use with their child at home (Paredes, 2010, 2011). In this way, parents become partners with teachers and work together to support continuous improvement and goal attainment.

Action. Families benefit most when schools provide resources that are linked to the data gathered from ongoing assessments. These resources offer families clear guidance about how to enable their children's strengths to flourish, how to overcome challenges, and how to engage their children in activities and discussions that will support their overall learning and growth. In short, data must be actionable

in order to produce changes in student achievement. From providing families with recommended activities that they can do at home with everyday materials, to highlighting resources in the community that they can access, schools are able to build effective opportunities for learning that respond precisely to the learning profiles of individual students. With access to data, an understanding of what that data reveals, and resources for action, families can:

- Support, monitor, and facilitate student progress and achievement in a focused and concrete way that complements learning at school.

- Inform transition from one grade level to another or one school to another so that teachers can be cognizant of and build upon the child's unique development and interests.

- Engage in ongoing conversations with their child about planning for career and college.

- Align student skills and interest to available programs/resources in the community such as after-school programs and summer camps to further enrich learning and growth opportunities.

Data for Advocating Schoolwide Change

Beyond supporting an individual student's learning, data on schoolwide performance can motivate parents to take action to improve their schools. School data help parents understand their school's standing in relation to other schools, raise questions about areas where performance falls short of school goals, and work with schools as strategic partners in addressing these issues. Parent leaders and community groups are on the forefront of accessing and using student performance data to advocate for educational equity.

Access. Student performance data are available through national, state, district, and school websites. However, the data are not always easily accessible or presented in a format and language that parents can understand. Some parent organizations translate publicly available data into useful formats so that parents can grasp how students are performing. Other parent organizations choose to partner with research centers to conduct more sophisticated data analysis,

especially when districtwide changes are sought. For example, the Community Involvement Program of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University has been instrumental in providing data analysis, research, and training to the Coalition of Educational Justice in New York City, a parent-led entity composed of several community-based organizations and unions. Based on its reports, the Coalition acquired compelling information to address several issues about educational equity, including the middle school achievement gap and school closures (NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, 2010).

Understanding. Parent organizations invest in training parent leaders to understand student data within an educational framework such as high school graduation and college readiness requirements, standards, curriculum, and assessment. They clarify for parents what different types of data reveal and the distinction between formative data showing student progress and summative data showing achievement. Parents, especially those from low-performing schools, gain new insights when data are disaggregated and viewed longitudinally. When they see data from high-performing schools and then look at their own school's data in comparison, they are motivated to act. Through an understanding of data, parents identify patterns, ask questions, and problem-solve on possible action steps.

The Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership is an organization that pioneered parent training in understanding school data as an integral part of leadership development. Through a three-part training program, parent leaders learn about the educational system; their roles as advocates; the relationship of standards, curriculum, and assessment; how to gather information

> Families want to know how their children are doing in school so that they can help them at home. They benefit from timely and relevant data on attendance, behavior, and academic progress and performance.

about schools; and how to interpret data within the framework of standards and curriculum. Parents learn to examine disaggregated data by race and gender in order to better understand where learning gaps occur. With their newly imparted knowledge and skills, parents develop projects with other parents in their schools that focus on improving student learning and engaging families in children's education (Corbett & Wilson, 2000).

Action. Data can answer important questions, point the way to change, and improve policies, programs, and practices. Through useful data displays, parents can grasp school issues that demand action. They use data to hold schools accountable and to innovate new approaches to tackle hard issues. For example, parents in one Mississippi community became concerned about the high school dropout rate. Based on training in data interpretation provided by Parents for Public Schools, a national advocacy organization, the parents examined longitudinal data tracking students back to sixth grade. They realized that the dropout problem could be traced to a middle school student engagement problem. Parents then worked with principals and teachers and created a mentoring program that brings current high school students to the middle school to build relationships with and provide academic support for the younger students (N. Rudy, personal communication, May 25, 2011). (See Appendix 3.2 for an example of disaggregated data used in training parent leaders.)

Conclusion

The experience of early data-sharing initiatives suggests there is enough value added in ensuring that families access, understand, and take action on student data to warrant more investment, development, and evaluation. Early

results show that data sharing serves as a catalyst for meaningful communication between parents and teachers. As Bill Tucker of the Education Sector observes, "Parents will no longer be satisfied with 'Fine' as a response to the question, 'How is my child doing?' Data change the conversation so that it becomes respectful, engaging, and results-oriented" (B. Tucker, comments made at the National Policy Forum for Family, School, and Community Engagement, November 9, 2010). The early initiatives also suggest that access to schoolwide data enables parents and community organizations to advocate for data-based improvements, design local solutions that take full advantage of a community's resources, and track student progress. Although we are in the early stages of learning how to effectively share data and recognize it is not a cure-all for today's educational challenges, we suggest it is emerging as a powerful way to leverage growing investments in state and district data systems and as a core element of family engagement strategies.

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> Through an understanding of data, parents identify patterns, ask questions, and problem-solve on possible action steps.

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Appendix 3.1: An example of online tools to help parents understand their child's assessments and ask teachers questions to support a child's progress

This graphic is one example of how parents can learn about a child's progress in meeting state standards using the parent portal of an online student data system. Source: NYC Department of Education.

Appendix 3.2: An example of disaggregated data used in training parent leaders

Grade 5

Percent of Students Scoring Proficient and Above

	All Students	Non disable	Disable only	Male	Female	Black	White	Asian	Hispanic	Ec Disad.	Non ED
■ Science	37	36	40	37	35	22	53			26	54
■ Math	55	55		54	55	41	69			40	76
■ Lang arts	47	48		42	55	30	65			33	69
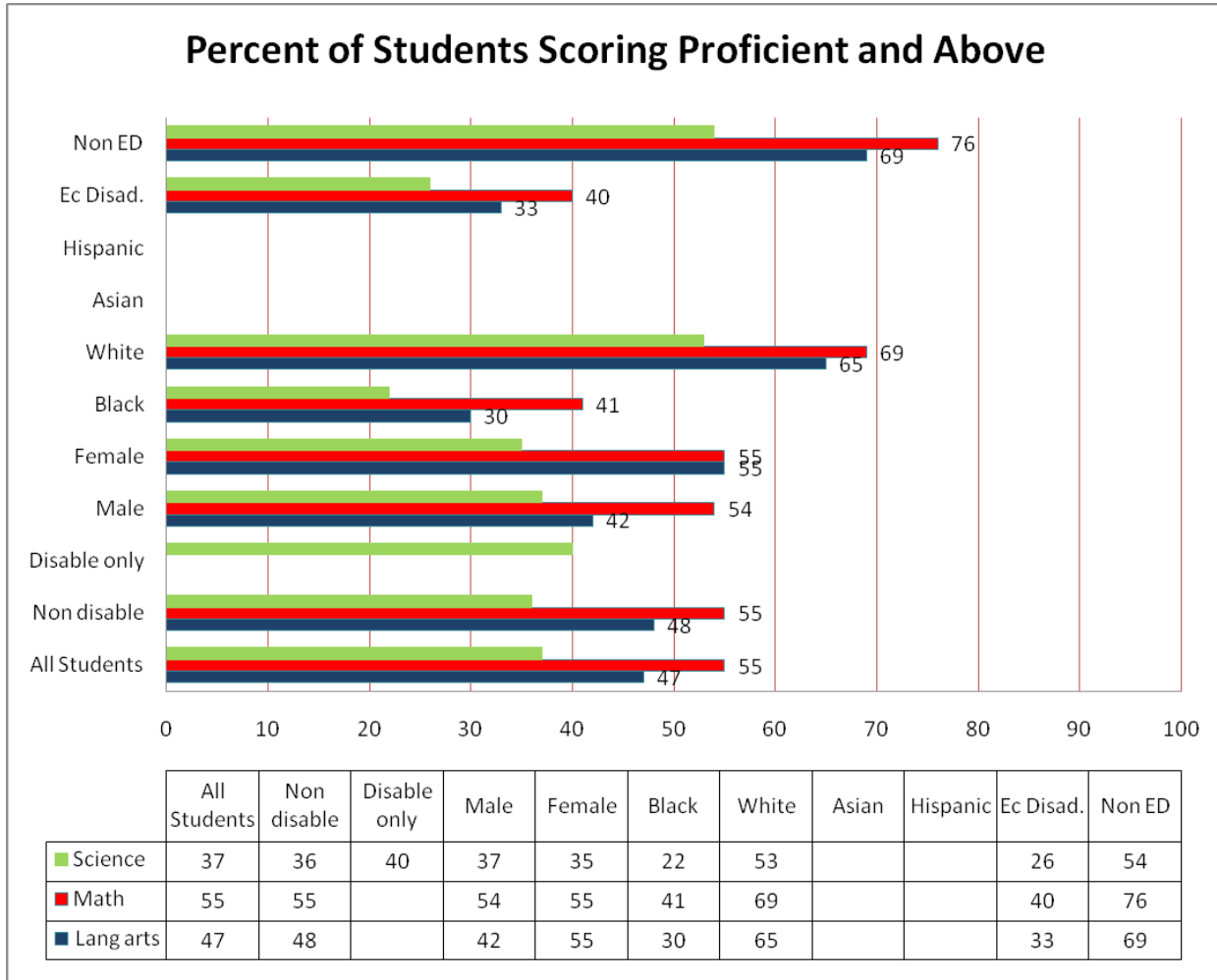
1. Why is there no data reflected for some subgroups?
2. In how many categories could one student's results be reflected?
3. Do you see an achievement difference between subject areas? What questions do you have about that difference?
4. Identify an achievement gap between different performance groups at this school. (for example: Are the boys scoring higher than the girls?) What questions would you have about that gap?

This graphic and associated questions illustrate one of the training tools used by Parents for Public Schools to help parent leaders understand how data can help them identify school issues that need to be addressed.

Source: Parents for Public Schools.

Families and communities can assist districts to improve instruction through their contributions to and support of rigorous academics inside and outside of school.
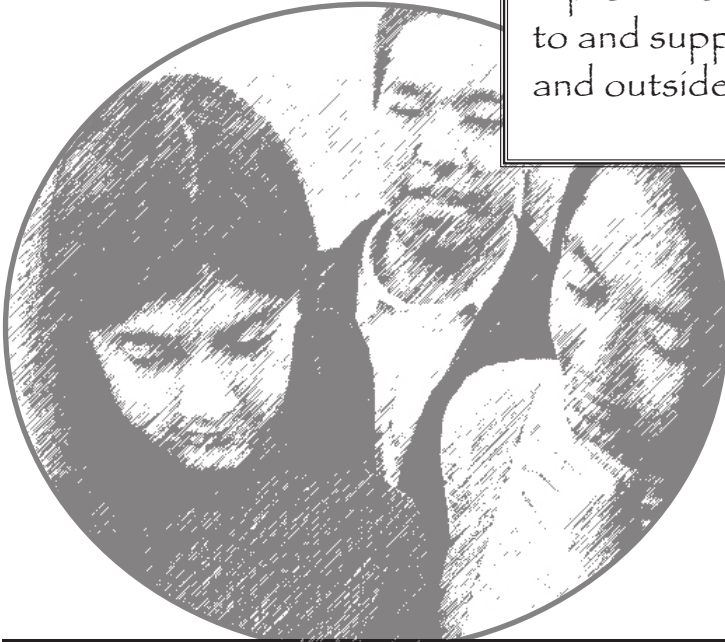
Engaging Families and Communities in School Turnarounds: When Students Can't Wait

Lauren Morando Rhim

Chapter 4

School turnaround is not school improvement plus.[1] Rather, school turnaround is a focused change effort designed to dramatically improve the performance of an organization on an aggressive timeline that benefits the students currently enrolled in the school. Unlike typical improvement efforts focusing on implementing incremental changes in three to five years, turning around the lowest performing schools requires urgent and focused efforts that will generate *positive growth in one to two years.* Examples of such growth would be improving fourth grade reading scores by 12% or reducing the achievement gap between affluent and poor middle school students by 5%. Whether the process entails the components defined by the U.S. Department of Education as turnaround, transformation, restart, or other approaches, these efforts require disruptive change that mandates not only district- and school-level personnel examine and change their behavior, but also students, parents, and communities.

Leveraging an Overlooked Resource: Engaging Families and Communities as Turnaround Advocates, Academic Partners, and External Experts

There is an established research base documenting the correlation between parent and community involvement and positive student outcomes (Brown, Muirhead, Redding, & Witherspoon, 2011; Jeynes, 2005, 2011; Lewis & Henderson, 1997; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005; Redding, Langdon, Meyer, & Sheley, 2004; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). The federal SIG program requires states and districts to provide "ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement" in targeted turnaround efforts. Failure to effectively and meaningfully engage these key stakeholders represents a missed opportunity to leverage a powerful resource. In particular, based on research regarding the impact of families

and communities on student achievement and factors critical to successful school turnaround efforts, they can contribute to turnaround in three key ways: (1) advocating for dramatic change, (2) supporting rigorous academics, and (3) providing external expertise (Brown et al., 2011; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Lewis & Henderson, 1997; Public Impact, 2007; Steiner & Brinson, 2011).

Advocacy

In a meta-analysis of parent involvement research, Jeynes (2005) not only documented the positive correlation between involvement and student outcomes, but also established that the single most powerful factor is parental expectations. Parental expectations are expressed in the "curriculum of the home," the attitudes, habits, knowledge, and skills that children acquire through their relationships with their families that serves as the foundation for how they approach school and learning (Redding, 2000).

Parental expectations are also communicated by how parents interact with the school system. Communities more generally express their expectations through their engagement, or lack thereof, in school matters. At their core, families and communities expect and need high-quality schools; parents want their children to succeed, and the broader community needs strong schools to ensure the long-term viability of the local economy.

Most tangibly, communities elect or remove school board members who enact, or fail to enact, policies that lead to high-quality schools and lobby school leaders to change policies they oppose. High-achieving suburban schools located in communities with well-educated and affluent parents are successful in part because the parents expect and demand quality schools. Parents and community members actively pursue change when schools don't meet expectations, and school leaders are readily held accountable for fulfilling family and community expectations. Advocacy for quality schools is a manifestation of high expectations.

In communities with persistently low-performing schools, channeling the desire for quality schools into advocacy—in a variety of forms—is a critical step to supporting school turnaround efforts. Lack of external support and pressure

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[1] Under The U.S. Department of Education's School Improvement Grant (SIG), the term "turnaround" defines a specific approach to a dramatic change effort. For the purpose of this chapter, the term "turnaround" refers not to a specific change approach (e.g., replace the principal and 50% of the existing staff) but to the dramatic change in the performance of a school in a time-compressed manner through a variety of means, including but not limited to the approaches defined under SIG.

for change can undermine turnaround efforts that require school and district personnel to alter their practices. Policy leaders committed to turning around schools need to intentionally leverage family and community expectations to initiate, drive, and sustain difficult change efforts (Steiner & Brinson, 2011).

Advocacy translates into actions at multiple levels of the system. It can include local efforts such as attendance at school board meetings where critical decisions are made, change agents running for school boards, grassroots turnaround petitions (see sidebar regarding the California Parent Empowerment Act), or business roundtables working with mayors and superintendents to craft a turnaround campaign. It can also include state-level efforts focused on changing legislation that undermines change initiatives (Renée & McAlister, 2011).

Regardless of its form or level, the first step to catalyzing families and communities to advocate for school turnaround is to communicate the dire need for change and the tangible benefits (e.g., higher graduation rates, increased college acceptance rates, and decreased crime) for individual students as well as the broader community (Brown et al., 2011; Steiner & Brinson, 2011). They must fully understand that substantive change—including actions that some stakeholders may oppose such as removing beloved but ineffective personnel or ending pet projects that don't advance academic goals—is required to provide quality schools for all students. Clear communication about the need for and tangible benefits of change will prepare them to endure the turbulent seas that accompany difficult change.

Ideally, skilled district and school leaders will engage families and communities to advocate for coherent turnaround plans. In the absence of strong local leadership, families and communities advocating for school turnaround can motivate district and school leaders to make changes and provide them with necessary political cover to overcome resistance.

Mobilizing Parents to Advocate for Dramatic Change: The California Parent Empowerment Act

A dramatic example of parents advocating for school turnaround is California's Parent Empowerment Act—the "parent trigger law"—that empowers parents to petition districts to convert failing schools to a charter campus, replace staff, transform the curriculum, or close the school. If at least 50% of parents sign the petition, the district is required to respond. The legislation passed in 2010 as part of California's efforts to win Race to the Top federal funding.

Highly controversial, the law was invoked to turn around McKinley Elementary in Compton Unified School District, but immediately encountered legal challenges from the local school board regarding the validity of signatures on the petition. The State Board of Education subsequently issued regulations clarifying how districts should verify signatures, clearing the way for McKinley parents to exercise their right to demand dramatic change to benefit their children.

Extending authority already granted to districts under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the California parent trigger law provides parents of children in low-performing schools a clear legal channel to demand dramatic change when districts are unable or unwilling to take necessary steps to turn around failing schools.

Based on the California law, parent trigger legislation has been proposed in 14 other states, and there is discussion of including similar language in reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (formerly NCLB). In an interview with Time magazine regarding parent trigger laws, Representative George Miller, ranking Democrat on the House Education and Workforce Committee, explained, "The fact of the matter is, when we look at developing a model for real change and improvement in public education, it's pretty hard to do without parents. We've tried for years, and it's not working."

Sources: California State Board of Education, 2011a, 2011b; Watanabe, 2011; Webley, 2011.

Academics

The essence of any successful and sustainable turnaround effort is an aggressive commitment to improving the quality of instruction delivered in individual classrooms. Families and communities can assist districts to improve instruction through their contributions to and support of rigorous academics inside and outside of school.

Inside School

Historically, family and community engagement in schools has been limited to activities such as participating in parent–teacher conferences and associations, fundraising for specific programs, volunteering in classrooms, and attendance at school events. These efforts are laudable and can augment the instructional program, but often fall short of fully utilizing families or communities to advance critical goals. Furthermore, the challenge in turnaround situations is that most low-performing schools are inundated with multiple, and sometimes competing, initiatives ostensibly designed to help the school but, that in practice, frequently diffuse focus and dilute priorities (Rhim, 2011; Rhim & Redding, 2011). Effectively engaging families and communities to support targeted turnaround efforts requires that district and school leaders (1) establish a clear set of turnaround priorities and (2) strategically weave families and communities into activities that advance these priorities. Not all volunteer efforts are equal and, in fact, some can detract from turnaround efforts if they distract school personnel or require inordinate amounts of time relative to the instructional benefits (see sidebar regarding Cincinnati Public Schools' Resource Coordinators).

The key variable in transforming scattered volunteers into meaningful contributors in schools is strategic planning that matches a school's instructional needs with volunteers' skills and, if necessary, proactively seeking particular expertise to help with specific academic goals (e.g., recruit a parent with technology expertise to assist a teacher in introducing a new mobile device or a local doctor to help with a biology unit). Initiatives that tap into family and community volunteers to explicitly support the academic goals of low-performing schools can bring in unique expertise while limiting distractions.

> ### School Turnaround in Cincinnati: Effectively Leveraging Families and Community Resources to Support Academic Goals
>
> *As part of Cincinnati Public Schools' (CPS) aggressive school turnaround initiative—the Elementary Initiative—school principals modified the role of existing "Resource Coordinators" from volunteer coordinators to analysts charged with allocating and tracking external resources and holding partners (e.g., student mentoring programs, parent volunteers, and nonprofits interested in providing services to the school) accountable. Volunteers are assigned to individual classrooms and programs according to schools' academic priorities as opposed to volunteers' interests. Focusing volunteer efforts necessitates saying no to some offers (e.g., sponsorship of a program that does not support high-priority turnaround goals). Principals in CPS schools identified the role of the resource coordinator as extremely valuable to managing the principal's time and targeting valuable resources, including families and other community members.*
>
> Source: Rhim, 2011.

Outside School

Most students attend school an average of 6 hours a day, leaving the remaining 18 hours to other activities that can enhance or inhibit learning. Families and communities play a central role in shaping whether time outside of school contributes to or detracts from education. First and foremost, families play a central role in ensuring that students attend school and can play an active role in assisting low-performing schools address chronic truancy issues (Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004).

How students spend their time out of school influences what they do in school and stands to help or harm strategic turnaround efforts focused on improving academic outcomes. For instance, a significant portion of time should be devoted to obtaining adequate sleep and eating healthy meals, but research indicates that many American students are sleep deprived (Wolfson & Carskadon, 2003) and practice less than adequate eating habits (Apovian, 2010). While simplistic, efforts to engage families and communities to make certain that all students

have adequate rest and nutrition could significantly contribute to efforts to improve student outcomes.

Aside from attending school, sleeping, and eating, the rest of the day is devoted to a diverse array of other activities (e.g., athletics, employment, homework, socializing on- and off-line, other forms of screen time be it television or computer screens). District and school leaders can intentionally engage families and communities to develop activities that will communicate expectations regarding the value of education and augment their education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davis, 2007). For instance, a plan to create a partnership with a local museum or business to operate an after-school program or internships exposing students to professional office environments could be a part of a district's turnaround plan. Given the amount of time spent out of school, overlooking family and the broader community and, specifically, how they influence how students spend their time and the degree to which they value education is a missed opportunity. Individual families and the broader community are well positioned to support students in using their out-of-school time in a productive manner, communicate the value of school, and expose students to opportunities available as a result of persisting and obtaining a high-quality education.

Expertise

Districts supporting and schools embarking upon a turnaround effort must garner significant expertise to cultivate a human capital pipeline, analyze data, develop a coherent plan, and then implement the plan with fidelity. Engaging families and communities in a meaningful way in the process can leverage additional expertise while also developing buy-in from this key constituency. Families and community members can be engaged long-term to serve on volunteer associations, school councils, and school boards (Brown et al., 2011; Henderson, 2010). Parents and community members can also be engaged for shorter-term projects associated with turnaround efforts. For example, they can host community meetings about the changes that need to occur for the turnaround to be successful and sustainable, or form task forces with a clearly articulated charge to develop creative solutions to specific problems.

Having community members at the table brings in an alternative perspective that can be invaluable when tackling difficult changes. Community members may also be aware of external resources (e.g., nonprofit organizations or philanthropies) that may help the school achieve its goals or potential barriers that may undermine new programs (e.g., an after-school church program that will be disrupted by an extended school day). Furthermore, engaging influential community members (e.g., parents from an underrepresented minority group, leaders from a neighborhood council, or individuals with deep family roots in the community) in the planning process can help district and school leaders build support for a turnaround process from the very groups who, absent a seat at the table and an opportunity to contribute to the process in a substantive way, might oppose disruptive change efforts.

Essential to tapping family and community expertise is to be explicit about their official role and ensure that it is substantive as opposed to symbolic. This will include outlining the limitations of their role (Steiner & Brinson, 2011). For instance, if parents are invited to serve on a principal selection committee, it should be clear from the beginning that the final hiring decision will be made by the school board. Infusing transparent decision making into relationships to the maximum extent possible will build credibility and trust, further catalyzing family and community engagement.

Conclusions

Efforts to turnaround failing schools—institutions that in some instances have underserved communities for decades—require dramatic change on a compressed timeline. Students currently enrolled in these schools cannot afford to wait three to five years for incremental change efforts to bear fruit. Responsibility for the change cannot rest on the shoulders of hero superintendents, principals, or teachers. Rather, turnaround efforts require a substantive and long-term engagement of key stakeholders that influence students and the schools they attend. Parents and the broader community are uniquely positioned to advocate for high-quality schools,

support students' academic pursuits, and contribute to the collective expertise required to turnaround and sustain these critical community institutions. To effectively engage families and community members, municipal, district, and school leaders must first acknowledge that change needs to occur, and thereafter develop a cogent plan to leverage all available resources to support the turnaround. Absent strong leadership, the community itself may need to serve as the initial catalyst for change.

There is no one "right" or "best" way to engage families and communities in turnaround efforts, as each community is unique. Nevertheless, it is critical that these stakeholders are engaged in an intentional and meaningful manner to assist district and school leaders to achieve their goals to initially turn around persistently low-performing schools and subsequently sustain the success. Developing a proactive and intentional, as opposed to reactive, strategy to engage these critical stakeholders will enable schools and districts to leverage their power and expertise to successfully turn around schools for the benefit of individual students and the community as a whole.

Examples of Family and Community Engagements to Support School Turnaround

Advocacy

- Lobby local legislators to change state regulations that impede turnaround efforts (e.g., state tenure laws that drive seniority-based hiring).
- Organize a grassroots turnaround campaign to drive and support the district turnaround plan.
- Engage local business associations to promote and support turnaround efforts through a marketing campaign touting the benefits of supporting high-quality public schools.

Academic Support

- Develop a healthy body, healthy mind campaign to educate parents and students about the importance of sleep and nutrition to academic outcomes.
- Recruit parents and community members with specific skills (e.g., literacy or mathematics) to volunteer in schools to support priority academic goals.
- Partner with a local community group to schedule after-school programs that reinforce the value of education and expose students to opportunities available to college graduates.

Expertise

- Develop a "community resource bank" of individuals with specific expertise that align with high-priority turnaround goals (e.g., technology experts available to donate hours to support integration of mobile computing devices in classrooms).
- Identify parents and community members with human resource skills to serve on a task force charged with developing an aggressive human capital pipeline to recruit teachers for hard-to-staff positions.
- Recruit business leaders with turnaround expertise to serve as mentors to current and aspiring school administrators.

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Resources

http://www.annenberginstitute.org: Resources on community organizing to support schools.

http://www.centerii.org: Resources on all aspects of school improvement.

http://www.families-schools.org: Resources for schools and parents and the new issues and archives of the *School Community Journal*.

http://www.hfrp.org: Resources related to family involvement (Harvard Family Research Project).

http://www.publicimpact.com: Resources related to family involvement and school turnaround.

http://www.sedl.org: Resources on connection between family engagement and student outcomes.

http://www.StudentsFirst.org: Resources about organizing grassroots education reform efforts.

Social and emotional learning is an integral part of children's development and their success in school. Educational success depends not only on academic achievement, but also on students' ability to engage respectfully and responsibly with others.
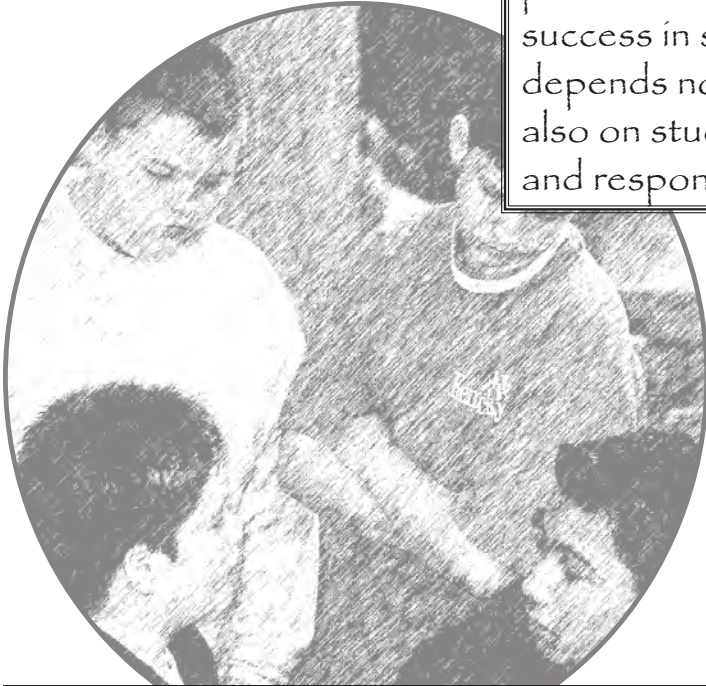
Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning:
Complementary Goals for School–Family Partnerships
Amy Mart, Linda Dusenbury, and Roger P. Weissberg

Chapter

5

Social and emotional learning is an integral part of children's development and their success in school. Educational success depends not only on academic achievement, but also on students' ability to engage respectfully and responsibly with others (Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Achieving the broad goals of education becomes easier when the focus on social, emotional, and academic learning is consistently reinforced across home and school contexts (Albright & Weissberg, 2010). The purpose of this chapter is to establish the importance of broadening the focus of school–family partnerships to explicitly address social and emotional development and to examine strategies that can support families and educators to collaboratively achieve the most powerful outcomes for students. This perspective grows from an understanding that the ultimate objective is not simply to involve families in supporting academic learning in and out of schools, but also to have schools take a more active and thoughtful role in promoting social and emotional development.

Home and school are among the most powerful environments impacting students' development. Students develop essential social, emotional, and cognitive skills as they interact with key adults in their lives. The traditional view that families are responsible for promoting social and emotional learning while schools are responsible for academic learning can lead to somewhat dichotomized roles for families and educators (Crozier, 1999). However, it has become increasingly apparent that school is also a critical context for social and emotional growth (Greenberg et al., 2003; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Zins & Elias, 2006), and home is a crucial context for fostering academic achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). With this realization, the question becomes not one of who should be responsible for which domains of development, but rather how can schools and families work together in coordinated ways to support success in all these areas.

What Is Social and Emotional Learning?

Social and emotional learning is a process for helping children—and even adults—to develop the fundamental social and emotional competencies necessary for success (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003; Elias et al., 1997). Social and emotional learning teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work effectively and ethically. These skills include knowing how to recognize and manage our emotions, develop care and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively and ethically. These skills also are the ones that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices. The basic definition of social and emotional learning revolves around five broad areas of competence:

- Self-awareness—accurately assessing one's emotions, values, strengths, and capacities.
- Self-management—managing emotions and behaviors; persevering in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward achieving personal and academic goals.
- Social awareness—showing empathy and understanding for others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences.
- Relationship skills—establishing and maintaining positive relationships based on cooperation; preventing and constructively resolving interpersonal conflict.
- Responsible decision making—making constructive choices about personal and social behavior.

Reliable science and hands-on experience have illustrated that social and emotional competencies can be taught and developed in every type of school and in students of diverse backgrounds and ages, and that academic achievement improves when social and emotional competencies are taught. A recent meta-analysis (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011) that aggregated the results of 213 experimental-control group studies of school-based social and emotional learning reported that students receiving high-quality instruction in social and emotional learning demonstrated:

- Better academic performance—achievement scores an average of 11 percentile

points higher than students who did not receive such instruction.

- Improved attitudes and behaviors—greater motivation to learn, deeper connection to school, better classroom behavior, and improved social relationships with peers.
- Fewer negative behaviors—decreased disruptive class behavior, aggression, delinquent acts, and disciplinary referrals.
- Reduced emotional distress—fewer reports of student depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal.

These findings, combined with a host of others, suggest that building social and emotional skills help students from preschool through high school to be engaged and ready to learn (Greenberg et al., 2003; Kress & Elias, 2006; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). In schools, social and emotional learning happens when educators implement strategies that create caring learning environments, explicitly teach social and emotional skills, and provide opportunities for students to use these skills throughout the school day (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003).

School–Family Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning

The idea that schools are taking a proactive role in building students' social and emotional competence is an exciting one. However, social and emotional skills cannot be taught in isolation, either at home or in school. Social and emotional competencies develop in dynamic relationship with others as they are modeled, practiced, and reinforced across contexts (Christenson & Havsy, 2004; Zins et al., 2004). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory reminds us that students' development is influenced not only by characteristics of the home,

Social and emotional competencies develop in dynamic relationship with others as they are modeled, practiced, and reinforced across contexts.

school, and community settings in which they live, but also the relationships between these settings. In their extensive work on factors that support school effectiveness, Bryk and colleagues (2009) emphasize the ways that academic and personal support for teachers interact with parent supports for learning to promote student motivation and participation. Studies suggest that students may be at greatest risk for academic failure when they experience inconsistent expectations across home and school contexts (Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1998; Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Although creating consistent expectations around academic work is clearly important, creating continuity of goals and expectations around social and emotional behaviors may be just as essential and perhaps more challenging. This may be particularly true in cases where poverty, cultural differences, and other factors create barriers to communication and shared understandings between home and school. The remainder of this chapter outlines a few basic principles that might guide educational leaders in creating the necessary conditions for educators to form true partnerships with families for social, emotional, and academic learning.

Promote a Holistic Vision and Mission

To achieve the full potential that families and schools can have when they join forces, it is necessary to broaden the schools' mission and goals and to redefine roles for families and schools. Many parents, educators, and policymakers share a common goal to promote children's social and emotional development, academic success, and readiness for the future. These complementary goals are reflected in the National Education Goals Panel's (1995) assertion that schools should "promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" and the National Conference of State Legislatures' (2002) statement that "scholastic achievement must go hand in hand with the acquisition of traits such as honesty, cooperation, fairness, respect for others, kindness, trustworthiness, the ability to resolve conflict, and the insight to understand why such traits are so important" (p. 1). Likewise, a recent survey by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) reveals that parents are eager to work together with schools to promote

whole child education aimed at supporting students' development as "resilient, adaptable, and creative" learners (McCloskey, 2011, p. 80). When schools, districts, and state education authorities formally incorporate this educational philosophy and clearly communicate a broader mission to all stakeholders, they empower families and educators to expand the focus of their work together.

Adopt SEL Programs That Incorporate a School–Family Partnership Framework

The adoption of evidence-based programs to systematically promote students' social and emotional learning at school is an important step toward pursuing this broader mission for education. In 2003, CASEL systematically reviewed 80 social and emotional learning programs and published a guide for educational leaders (available in revised form in fall 2011). This guide helps leaders to identify programs that use high-quality instructional strategies to promote social and emotional skills across settings, have documented positive effects for students, and offer professional development and technical assistance to support implementation. Recognizing the importance of school–family collaboration for social and emotional learning, CASEL also evaluated the quality of family involvement activities in these programs and found that a number of evidence-based social and emotional learning programs explicitly emphasize family engagement.

Similarly, 52 of 209 studies reviewed by Durlak and colleagues (2011) included one or more family components, and these had positive effects on students' social skills, attitudes, and school performance. Social and emotional learning programs may include newsletters that keep families up to date on the social and emotional skills that their children are learning in school or family guides that explain social and emotional learning concepts in family-friendly language. Some programs also include home activities that provide opportunities for families and students to work together on learning activities that promote social and emotional learning (Albright, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2011). With support from administrators for quality implementation, these programs can enhance students' social and emotional skills through explicit instruction

while also creating potential opportunities for social and emotional learning at home and providing shared language for students, teachers, and families (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Kam, Greenberg, & Walls, 2003).

Include Parents in Decisions About Social and Emotional Learning in Your School System

Organizing parents to be involved in decisions about social and emotional learning also demonstrates commitment to making social and emotional development a priority and serves to promote communication and involvement. Participation in making decisions about issues that impact their children is among Epstein's (1995) six types of family involvement, and it is relevant to social and emotional as well as academic learning. Giving families a voice in planning and decision making helps to ensure that leaders make good decisions, and it can enhance families' commitment to supporting new initiatives once they are adopted.

Educate Parents and Families on How to Promote Social and Emotional Development

Schools can help equip parents and other caretakers with the knowledge and skills they need to manage difficult behavior, reinforce social and emotional skills, and build positive relationships with their children in the home by providing workshops and informational sessions on topics related to social and emotional learning. Sessions might focus on understanding normal child development or approaches to promoting healthy development at home such as: establishing limits and consistent discipline, increasing use of praise, and modeling socially and emotionally competent behavior. Durlak and colleagues (2007) found that school-based parent training programs that addressed these topics had a significant effect on positive youth development. Of all the interventions they examined—which included a variety of school-, family-, and community-focused programs—parent training programs were the only category for which significant, positive impact for students was sustained over time. Although these were universal programs, made available to all families regardless of their students' previous behavior or level of risk, parent training may be especially helpful for families of students who experience difficulty managing their behavior in

school or at home.

Encourage Two-Way Communication With Families About Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

Sebring and colleagues (2006) suggest that: "(1) teachers need to be knowledgeable about student culture and the local community and draw on these in their lessons, and (2) school staff must reach out to parents and community to engage them in the processes of strengthening student learning" (p. 11). To do so, educators must regularly share information with families and create opportunities for families to communicate their insights, concerns, and hopes. This two-way communication informs and empowers families to support their children's education, and it helps teachers to better understand external factors that influence students' learning and engagement. By focusing school–family communications on social and emotional as well as academic development, educators convey respect for students' inner lives and an understanding of students as complex and multifaceted. This attention to social and affective concerns can build trust and deepen communication with families (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchell, 2009).

It is not our intention to overburden teachers with the responsibility for constant communication with families about social and emotional development. In fact, quality of school–family interactions, rather than quantity, seems to predict student achievement and behavior (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999). Brief surveys at the beginning of the year may be an efficient way for educators to learn more about students' home lives and their families' goals and concerns and to establish an emphasis on social and emotional learning. Guidance for teachers should encourage them to be flexible and creative with these communications to find what works for different families. Some families may respond to written or electronic communications. Other families may have literacy or language barriers or may not have access to a computer, so in-person modes are more effective. The following four key characteristics of effective school–family communication serve as a useful framework for supporting teachers in communicating with families about social and emotional learning (Albright,

Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2011):

- *Child-centered* communication that is highly individualized is of most interest to families (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999, 2007). While it may also be helpful to provide some general information, discussion that focuses on a child's specific strengths and struggles allows both teachers and family members to better support the child's development.

- *Constructive* communication and information is meaningful and useful because it provides families with practical suggestions. Positive language that focuses on solutions helps families remain optimistic (Ames, 1993; Christenson, Weissberg, & Klein, 2007).

- *Clear and concrete* communication is most beneficial to families in supporting children's actual learning. This is particularly important when communicating about issues of social and emotional development for which parents and families may not share a common vocabulary. Communication with families should give specific examples and clear guidelines using simple language and minimal text. Keeping this principle in mind may help minimize miscommunications resulting from differences in literacy, language, and culture.

- *Continuous* communication keeps families informed about their child's development and in sync with classroom practices and policies. Teachers should reach out to families as early as possible to establish a collaborative tone (Rubenstein, Patrikakou, Weissberg, & Armstrong, 1999) and maintain regular contact throughout the school year.

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Make Social and Emotional Learning a Focus of Student Learning Standards and Report Cards

To further contribute to clear, timely communication about social and emotional learning, educational leaders might consider incorporating social and emotional competencies into student learning standards and report cards. Learning standards provide an objective basis for discussion of students' social and emotional development, and they provide a common language for these discussions. In the absence of learning standards, teachers may have difficulty conveying their insights about a student's social and emotional development, and parents have no basis for understanding what to expect from their child at a given developmental period. Standards that outline what a child should know and be able to do in social and emotional domains provide a starting point for shared understanding of a student's strengths and challenges and a guide for collaborative work (Dusenbury, Zadrazil, Mart, & Weissberg, 2011).

When standards for social and emotional learning aligned with assessments are meaningfully reflected on "the other side of the report card," schools send a message about the importance of these competencies and provide structured opportunities for teachers, families, and students to discuss social and emotional development. Report cards are a powerful tool for communicating with families—perhaps the single most impactful tool that educators have—and often serve as the basis for parent–teacher conferences. Modifying them to reflect the complementary goals of social, emotional, and academic learning will be an important step toward promoting holistic school–family partnerships (Elias, 2009; Elias, Wang, Weissberg, Zins, & Walberg, 2002).

Summary

As evidence builds for the idea that social and emotional skills support academic learning and foster healthy outcomes in their own right, schools are beginning to focus on social and emotional learning as a means of promoting students' success. The full potential of these efforts, however, cannot be realized if schools and families continue to engage in separate, parallel efforts. Students succeed best when all the key adults in their lives work collaboratively to support them in all developmental domains. We believe that when schools and school systems make a concerted effort to act based on the principles outlined above, they are best positioned to support coordinated school–family partnerships that support social, emotional, and academic learning.

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Community schools come in all shapes and sizes. Yet, each one is designed as a center of community—a place and a set of partnerships connecting school, family, and community.
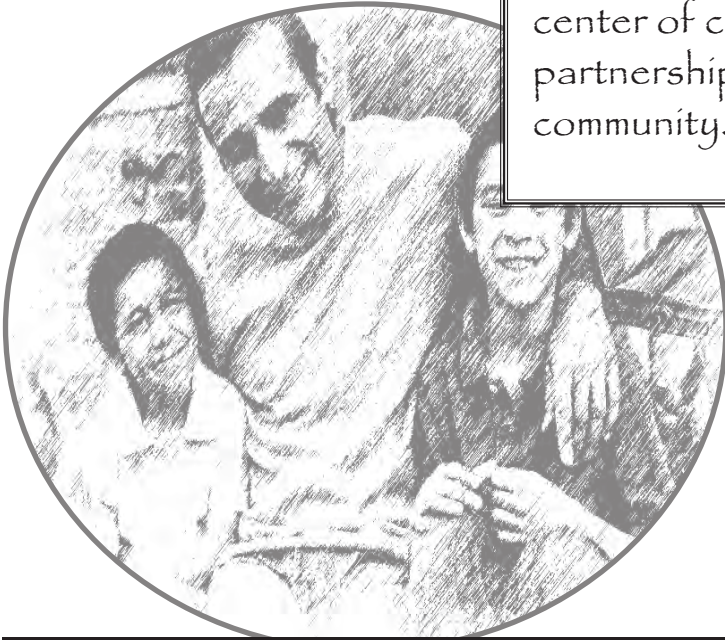
Engaging the Entire Community:
The Community Schools' Way
Marty Blank

Chapter

6

It is almost impossible to imagine that, between 2007 and 2010, a school that had experienced a dropout rate of 84% by Grade 10 became a school with a graduation rate of 82%. But that is what happened at Cincinnati's Oyler Community Learning Center, one school in a system of community schools that has helped raise that city's graduation rate from 51% in 2000 to 83% in 2009.

Since 2002, when the Cincinnati Public Schools and its public and private partners made a commitment to transform every school into a community school, Cincinnati has intentionally structured the collaborative delivery of quality learning opportunities and supports for students districtwide. Using a community schools strategy, Cincinnati has effectively brought together its school and community resources (e.g., mental health, youth development, college preparation, mentoring, tutoring, and others) to improve results for students, families, and schools.

Community schools, with their emphasis on intentional partnerships, represent the most effective approach to the kind of family and community engagement that the U.S. Department of Education envisions in its school improvement guidelines, "a community-wide assessment to identify the major factors that significantly affect the academic achievement of students in the school, including an inventory of the resources in the community and the school that could be aligned, integrated, and coordinated to address these challenges" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 39).

Over the past two decades, a growing number of localities have developed considerable knowledge about how to launch, sustain, and expand community schools. Lessons learned in Chicago, IL; Multnomah County (Portland), OR; the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania; Cincinnati, OH; Evansville, IN; New York City; Grand Rapids, MI; Lincoln, NE; South King County, WA; Hartford, CT; and other places provide a valuable road map for other school systems ready to deeply engage their communities.

The Power of Vision-Led, Results-Based Partnerships

Community schools come in all shapes and sizes. Yet each one is designed as a center of community—a place and a set of partnerships connecting school, family, and community. Community schools have a vision of students succeeding in school, graduating, and becoming productive parents, workers, and citizens. As they work toward this vision, community schools align school and community resources so that the essential conditions for learning are in place:

- Early childhood development programs nurture growth and development.
- The school offers a core instructional program delivered by qualified teachers; instruction is organized around a challenging and engaging curriculum with high standards and expectations for students.
- Students are motivated and engaged in learning—in both school and community settings—before, during, and after school and in the summer.
- The basic physical, mental, and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed.
- Parents, families, and school staff demonstrate mutual respect and engage in effective collaboration.
- Community engagement, together with school efforts, promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful, and that connects students to a broader learning community.

Public schools cannot create all of these conditions alone. But experience shows that vision-driven, results-based partnerships can. Such partnerships build relationships among schools and other sectors of the community with a vested interest in the well-being of children and families. Local government, community-based youth development organizations, business, higher education, health and social service agencies, neighborhood groups, civic and faith-based organizations, families, and residents are all involved.

Individual community schools typically have a site team that brings together the principal, teachers, and other school staff with families, residents, and community partners to guide their joint work. A community school coordinator, employed by a lead partner agency or the school, mobilizes community partners and integrates their work into the life of the school.

Vision-driven, results-based partnerships are by definition collaborative. Partners agree to share ownership and accountability for results; they work together to leverage and coordinate existing resources. A recent Coalition for Community Schools study shows that every dollar spent by a school system to implement a community schools strategy leverages at least three dollars in federal, state, and local funds and philanthropic and community partner resources (Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, & Pearson, 2010). These funds increase the learning opportunities and support services available to ensure that children are ready to learn; to master academic skills and social, emotional, and physical competencies; and to develop a sense of connectedness to their school and community. With more resources available and a clear focus on the conditions for learning and long-term results, community schools offer advantages that stand-alone schools simply cannot. They:

- Provide learning opportunities that develop both academic and nonacademic competencies;
- Build social capital—social networks and relationships support learning and create opportunities for young people while strengthening their communities (for a description of social capital in the community school, see Kirp, 2011); and
- Garner additional resources to ensure that students are ready and able to learn every day and that allow school staff to focus on meeting teaching and learning goals (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003).

The Challenge: Growing Schools into Systems

Thousands of schools across the country already offer some variant of a community

> Vision-driven, results-based partnerships are collaborative by definition. Partners agree to share ownership and accountability for results; they work together to leverage and coordinate existing resources.

school strategy to better meet child and family needs—and they are making a difference in a wide range of indicators that lead to school success, including academics, attendance, and family participation. In order to wrap their arms around all their children, however, schools and communities need to expand, deepen, and sustain a scaled-up system of community schools.

Scaling up community schools is no pipe dream. Local initiatives are meeting the challenge and making it happen, and the readiness of schools and community partners to build a sustainable and coordinated system of community schools has never been greater. Why? First, school districts, community leaders, and parents see the measurable improvements for children and families that community schools make, and they want to replicate their success.

Second, in an era of shrinking budgets, schools and community partners recognize that a collaborative community school strategy offers a cost-effective way to organize fragmented community services and meet their respective institutional goals. Community schools also are proving to be a powerful response to the growing diversity in our country. Finally, the community schools strategy provides a much-needed vehicle for realizing the Department of Education's goal of greater family and community engagement.

The Coalition for Community Schools has incorporated the system-building experiences of varied communities in its guide: *Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy* (www.communityschools.org/scalingup). The following lessons, gleaned from the guide, are at the heart of successful efforts to develop effective systems of community schools.

Lesson #1:

There are multiple ways to launch a community schools agenda district-wide. A community schools strategy is flexible and adapts to each community's local context, needs, resources, and leadership. Sometimes a school district—but often a United Way, a county or city, a nonprofit agency, or a higher education institution—steps up to create an opportunity for collaboration and provides an anchor presence in a set of schools.

Often, a local community school serves as a template for expansion.

Lesson #2

Experienced initiatives all develop a collaborative leadership structure that reflects their community and that shares ownership and executes essential system-building functions. Figure 1 graphically outlines the core elements of such a structure. Community-wide leaders provide vision, policy, and resource support; school site leaders and community partners focus on planning and implementation. They work together with an intermediary organization that assists the initiative in planning, coordination, and management—to carry out seven key functions:

- **A Results-Based Vision** to fuel the initiative and motivate scale-up efforts.
- **Data and Evaluation** to track key indicators of student progress (e.g., attendance, health, family engagement, and achievement) and collect data on community assets to support the school's mission.
- **Finance and Resource Development** to ensure that existing school and community resources are identified, coordinated, and used to leverage new dollars, fund continuous improvements, and sustain expansion.
- **Alignment and Integration** to ensure that the school and its community partners are lined up and heading in the same direction at the community and at the school site level.
- **Supportive Policy** to ensure that the policies of school districts and partner agencies support community schools and that community leadership responds to school site needs.
- **Professional Development and Technical Assistance (TA)** to embed a community school culture within everyone working with students and in the larger community by transmitting values and attitudes, assumptions, and expectations consistent with a community schools vision.
- **Broad Community Engagement** to create the political will to fund and sustain scale-up by developing a broad-based commitment to community schools and ensuring that youth, families, and residents are fully heard.

Lesson #3

Building capacity in each functional area is not a step-by-step, linear procedure. Community-wide, school site, and intermediary leaders must work in multiple functional areas at the same time. Figure 2 outlines a set of stages and milestones that community schools' partners must work through—and revisit to further improve and expand their system. The *Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships Guide* includes specific indicators to measure whether milestones have been met. This sequence can help community leaders see where they are beginning and where they need to go.

Lesson #4

The effectiveness of a community schools strategy is based on a culture that builds collective trust and promotes a set of core principles. Key principles that factor into student success include high expectations for schools, families, and students; reliance on family and community strengths; and the development of the whole child. Continuous effort to build capacity in each functional area develops what research and experience suggest are the characteristics of an effectively scaled-up system. Such a system:

- **Shares ownership.** Partners engage in collaborative decision making and take ownership of their efforts to help all students succeed; they develop a balance of power and equal voice.
- **Spreads community school practice** throughout a community's educational pathways, from early childhood programs to higher education and career training, in the district office, schools, and across partner agencies.

> The effectiveness of a community schools strategy is based on a culture that builds collective trust and promotes a set of core principles.

- **Deepens understanding of community school principles**. Professional development and partner relationships alter attitudes, behaviors, assumptions, and expectations about teaching, learning, and child and youth development practices.

- **Sustains itself and continually improves** by measuring progress against clear benchmarks, developing the ability to finance community schools, and capturing the political support of the community—parents, residents, and policymakers.

Lesson #5

A successful community school initiative includes two kinds of results. As Figure 3 illustrates, a vision-driven, results-based leadership structure has the capacity in key functions to produce: (1) a scaled-up system of community schools characterized by shared ownership, spread, depth, and sustainability (adapted from Coburn, 2003) and (2) improvements in the lives of expanded numbers of children, families, and communities. Both sets of results are mutually reinforcing—a growing and more effective system serves more children, schools, and families and produces more positive results; in turn, these results help create the political will for further expansion, sustainability, and even greater results over the long term. Figure 4 shows the kinds of results that community schools seek.

These lessons and the vision of community schools underscore a fundamental, yet too-often-forgotten, premise of American life: that our schools and communities are inextricably connected, and that strengthening one is essential to strengthening the other.

Schools often struggle to find a way to effectively engage families and communities to improve results. Community schools around the country have served as the vehicle to ensure that communities are engaged with and support their most vital asset, their public schools.

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Figure 1: A Collaborative Leadership Structure for Community Schools

A Collaborative Leadership Structure for Community Schools

COMMUNITY-WIDE LEADERSHIP
Key Roles: Vision, Policy, Resource Alignment

SCHOOL-SITE LEADERSHIP
Key Roles: Planning and Implementation

INTERMEDIARY LEADERSHIP
Key Roles: Planning, Coordination, and Management

Key System Functions
- Results-Based Vision
- Data and Evaluation
- Finance and Resource Development
- Alignment and Integration
- Supportive Policy and Practice
- Professional Development and Technical Assistance
- Community Engagement

COMMUNICATION & ALIGNMENT

Community and Faith-Based Agencies
Students, Families, and Residents
Public Agencies and Local Government
Philanthropies and Businesses
Unions
Nonprofit Organizations
Higher Education
School Districts
Principal
Site Coordinator
Teachers and School Staff
Students, Families and Residents
Community Partners
Lead Agency

Figure 2: A Process for Building a Scaled Up System
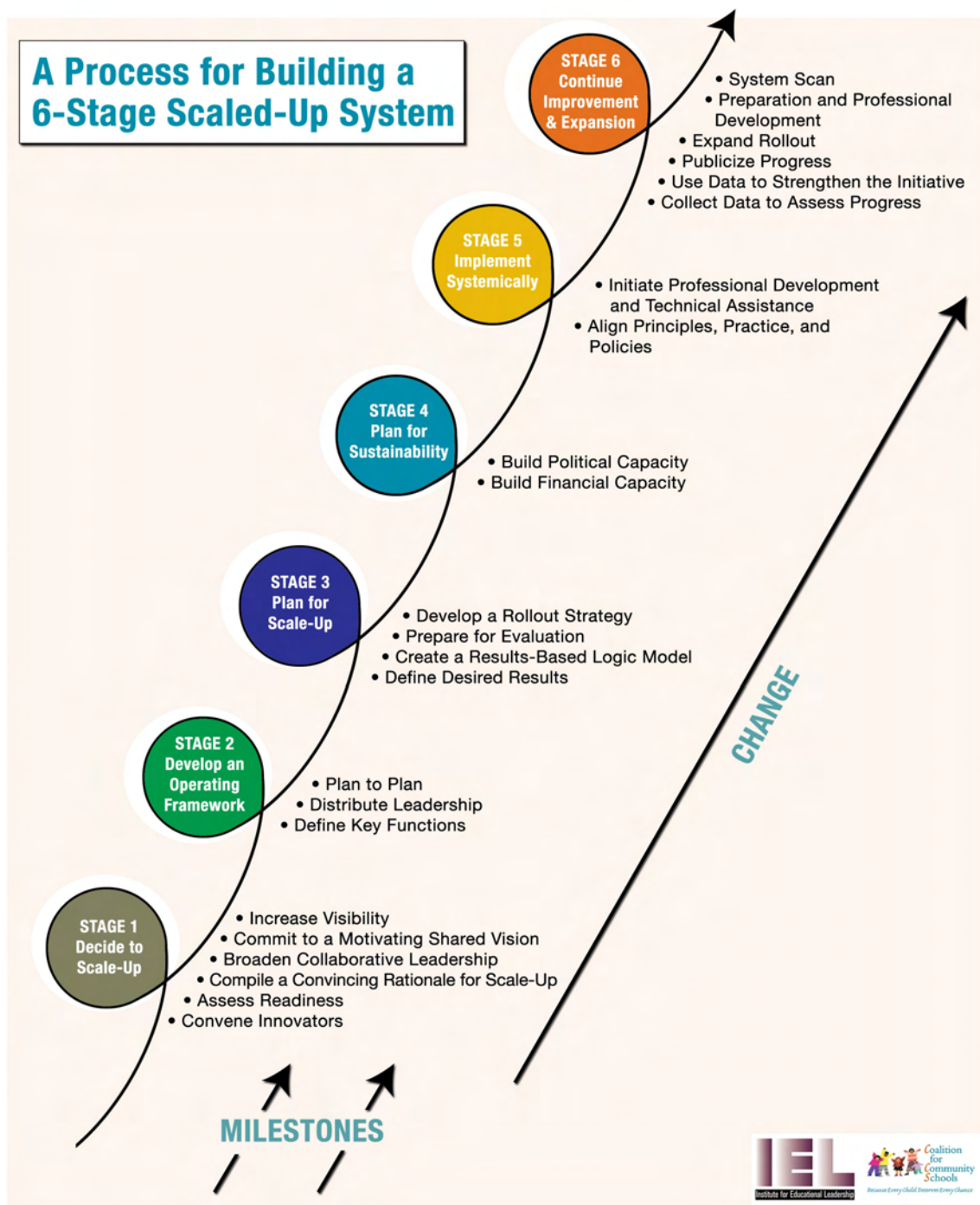
Figure 3: Building a Scaled Up System

Building a Scaled-Up System

Collaborative Leadership Structure

COMMUNITY-WIDE LEADERSHIP
Key Roles: Vision, Policy, Resource Alignment

SCHOOL-SITE LEADERSHIP
Key Roles: Planning and Implementation

INTERMEDIARY LEADERSHIP
Key Roles: Planning, Coordination, and Management

KEY SYSTEM FUNCTIONS
- Results-Based Vision
- Data and Evaluation
- Finance and Resource Development
- Alignment and Integration
- Supportive Policy and Practice
- Professional Development and Technical Assistance
- Community Engagement

COMMUNICATION & ALIGNMENT

Shared Vision

Results

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SCALED-UP COMMUNITY SCHOOL SYSTEM
- Shared Ownership
- Spread
- Depth
- Sustainability

RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY
- Children are ready to enter school
- Students attend school consistently
- Students are actively involved in learning and their community
- Families are increasingly involved in their children's education
- Schools are engaged with families and communities
- Students succeed academically
- Students are healthy: physically, socially, and emotionally
- Students live and learn in a safe, supportive, and stable environment
- Communities are desirable places to live
- Students graduate ready for college, careers, and citizenship

Figure 4: Community Schools Results and Indicators

Results	Indicators That Align With Each Result	
Children are ready to enter school	• Immunizations • More children with health insurance[1] • Children in expected height and weight range for their age • Availability of early childhood education programs	• Attendance at early childhood education programs • Parents read to children • Vision, hearing, and dental status
Students succeed academically	• Reading on grade level by third grade • Daily attendance • Early chronic absenteeism • Tardiness • Truancy	• Standardized test scores • Teachers support students • Grades • Graduation rates • Dropout rates
Students are actively involved in learning and their community	• Students feel they belong in school • Availability of in-school and after-school programs • Students feel competent • Schools are open to community	• Attendance at in- and after-school programs • Partnerships for service learning in the school/community • Post-secondary plans
Students are healthy: physically, socially and emotionally	• Asthma control • Vision, hearing, and dental status • Physical fitness	• Nutritional habits • Positive adult relationships • Positive peer relationships
Students live and learn in stable and supportive environments	• Students, staff, and families feel safe in school • Families provide basic needs	• Incidents of bullying • Reports of violence or weapons
Families are actively involved in their children's education	• Families support students' education at home • Family attendance at school-wide events and parent-teacher conferences • Family experiences with school-wide events and classes	• Family participation in school decision-making • Trust between faculty and families • Teacher attendance and turnover • Faculty believe they are an effective and competent team • Community-school partnerships
Communities are desirable places to live	• Employment and employability of residents and families served by the school • Student and families with health insurance	• Community mobility and stability • Juvenile crime

From: Institute for Educational Leadership and Coalition for Community Schools

[1] Schorr, L. B., & Marchand, V. (2007). *Pathway to children ready for school and succeeding at third grade*. Cambridge, MA: Pathways Mapping Initiative. Retrieved from http://www.cssp.org/publications/pathways-to-outcomes/3rd-grade-pathway-pdf-9-07.pdf

Part II:

Families and Learning

Aspiration and Expectation:
Providing Pathways to Tomorrow

Topic 1

William Jeynes

One of the most important developments in recent parental involvement research is the discovery that some of the most puissant components of parental involvement are the most subtle (e.g., high expectations, loving and effective communication, and parental style). In a series of three meta-analyses (Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007), the subtle aspects of parental engagement were shown to be generally more salient than overt expressions of this involvement (e.g., checking homework, establishing household rules, and parental participation in school activities). A meta-analysis statistically combines all the relevant existing studies on a given subject in order to determine the aggregated results of said research. In those same meta-analyses, among all the subtle and overt expressions of family participation, parental expectations emerged as having the strongest relationship with student academic outcomes (Jeynes, 2010). Parental expectations may be defined as the degree to which a student's parents believe that their child has great promise of achieving at high levels. In these meta-analyses, students whose parents had high expectations possessed academic outcomes the equivalent of more than half a grade point higher than their counterparts whose parents did not have high expectations of them. These results hold across children of all major racial backgrounds (Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007).

It is important to note that the high expectations that were associated with elevated levels of academic achievement were not those of an authoritarian nature in which a father or mother bellowed, "You *will* go to Harvard or Princeton" (Hoge, Smit, & Crist, 1997). Rather, these expectations are often more unspoken than they are spoken (Jeynes, 2010; Lee, 2010; Taylor, 2002). It is a general understanding that is a product of a potent work ethic, a strong faith regarding the future, and a pleasantly steadfast spirit (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010; Zhan, 2006). It is clear from myriad studies that a parent can do more damage by aiming disparaging remarks toward children than one can ever neutralize by the limited redemptive actions of attending a few school functions. Such remarks as "you're so stupid" can be so trenchant and caustic as to emasculate boys and demoralize girls (Hoge, Smit, & Crist, 1997; Lee, 2010).

Thus, it is not particular actions like attending school functions, establishing household rules, and checking student homework that tend to be associated with the greatest advancements in academic

achievement. Rather, types of parental engagement that yield a general atmosphere of involvement produce the strongest results. Other aspects of parental involvement, such as maintaining loving and open lines of communication between parents and their children, as well as having a parental style that is both supportive and provides structure, also yield a household ambiance of high expectations (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010; Zhan, 2006). These types of family engagement produce an educationally oriented environment, which establishes an understanding of a certain level of support and standards in the child's mind.

It is encouraging that the above findings highlight the prominence of parental expectations expressed. The reason for this is twofold. First, some mothers and fathers likely influence their children's educational achievements to a greater degree than these parents realize. Through their expectations for success and parenting style, they establish an atmosphere conducive to strong achievement. Second, to those parents who inquire about how to become more engaged in their children's schooling, the answer may be easier than teachers commonly believe.

There is little question that the body of research on parental involvement and expectations has become considerably more sophisticated in the last 10 years than it was during the 1980s and 1990s. The question arises, however, of what actions State Educational Agencies (SEAs), Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), and schools can take to encourage high levels of parental expectations and aspirations. There are a variety of actions that SEAs can take to encourage mothers and fathers to raise their expectations of their children in school. LEAs can also take actions that can work concurrently with those initiated by states to ameliorate student scholastic

> It is important to note that the high expectations that were associated with elevated levels of academic achievement were not those of an authoritarian nature in which a father or mother bellowed, "You will go to Harvard or Princeton."

outcomes. And myriad educators have asserted that the closer one gets to the school level, the more efficacious reforms tend to be (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Myriad studies now confirm that high parental expectations of their children as expressed in their behavior, attitudes, and communication are associated with higher scholastic outcomes among children in school. To the degree that educators foster these expectations, American children can flourish.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Produce books on parental involvement and high expectations that are addressed to both parents and teachers designed to help them raise family aspirations.
2. Recommend a broader list of books on parental involvement and expectations that teachers can read to better familiarize themselves with the topic.
3. Pass legislation that would allow those about to be married to get their marriage license fees waived if they take a series of parenting classes either from a member of the clergy or a licensed family counselor.
4. Enlist the cooperation of community centers, houses of worship, and women's clubs to offer parenting courses helping families raise their expectations and becoming more communicative and supportive in their interactions with their children.

Local Education Agency

1. Send parents and students from the district to share at schools—before other parents and students—the benefits of having high expectations and aspirations.
2. Initiate district-based parenting classes.
3. Hire counselors that can periodically meet with parents and children (if necessary) to help parents (and students) improve their communication and support skills (these would be distinct from guidance counselors who are designed to mostly help with student-based academic issues).
4. Enlist the cooperation of community centers, houses of worship, and women's clubs to offer parenting courses helping families

raise their expectations and becoming more communicative and supportive in their interactions with their children.

School

1. Initiate school-based parenting classes that will teach parents how to: (a) raise expectations of their children, and (b) speak and act in a way that is supportive of their children and their accomplishments.

2. Train teachers and administrators to become more familiar with the research on parental involvement, so that they become aware of the most important components of parental involvement.

3. Encourage teachers to raise expectations of students and take great interest in them; to the degree that teachers raise their expectations of students and take an interest in them, parents will be more likely to be inspired to do the same.

4. Encourage guidance counselors to encourage students to take a higher percentage of advanced placement courses (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Jeynes, 2010).

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Jessica

William Jeynes

Jessica took a bite into her meatball sandwich and watched as one of the meatballs fell to the ground. The scene rekindled memories of the lunches she had with her mom, in Jessica's school years, well before her current term in medical school. Jessica reflected about the last time she had a meatball fall to the floor, when her mom quickly took one of the meatballs from her own sandwich and replaced the missing one in Jessica's sandwich. "Your job is just to find out what your purpose is in life, Jessica, and I'll be behind you 110% in whatever you undertake," her mom used to say. Jessica had just received a B+ in her science class, and she was nervous about how her mom would react. But her mom simply asked, "Did you try your best? You know that's all I ask." "Well, almost," Jessica replied. "The class is really boring."
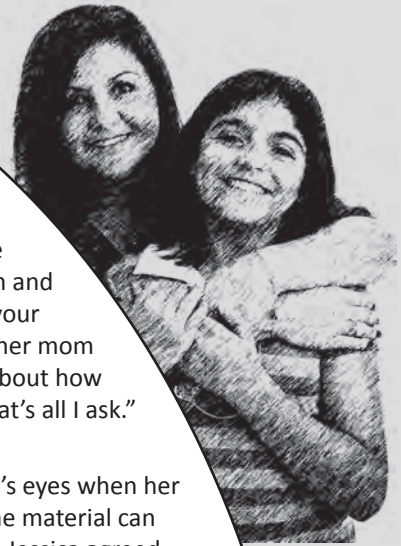
Jessica recalled well the combination of love and firmness that emanated from her mom's eyes when her mom said these words. "I love you, precious, and I understand and remember well that some material can be boring. But do you remember the key I shared with you to overcoming even then?" "I do," Jessica agreed, nodding as she did so. "I need to remember my purpose in life and all the people I will help when some day I become a doctor or a nurse." An "ultra-bright" smile beamed across of the face of Jessica's mom. "There you have it! The essence of what you're going to be doing is loving people, helping them. In the end, it's not about the books. It's about your purpose in life and the people you will help by studying those books. You'll help make our world a better place, a more caring place. And, precious, don't you know our world needs people like you. Do you think you can do better next time?" Jessica smiled enthusiastically and wiped a tear from the corner of her eye. The laugh lines around her eyes crinkled around more noticeably than in most her age. "I'm here for a reason, momma. Thank you for reminding me. I think I can do better next time, if I just remember that. Thanks for being there for me and teaching me." The brilliant smile on Jessica's mom's face did not subside, "It's my joy. I always enjoyed teaching you, not only about subject matter, but also about life. You have no idea what joy you bring to my life. And it's not just when you get As, it's because you are you."

Jessica's mom continued, "I'm really sorry, Jessica, but I won't be able to make the parent-teacher conference tonight. As you know, I have to work." Jessica licked some extra meatball sauce that was about to drip and gazed in her mom's warm brown eyes. Jessica's laugh lines crinkled again. "I would much rather have a mom and dad who each work 60 hours, and miss a conference, so I could go to medical or nursing school than…well, you know what I mean." Jessica's mom squeezed Jessica's left hand. "I love you, sweetheart. I did call the teacher and asked her if she could meet me at an alternative time, but I'm not sure if she is excited about meeting me so late." Jessica's memory returned to the present and the sandwich that was before her. How amazing it is that a dropped meatball could stir up such intimate memories. During her childhood, Jessica knew that she was interested in going into the medical field, becoming either a doctor or a nurse. But as Jessica pensively recalled the dedication of her parents, she realized that becoming a doctor was almost inevitable.

To the reader who peruses this account, it is patent that Jessica's mother was highly involved in educating and supporting her children. Most teachers, however, are not going to be privy to a child's home situation. Instead these instructors will notice the parent-teacher nights that go unattended, the school plays with absent family members, and the phone calls home that are met with electronic recorded messages. Based on this overt evidence, myriad educators will conclude that parents like Jessica's mother are detached from the educational aspirations and personal experiences of their children. Nevertheless, it is clear that Jessica's mother was very involved in her daughter's education and development. Her mother's engagement was more subtle, at least from the school's perspective, and involved having high expectations of her daughter, having open and supportive communication with her, and having a parental style that maintained a balance between love and structure. These are precisely the same qualities that various meta-analyses on parental involvement indicate are among the most salient components of parental participation in their children's schooling. The dropped meatball also stimulated Jessica's memories of her mother's sacrificial nature, and this quality clearly had deeply touched Jessica. Many parents of color or low socioeconomic status, as well those of a variety of other situations, are just like Jessica's mother. It is important for teachers to be aware of the participation of these parents, so that they can build on these parents' strengths and help maximize the efficacy of their involvement.

Self-Efficacy: Up to the Challenge

Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey

Self-efficacy is central to understanding how individuals make decisions about the kinds of activities they will undertake in various domains of their lives. For parents, decisions about the activities they will engage in supporting their students' school learning are among the most important that they make. This is because considerable research has suggested that parents' active support of student school learning plays a causal role in their students' educational success, from early childhood through the secondary school years. Because parents' contributions to students' education are so often a critical component of their learning success—and because these contributions are grounded in large part in their self-efficacy for involvement—students, teachers, schools, and communities have much to gain from informed and active school support of parent and family self-efficacy for involvement.

A quick review of research on parental involvement suggests multiple benefits of family members' active engagement in student learning. These include positive and improved student performance on summary indicators of achievement (e.g., teacher ratings of student success, student grades, student performance on achievement tests, and on-time high school graduation: e.g., Barnard, 2004; Clark, 1983; Fan & Chen, 1999; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hill & Craft, 2003; Jeynes, 2003, 2007; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008), as well as the development of learning skills and attributes often critically important for school success. Across varied groups—including students at risk of poor school outcomes—these include students' beliefs about the importance of school learning, students' active engagement in learning processes, and students' knowledge and use of effective learning behaviors (e.g., Fantuzzo, Davis, & Ginsberg, 1995; Grolnick, Kurowski, Dunlap, & Heavy, 2000; Shumow, 1998), as well as their knowledge and use of self-regulatory skills during learning activities (e.g., Xu & Corno, 2003) and sense of personal competence and self-efficacy for learning (e.g., Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Frome & Eccles, 1998; Sanders, 1998). Clear benefits to student learning such as these suggest strongly that teachers', schools', and communities' success in educating students is likely to benefit markedly from understanding how to support parents' self-efficacy for involvement and their effective engagement in supporting student learning.

Bandura's (1986, 1997) considerable theoretical work and research has suggested that two personal beliefs are central to individuals' self-efficacy beliefs, and thus to their decisions about the activities they will undertake in varied domains of responsibility and functioning. The first is the belief that one has some reasonable personal control over decisions about the activities he or she will undertake. The other is the belief that one will be successful to at least some extent in those activities. The first belief incorporates the idea that individuals generally want some voice or "say" in the activities they undertake. The second suggests that individuals generally choose to engage in activities if and as they believe that their actions will indeed contribute to important outcomes. Applied specifically to the issue of parents' decision-making about active engagement in students' school learning, these two principles suggest that parents are most likely to be motivated for involvement when they believe that they have some degree of control and influence over their children's learning, as well as the kinds of activities they may choose in supporting that learning. They suggest further that parents will engage in these activities when they believe that the activities will indeed "make a difference" in their students' learning.

These two conditions are generally best met when parents' voices, ideas, and questions are sought and heard in the context of collaborative interactions between family and school regarding individual, interactive, and mutual contributions to students' successful learning. Because notable power differentials often pertain between schools and families—especially in schools serving families whose education, income, and other resources are "less" than those of the schools' teachers and administrators—it is often critically important that schools

> ...parents are most likely to be motivated for involvement when they believe that they have some degree of control and influence over their children's learning...

reach out to parents proactively and work to develop consistent, respectful, and effective patterns of interaction and partnerships (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007).

The power of self-efficacy to motivate parents' active engagement in their students' schooling has been underscored by several researchers (e.g., Dauber & Epstein, 1991; Deslandes, Royer, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). For example, parents with relatively strong self-efficacy for involvement are more likely than their lower efficacy counterparts to support their students' learning at home (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Grolnick et al., 1997; Sheldon, 2002), to support students' self-management skills related to learning activities (Bandura et al., 1996), and to monitor and guide their students' school progress (Grolnick et al., 1997; Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Parents' self-efficacy for involvement has also been related to other domains of parental functioning linked to stronger student learning, including parents' aspirations and expectations for their students' school success, parents' commitment to their goals for students' learning, and the levels of motivation and perseverance parents bring to involvement when difficulties emerge (Bandura et al., 1996). Bandura emphasized further that parents' self-efficacy beliefs also influence the quality of their thinking about problems in their children's schooling, as well as their attributions about the causes of their children's school successes and failures. Overall, the stronger and more positive parents' self-efficacy beliefs are for helping their students learn, the stronger and more effective their involvement activities and their ability to engage in effective problem-solving efforts with teachers and others will be.

Because self-efficacy beliefs are often so central to parents' involvement and success in supporting multiple aspects of their students' learning, it is very important that schools and communities understand the actions they may engage in to: (a) support the development of strong self-efficacy beliefs among students' parents, and (b) gain the student learning benefits of parents' active involvement. Bandura's (e.g., 1997) and

others' (e.g., Schunk, 1989) research has underscored the critical roles of four specific factors in the development of positive self-efficacy beliefs. The first and most important is *personal experience of success in the given domain*. When parents experience such success in helping their students learn, they receive support for believing that they are capable of influencing their students' learning. As they gain more experience and success, they become increasingly likely to believe that their continued and ongoing efforts will help their students succeed. The second factor is *parents' vicarious experience of success related to involvement*. This factor functions when parents observe others (especially those who are similar to themselves in some important ways) behaving and succeeding in involvement activities. When parents observe similar others' involvement and success, they are more likely to believe that they, too, may be able to engage in such actions with similar success. The third factor supporting self-efficacy development is *verbal encouragement and persuasion from important others*. This is often most effective when the others offering encouragement and persuasion are perceived by the parent as similar to oneself and when the behaviors and activities being encouraged are perceived by the parent as personally manageable in the context of his or her own life. When such conditions pertain, parents become more likely to believe—and act on the belief—that they, too, can successfully engage in the behaviors being encouraged. The fourth and final factor motivating the development of self-efficacy is *personal emotional arousal*. In the context of family support for student learning, this emotional arousal is most often grounded in parents' concerns, hopes, and expectations for their students' educational success. When these emotions are aroused and active—especially when important others are present to encourage parents' actions grounded in those emotions—the parent is more likely to become and continue to be actively engaged in supporting students' learning.

What does this considerable body of theory and research suggest about ways in which school systems—those in State Education Agencies (SEAs), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and local schools—might use the information to support increasingly effective parental and family engagement in students' school learning?

Action principles grounded in this work are suggested below.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Make and act on a public commitment—of intellect, time, and resources—to equip school administrators, teachers, and support staff for effective collaborative work with students' families. If schools across a state are to realize the many student learning benefits associated with effective parental involvement, knowledgeable statewide leadership in the effort—and clear articulation of its importance—are likely to be critical elements of its success.

2. Take steps to ensure that basic knowledge of families' roles in students' learning—and schools' roles in supporting parents' self-efficacy for involvement—is an essential component of all educators' professional preparation in the state. Target areas should include pre-service teacher education, school administrators' pre-service education, and ongoing in-service and professional training opportunities for all school personnel. These opportunities should focus on: (a) the importance of parental involvement and its contributions to students' school success; (b) the role of self-efficacy in parents' decisions about involvement in their students' education; (c) the role of teachers' self-efficacy for supporting parental involvement; and (d) the critical role of effective family–school relationships in supporting parents' self-efficacy and their involvement in students' learning. Particularly when working to develop principal leadership in this area, draw on the skills and experiences of principals who have already developed commitment and expertise in family involvement. Engage these principal leaders—at the SEA and LEA levels—in building principals' self-efficacy for leading their schools' work with students' families.

3. Build SEA, LEA, and school principals' understanding that schools and teachers can best offer effective support for families' involvement roles and activities when schools develop effective, mutually

respectful, "two-way" interactive relationships with families. Address this goal in part through well-informed and thoughtful discussion among SEA, LEA, and school leaders focused on relevant theory, research, and practice, working toward common understanding of the value of school support for parents' self-efficacy as a means to enhancing effective family support for student learning. (Note that participants' discussion of and agreement on plans, goals, roles, and responsibilities in support of parents' self-efficacy for involvement is often related to the success of those efforts [e.g., Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Wheelan, 1994]).

4. Request regular information (from school personnel and school families) regarding specific steps LEAs and individual schools within districts are taking to support parents' self-efficacy for involvement and their involvement efforts. Monitor and respond to ideas and issues noted in the reports as submitted, offering: (a) specific commendations for (and sharing of) successes, as well as (b) responses and suggestions pertinent to specific issues noted in LEA and individual school reports.

Local Education Agency

1. LEAs should offer strong explicit support for the development of school administrators', teachers', and other school staff members' knowledge of: parental involvement's role in supporting student learning; teachers' roles in supporting parents' self-efficacy for involvement; and participants' skills in and commitment to supporting parents' self-efficacy for involvement. Across these efforts, attention should be paid to the essential roles of participants': (a) beliefs about personal control and choice regarding what they do (and how they do it) in supporting parents' self-efficacy and (b) beliefs about the likely effectiveness of their efforts (e.g., "Will my efforts in fact influence teachers' self-efficacy for involving parents—and thus parents' self-efficacy for supporting student learning?").

2. Focus LEA discussions on strategies for developing administrators' and teachers' self-efficacy for building: (a) interactive and respectful relationships with students' parents, and (b) parents' self-efficacy for involvement. This principle applies much of the theory and research noted earlier to a task often overlooked in practice (the development of principal and teacher self-efficacy for involving parents). Discussions incorporating key LEA personnel and principal leaders should include meaningful engagement with specific sources of information on self-efficacy, as well as opportunities to share experiences of success in school–family interactions and support for parental involvement. This sharing should be used as foundation in brainstorming effective approaches for increasing principals' and teachers' self-efficacy for supporting parents' involvement.

3. Develop strong LEA and strong school-level (principal, teachers, other staff) understanding of four principles central to school members' effectiveness in supporting parents' self-efficacy for involvement: (a) parents' self-efficacy for involvement supports parents' decisions to become involved; (b) school and teacher support for parents' self-efficacy enhances parents' involvement and effectiveness; (c) effective parental involvement supports students' learning; and (d) there are many different ways in which families may be effectively involved in supporting their students' school success. Developing these understandings is often best served when principals and teachers commit to reading, discussing, and applying relevant information from a sample of strong, focused, and readily informative sources related to the principles.

4. School-based efforts (supported by the LEA) to enhance parents' self-efficacy for involvement are most likely to be effective when: (a) the efforts are well-led (e.g., the leader—the principal or other source familiar with the school and respected by school personnel—is knowledgeable, draws out, and values individual responses and group discussion); and (b) leaders use individual

contributions and group discussion to guide group development of goals and plans for subsequent implementation. The development of broad agreement among participants (regarding plans and responsibilities for supporting parents' self-efficacy) is often key to group and individual success in working to achieve identified goals.

School

1. Teachers play a critical role in building parents' sense of self-efficacy for support of students' learning. Teachers' active engagement in this effort is often essential to a school's ability to gain the benefits of parents' effective involvement. While parental involvement is often given a positive nod during discussion of student learning, support for parental involvement is not always a central tenet of schools' commitment to students' learning success. (This may be especially true when schools serve families where parents did not experience success during their own schooling, or where parents have had very little or no schooling, as is often the case for many immigrant and refugee families.) Effective school leadership in developing teachers' capacities for supporting parental self-efficacy is often critical to schools' collective efforts to increase student learning and achievement.

2. Active principal support is often very important to teachers' development of personal self-efficacy for involving parents. It is also often essential to teachers' commitment to gaining the knowledge necessary for supporting parents' self-efficacy. Principals—and a school's teacher-leaders—often play critical roles in collective school efforts: to examine why and how parents' involvement supports student learning; to identify teachers' skills for working effectively with parents; and to develop needed additional supports for teachers' self-efficacy in involving parents.

3. Principal and teacher leadership is also often central to the success of group work to develop strategies for engaging parents in effective support of student learning. When a principal and respected teacher-colleagues lead these efforts, participants receive notable information about the importance of the effort for the school as a whole. Meeting in group sessions can offer notable support for participants' knowledge and understanding of parental involvement as well as its importance for student learning. Such group sessions are often most valuable when participants share prior experiences of success in supporting parents' involvement and when leaders engage the group in problem-solving regarding the difficult issues that may emerge in working with students' families. Keys to the success of such sessions often include: (a) helping all participants understand that they have options in the specific approaches they take to work effectively in support of parents' sense of efficacy for involvement (control beliefs), and (b) sharing individual experiences and developing collective knowledge as well as individual belief that the actions group members take to support parents' involvement can—and often will—be effective in supporting parents' sense of efficacy for helping their students learn (i.e., teacher efforts can and often will "make a difference"; see, for example, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001).

4. School principals are also well advised to include family involvement—and schoolwide efforts to support parents' sense of efficacy for involvement—as a regular item for discussion in schoolwide as well as departmental or area meetings for faculty. Treating parental involvement and teachers' efforts to support parents' efficacy for involvement as a normal topic for regular faculty discussion has two major consequences: it enhances the schoolwide salience of the effort, and it offers participants regular opportunities to access the four sources of personal efficacy. Thus, participants are likely to have and observe opportunities for sharing personal experiences of success in the area: observing and receiving the benefits of vicarious experience reported by others; hearing and receiving verbal persuasion regarding the importance of efforts in the area; and experience emotional arousal in relation to the school's goal of enhanced student learning.

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Curriculum of the Home

Herbert J. Walberg

Of the economically advanced countries, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea took the first three places in advanced mathematics performance by 15-year-olds. Twenty-four percent of the students in these countries (on average) were advanced, in contrast to only 6% in the United States (Hanushek, Peterson, & Woessmann, 2011). East Asian countries have long done well on international comparisons in mathematics and science, and their economies have grown as much as three times the rate of Western countries. Despite potential socioeconomic and language handicaps, the children of East Asian immigrants to the U.S. also have excelled.

One plausible and evidenced-based explanation of stereotypical East Asian superior performance is the stimulating quality of the home environment. Walberg (2011) refers to the evidence of the benefits of educators encouraging parents to academically enrich the 92% of time that students spend outside school in the first 18 years of life (see also Redding, 2000 for practical principles and activities).

Even so, few non-Asian American parents, mothers in particular, rise to the heights of "tiger mothering" as described by Amy Chua (2011)—daughter of Chinese immigrants, mother of two daughters, cum laude graduate of Harvard Law School, author of two award-winning bestsellers, and chaired professor of law at Yale University. Despite the immense efforts of American assimilation, writing books, and becoming a chaired professor at an Ivy League university, Chua enforced with iron will strict discipline on her two daughters. They were allowed no playmates. They were not allowed to be in a school play nor to complain about not being in a school play. Each daughter had to be the number one student in every subject except gym and drama. Because she spoke a lesser dialect, Chua hired an elegant speaker of the preferred Mandarin to tutor her daughters. They were not allowed to play a musical instrument other than piano or violin. She forbade sports and other extracurricular activities.

Though a half-hour of study per day outside of school might be acceptable to many American educators and parents, Chua required three hours of her daughters. After that was music practice, up to six hours without dinner or a bathroom break on one occasion, for daughter Sophia to master a

composition. The girls were nearly always first in all academic subjects, and Sophia played at New York City's famous Carnegie Hall.

Despite such strict upbringing, the daughters acquired a sense of humor as well as a sense of fulfillment. In an open letter to her mother published in the New York Post, daughter Sophia Chua-Rubenfeld (2011) declared her critics wrong in assuming "Lulu and I are oppressed by our evil mother. That is so not true. Every other Thursday, you take off our chains and let us play math games in the basement." What she gained from it all: "To me, it's not about achievement or self-gratification. It's about knowing that you've pushed yourself, body and mind, to the limits of your own potential."

Chua's book and article about it generated 5,000 passionate and conflicting comments in, of all places, The Wall Street Journal's posting site. The comments and Amazon reader reviews and ratings of Chua's book (as of January 14, 2011) are also polarized: 19 five stars, 20 one star, and 11 between. Those rejecting her view preferred socialization including dating, sports, and other extracurricular activities, and allowing children and adolescents greater latitude to choose their friends and activities. Those favoring Chua's view held that great lengths of engaged practice with high standards is the important ingredient of reaching the top. Many defending Chua's views and practices maintained that mastery precedes creativity in most fields.

Given such conflicting views, what can educators do? They can hardly change child- and adolescent-rearing philosophy and practices, especially from one extreme to the other. But they can point out to parents the relationship between how their children spend their time outside of school and their success in school and possibly in life. Even small improvements in the amount and quality of academically constructive hours outside school are likely to have more than moderate learning effects while contributing little or nothing to school costs.

Despite her distinguished law career and best-selling books, Chua's ability to devote long hours of attention to her daughters should cause parents and educators to think carefully about how students spend their time outside the classroom. They may decide to act on their

conclusions. So suggests the U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, reacting to the results of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's international achievement survey, which revealed that a cross section of Shanghai 15-year-olds took first place in reading, mathematics, and science among 65 participating countries.

As Secretary Duncan said in a December 7, 2010 interview, "We have to see this as a wake-up call. I know skeptics will want to argue with the results, but we consider them to be accurate and reliable, and we have to see them as a challenge to get better." He added, "The United States came in 23rd or 24th in most subjects. We can quibble, or we can face the brutal truth that we're being out-educated" (quoted in Dillon, 2010). In responding to such a challenge, what can educators do?

Exploit Matthew Effects

The term "Matthew effects," referring to the academically poor getting poorer and the rich getting richer, comes from the Matthew 25:29 (King James Version): "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Walberg & Tsai, 1984). Ironically, although improved instructional programs may benefit all students, they may confer greater advantages on those who are initially advantaged. For this reason, the first six years of life and the "curriculum of the home" may be decisive influences on academic learning. These effects appear pervasive in school learning, including the development of reading comprehension and verbal literacy (Stanovich, 1986). Therefore, reaching out to families to encourage academically constructive child practices is time well spent.

Communicate With Parents

Children throughout the world learn their native language readily and seemingly without effort, while adults beginning a second language find it extraordinarily difficult and frustrating. Thus, nearly universal experience shows that early and sustained immersion in a language has powerful effects. Since language is largely the medium of schooling, its early mastery and sustained encouragement is a key to school success.

In language exposure and encouragement, what are the potential effects of parents and educators? As mentioned earlier, of all the hours in the first 18 years of life, American children spend only 8% of their time in school. The other 92% of the hours are the responsibility of their parents, and parents vary widely in their child-rearing practices and in the circumstances they provide for their children.

Hart and Risley's (1995) study showed professional parents, in contrast with low-income parents, not only spoke with their young children much more frequently, but also encouraged them six times more often with positive verbal feedback for good behavior. These parental practices seem to have highly consequential effects on their children's school preparation and success.

Though the causal evidence is neither as clearcut nor as scientifically rigorous as we might like, the effects of child rearing on children's character and learning seem plausible and are widely believed. For this reason, educators may help children by reaching out to their parents and informing them of practices that appear to help children at home and in non-school hours, including afternoons, evenings, and summers.

Because parents are their children's first and perhaps most important teachers, educators might well inform them of their children's progress in school and share ideas about specific practices that can help them at home, such as providing a quiet place for reading and homework and discouraging them from watching junk television.

Foster Parental Behaviors That Enhance Learning

Even more powerful than demographic factors, parental behaviors appear to influence children. Demography, nonetheless, sets the stage and affects both parental behaviors and children's development, particularly their learning prior to entry into school, and especially in those key aspects of language acquisition that are prerequisites for learning to read. In turn, shortcomings in reading ability translate to lower academic achievement.

Children from lower income families receive significantly reduced exposure to rich vocabulary and less positive verbal affirmation from family members. Mentioned earlier, Hart and Risley (1995) conducted intensive, observational, in-home research on language acquisition in the early life of children (birth to age 4). They estimated that, by the end of 4 years, the average child in a professional family hears about 45 million words—nearly double the number of words that children in working-class families hear (25 million) and more than 4 times the number of words, about 10 million, spoken to children in low-income families.

Though vocabulary differences between the groups were small at 12 to 14 months of age, by age 3 sharp differences emerged, which correlated with parents' socioeconomic status (SES). Children from families receiving welfare had vocabularies of about 500 words; children from middle/lower SES families about 700; and children from families in higher socioeconomic brackets had vocabularies of about 1,100 words, more than twice that of children from families receiving welfare. Parents of higher SES, moreover, used "more different words, more multi-clause sentences, more past and future verb tenses, more declaratives, and more questions of all kinds" (Hart & Risley, 1995, pp. 123–24). Entwisle and Alexander (1993) also found that differences in children's exposure to vocabulary and elaborate use of language multiply further at ages 5 and 6, when children enter school.

Children in poorer families are also less likely to have parents regularly read to them than children in wealthier families (Barton & Coley, 2007). Sixty-two percent of parents of 3- to 5-year-old children from the highest income quintile read to their children every day. In the lowest income quintile, only 36% of parents read to their 3- to 5-year-old child. Children in two-parent families were more likely to have someone read to them

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regularly than were children in single-parent homes (63% vs. 53%). Also, mothers with higher educational attainment read to their children more often. Only 41% of mothers with less than a high school diploma read to their child or children regularly, compared with 55% of mothers who were high school graduates, and 72% of mothers with college degrees.

Sticht and James (1984) emphasize that children first develop vocabulary and comprehension skills before they begin school by listening, particularly to their parents. As they gain experience with written language between the first and seventh grades, their reading ability gradually rises to the level of their listening ability. Highly skilled listeners in kindergarten make faster reading progress in the later grades, which leads to a growing ability gap between initially skilled and unskilled readers.

Monitor and Encourage Homework Completion

Over 66% of all 9-year-olds and 75% of all 13- and 17-year-olds reported doing some homework every day, according to the 1994 Nation's Report Card (Campbell, Reese, O'Sullivan, & Dossey, 1996). As students get older, a greater percentage of them report spending more than 1 hour per day on homework: 39% of 17-year-olds, 37% of 13-year-olds, and 16% of 9-year-olds report spending more than an hour on homework per day. Still, American students spend far less time in school and in out-of-school study than high-achieving Asian students.

An earlier research synthesis (Cooper, 1989) reviewed nearly 120 empirical studies of homework's effects and the ingredients of successful homework assignments. The study revealed that homework completion tended to have significant, positive effects. The average high school student in a class doing homework outperformed 69% of the students in a no-homework class. Cooper's (2006) more recent synthesis of research also indicates consistently positive effects of homework on student achievement.

In addition to enhancing achievement, homework has other potential advantages, including preparing students for independent learning, engaging families in constructive tasks, informing parents of the content of school-based instruction, providing a constructive alternative to television viewing, and enabling the child to practice material without school-based distractions. A well-lit, quiet study area can help avoid distractions that may impede students' completion of homework assignments. Parents can further foster the completion of homework by being aware of homework assignments and establishing and maintaining a scheduled study time for their children. Indeed, regular household schedules for meals, sleep, and so forth in the home reinforce expectations for doing homework (Redding, 2000).

Foster Academically Constructive Out-of-School Activities

Limiting television exposure appears to be one of the key factors affecting academic achievement, and parents can do much to make children's out-of-school time complement and enhance their formal instruction. As suggested above, children appear to do better in school when parents provide predictable boundaries for their lives, encourage productive use of time, and provide learning experiences as a regular part of family life (Redding, 2000). In families run by calendars, schedules, grocery lists, "to do" lists, shared household chores, reading, studying, and playing mentally challenging games, children may more easily adapt to the responsibilities of school. The disadvantages of poverty may be mitigated by such conditions for learning.

One study (cited in Redding, 2000) found that high-achieving students spend about 20 hours each week outside of school in constructive learning activities, particularly with the support and guidance of parents or other close adults. Music practice, reading, writing, visiting museums, and participation in youth groups engage children in varied learning experiences, keeping them engaged. Parents' support for exploring and working together with their children on hobbies and games multiplies the school's efforts to effectively nurture a child's talents and interests.

Children appear to benefit when their parents know their whereabouts, know their friends, monitor their television viewing, and maintain contact with their teachers. Taking a regular inventory of a child's weekly schedule provides valuable information to parents on how time is

being allocated to activities that are in a child's long-term interests. Recreational and social activities, of course, should become a regular part of a child's life, while maintaining the importance of reading and studying.

Mass media, including streaming videos, movies, Facebook, and television, can displace homework, leisure reading, and other learning and academically stimulating activities. "Screen time" may dull the student's motivation for academic work. Even so, researchers have estimated that high school students spend an average of 20–30 hours a week watching television and other forms of media in contrast to a mere 4 or 5 hours spent on homework weekly.

Studies of K–12 students indicate that those who watch 4 hours or more of television per day have lower academic achievement than do students who limit their television viewing (Barton & Coley, 2007). Eighth graders who watched more than 5 hours of television per day showed the lowest average mathematics scores in a large international survey. According to a 2004 Child Trends report (as cited in Barton & Coley, 2007), about one third of eighth graders watched 4 hours or more of television on weekdays. Only 19% of children whose parents attended graduate school watched 4 hours or more of television per day, compared to 42% of students whose parents had less than a high school education.

The implications of research on television and other media effects are uncertain because randomized experiments have not been conducted, and it has been difficult to statistically control for rival causes, such as parent education. Moreover, it can easily be envisioned that students may benefit from watching academically constructive programs and discussing them with their parents, classmates, and teachers. For these reasons, educators might best counsel parents to monitor the number and quality of programs their children watch and to limit the amount of time they spend on academically nonproductive programs and other media.

Conclusion

Since children are potentially in school only about eight percent of the time in the first 18 years of life (not counting absences), their lives outside school have big consequences for their academic success. Even small improvements in

their home and community life are well worth the effort. Here are some specific practices that may be employed.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Appoint a leader to coordinate home and community efforts throughout the state.
2. Select useful media to improve home and community environments to be used by local educators and parents.
3. Commission or conduct workshops for local educators on the curriculum of the home.
4. Employ mass media to point out how parents can encourage their children's academic success.
5. Construct separate websites for parents and for educational administrators and teachers devoted to the curriculum of the home.

Local Education Agency

1. Appoint a leader to coordinate home and community efforts throughout the local agency.
2. Develop explicit written policy and practices on agency, school, and parent opportunities and responsibilities for improving the home curriculum.
3. Describe curriculum activities of the home in local media including newspapers and Internet sites.
4. Conduct workshops for educators on improving academically stimulating activities in the home and community.
5. Select and distribute publications directly to parents on improving the home curriculum.

School

1. Appoint a school leader to improve and coordinate activities designed to improve the curriculum of the homes of children attending the school.
2. Develop detailed home curriculum policies and practices for school staff.
3. Conduct workshops for teachers and other educators on the home curriculum.

4. Write and regularly distribute home curriculum practices for parents including material on homework expectations.

5. Conduct in-school workshop series for parents on improving the curriculum of the home.

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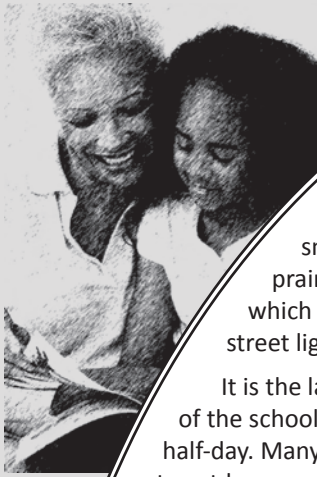
Annabelle
Marilyn Murphy

The red brick school building sprawls across generous suburban acreage. The day cooperates with pristine blue skies and sunshine beaming benignly down on the gathering crowd. The small New Jersey town is a balance of pretty Cape Cod homes nestled against prairie-style four squares and boxy colonials. Flags from the Memorial Day parade, which featured the annual march of Boy Scouts and fire engines, still flutter from the street light poles.

It is the last day of the school year, and parents and friends are lining the sidewalk in front of the schoolhouse doors, ready to greet the students as they emerge from the traditional final half-day. Many in the crowd are the regulars who meet their children every afternoon. Several are stay-at-home grandparents recruited back into the child care role. There is a genteel buzz of conversation backgrounded with the patient shuffle of sneakers and well-worn sandals. Several working moms and dads arrive, anxious to join this informal greeting of the emerging students.

Promptly at noon, the principal pushes open the double doors. Several of the dads help secure them, as the leaders of the lower school—the sixth-grade class—emerge. The parents have formed an impromptu tunnel of arms, and the kids delightedly rush under the community embrace, as they emerge laughing and dragging their oversized back packs. This is a happy group, and amid much cheering and laughing, they applaud the end of the school year and look forward to vacations, plus lazy days at the local swimming pool.

Lois is there to greet her granddaughter Annabelle. Annabelle is an enthusiastic and lively first-grader, with twice the energy and capacity one would expect from her diminutive size. As the second graders finish filing out, Annabelle's mom and grandmother peer anxiously at the doors awaiting Bella's usual happy face among the final first-grade students. She finally comes, but she is unexpectedly glum, dragging her enormous purple back pack.

"Hi Bella; what's wrong?" her mom asks. "Didn't you have fun on the last day?"

Annabelle looks down and responds dejectedly, "My teacher said we wouldn't be back for 81 days! I can't believe it; I love school!"

That's when Lois realized something that well-educated and well-meaning folks may be doing wrong. Annabelle has had some of the best research-endorsed supports. She has enjoyed well-prepared teachers, a supportive district system, and a community dedicated to providing the best education for their citizens. In addition, she has motivated, engaged, and knowledgeable parents plus a loving extended family. So why was everyone sending the mixed message that release from school is a good thing, indeed a cause to celebrate? Sure, there were congratulations built in for a job well done, but wasn't the underlying implication that it is better to not be in school, released to pursue more enjoyable activities? Fortunately, Annabelle didn't get it; her teacher was so effective in instilling the love of learning and providing such a positive experience that Bella was sad and disappointed to see it end. Good for her, but therein lies a caution, Lois thought.

It is important to consider that if we believe schools should be a happy, positive place, and if we are making efforts to be engaged and supportive, then we also need to be less ambiguous about how we view the schooling experience and be careful not to send mixed messages about how glad kids should be to not be there. For example, homework should not be viewed negatively or presented as punishment. School schedules should be respected even if they do interfere with family activities. It's not enough to be engaged; we also need to be collaborative and supportive. As teachers, it's critical to support the Annabelles, keeping learning challenging and exciting and helping them to see that school is a good place to be. We hear so much about re-engaging the disenfranchised student, a familiar plot line in newspapers and stories such as *Dangerous Minds* and *Stand and Deliver*. Being proactively engaged and keeping disengagement at bay involves keeping an eye on the Annabelle factor and starting early to keep students happy and positive about school. We need to strive not to be the one who plants the seed of discontentment with learning—who puts out the light.

The sidewalk gradually empties as everyone began the drift from the schoolyard. "I'm going to play school when we get home," Annabelle announces, revived to her usual ebullient self. "I'll be the teacher and I'll correct your paper, ok?"

Lois smiled back. "Sure, Bella, that would be fine."

Homework and Study Habits

Lee Shumow

The purpose of this topic is to discuss parental engagement in the customary educational practice of homework. Before doing so, some basics are provided. Homework can be defined as learning tasks assigned for completion outside of the classroom. Both parents and teachers generally expect that students will have homework, and that homework is beneficial (Bempechat, 2004; Warton, 2001).

Numerous studies have been conducted about possible benefits of homework but have tended to focus on achievement alone and ignore other expected outcomes. Studies on achievement (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006) found that more time doing homework actually predicted lower achievement for elementary school students. Middle school students doing less than 90 minutes of homework per night did better academically than students who did no homework; however, those doing more than 90 minutes a night did worse than students who did less. One explanation might be that students who spent more time were probably struggling academically. The more time high school students spent doing homework, the higher their achievement, with benefits leveling out at 2 hours per day.

Parent Engagement With Homework: Who Helps and Why?

Many believe that affluent mainstream parents are more likely to help their children with homework than more marginalized parents. However, researchers have repeatedly documented that parents with low income, limited education, or minority status are just as likely to help their children with homework as other parents (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) explain that parent engagement tends to be driven by: (1) parents' ideas about what they should do, (2) their belief that they can successfully help, and (3) the invitations they receive to be involved. Most parents expect to have some involvement with homework, but not all feel confident about it (Shumow, 2010). Parents are often encouraged and expected to be involved with their children's homework so as to understand, support, and encourage students' learning and success. Strategies schools can use to involve parents in homework are the subject of another chapter in this *Handbook*.

Benefits of Parent Engagement in Homework

Studies about the impact of parent engagement in homework on student outcomes have reported mixed results. Although the relationship between parent homework engagement and student achievement is complex, some conclusions can be drawn about whether and how parental involvement with homework is associated with student achievement from consolidating the studies (meta-analysis). The extent to which parent engagement in homework benefits students depends on several factors.

Grade level. Findings from 20 individual studies were combined to show that parental help with homework: (1) promotes homework completion and reduces problems with homework among elementary school students, and (2) promotes achievement in elementary and high school students, but not middle school students, who actually did worse (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008). Another meta-analysis confirmed those middle school results (Hill & Tyson, 2009). There are a few possible explanations. Young adolescents might interpret parental help as threatening their quest for autonomy and resist. At least one nationally representative study showed that parents help more with homework during middle school when their child is struggling (Shumow & Miller, 2001), so help might signal preexisting student differences; parents of struggling students were least likely to be involved at school. As well, helping becomes more challenging because material is more complex in middle than elementary school. The middle school structure (subject area teachers with many students) also complicates communication between teachers and parents. Finally, parents might help middle school children differently.

> Parents are often encouraged and expected to be involved with their children's homework so as to understand, support, and encourage students' learning and success.

Subject area. The meta-analysis by Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008) found that parental help with language arts homework resulted in better academic performance, but mathematics help resulted in lower performance. It is possible that parents had negative experiences, limited knowledge, or unfamiliarity with school mathematics (Shumow, 2010) which negatively impacted their assistance.

Parent background. Parents' background knowledge, educational experience, and social capital contribute to being effective helpers. For example, parents who have knowledge about student learning and typical learning pathways provide especially effective guidance when helping their children with homework (Shumow, 2010). Parents and school leaders disagree to some extent about whether parents are provided with information to help them help their children do homework, suggesting either that the information is not reaching parents or that they do not understand it. Jeynes (2007) reported that the positive relationships between parental help with homework and students' academic performance appears to be diminished in homes where parents belong to marginalized groups who have had restricted educational opportunity.

Is Homework a Battleground?

Anecdotal reports regularly appear in mass media describing homework with war metaphors. To the contrary, one recent study found that, when adolescents were doing homework with their parents, they enjoyed it more than when alone and concentrated better than with peers. Furthermore, adolescents did not report being angrier or more stressed with parents compared to being alone or with others (Shumow, Schmidt, & Kackar, 2008). An advantage of that study was that the students wore devices that beeped randomly; they were then asked to report in the moment how they felt, which is a very accurate method of measuring emotion.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Mandate teacher education about how to work with parents on homework.

2. Include homework policies and practices in school improvement planning and monitoring requirements.

3. Provide technical assistance for selecting and managing electronic communication systems.

4. Develop and provide a resource bank on parent involvement with homework.

5. Provide training, assistance, and materials (including video demonstrations and translated materials into high incidence languages) to help schools help marginalized parents.

Local Education Agency

1. Provide workshops for teachers on parent engagement with homework.

2. Provide supports for writing effective homework policies.

3. Identify effective two-way communication systems in schools and use them as examples for other schools.

4. Enact State Action Principles 4 and 5 locally (see above).

5. Work with community agencies to provide and align services for families around homework.

For Schools

1. Provide professional development for teachers about family engagement in homework.

2. Develop a homework policy including grade-level guidelines for amounts of homework.

3. Establish mechanisms for two-way communication with parents about homework.

4. Understand that parents are often more involved in homework and less involved at school when their children are struggling, and that marginalized parents do attempt to assist their children.

5. Teachers or teams (grade level or subject area) provide specific accessible information, guidelines, and resources to help parents help their children with assigned homework.

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Tyler

Lee Shumow

Tyler, a pudgy, easy-going fifth grader, had a great weekend, except for his mom stressing out about his homework assignment. Every day when Tyler gets off the bus from school he has to do his homework, even on Fridays, which he doesn't think is fair! His mom, Becky, insists that he get it done before they eat an early supper and she leaves for her waitressing job at the casino, and she can't depend on his father to supervise homework on the weekends he has the kids. Becky works late, and she wants everything organized and ready for the next day before supper. She is usually asleep when he goes to school in the morning because it takes her awhile to fall asleep after she gets home, and a few days a week she cleans houses to pick up extra cash, so she can't go back to sleep after the kids leave. Tyler would rather play with his Xbox and unwind after school. He'd also like to ride a bike with a couple of friends once in a while, but his mom won't budge. She's always harping on the importance of responsibility and how he has to go to college so he doesn't end up living from paycheck to paycheck or broke like her and his dad.

On Friday, the language arts homework was pretty hard; he couldn't remember how to do it, his sister didn't know how, and his mom couldn't figure it out either. He forgot his book at school and couldn't really remember what they did in class. He likes some of the stories they read in language arts, but the skill development stuff was pretty boring, and it was hard to pay attention sometimes. Becky said she would try to find someone to help, and they would work on it Sunday night. That didn't work out, and she was all upset about it.

But his dad, an over-the-road trucker, was in town for the weekend, so Tyler got to stay over at dad's apartment by himself Saturday night. It was awesome. His sister, a ninth grader, was at the Homecoming dance at the high school. No requests to go to the mall, eat salad, or watch girl movies and t.v. They got a pizza and watched a great action movie. Then, Sunday morning his dad made pancakes, and they went out looking for Tyler's Halloween vampire costume before they watched the football game on television. Their team won, and they stopped for a chocolate malt to celebrate on the way to drop Tyler at home.

Now it's Monday morning, and Tyler nervously hands Ms. Cantor a note from his mother on his way into the classroom. Ms. Cantor recalls that she has never met Tyler's mother because she did not come to the open house and has never picked Tyler up from school. In fact, this is her first communication with Mrs. Jackson. She opens the note and reads:

> *Tyler could not do his language arts homework this weekend. He didn't get how to do it. I couldn't get it either. I took it around to the neighbors and nobody knew what affixes and structural analysis is or how to do it. If adults can't figure it out, how are fifth graders supposed to do it. Please don't punish him for it.*

Ms. Cantor is puzzled and a bit taken aback. She doesn't think of herself as punitive, and she has certainly never punished Tyler. Although he struggles to keep up, especially in language arts, and does a bit below average on tests, he always has his homework done and usually tries in class. He is polite, friendly, and cooperative with her and his peers. They've gotten along just fine. Her biggest problems with him have been that he keeps a messy locker and that his mind sometimes wanders during whole class instruction, but that is nothing unusual for a fifth grade boy. When she thinks about it, she feels quite irritated to be unfairly judged by Mrs. Jackson. All Tyler had to do was tell her that he needed help. She could and would have helped him after school on Friday. She resolved to talk to Tyler about it the first chance she gets and hopes that Mrs. Jackson comes to parent-teacher conferences in November so she can let her know that she would never punish Tyler for missing one homework assignment, and that he should let her know when he does not understand something.

Ms. Cantor has never had a class or even as much as an inservice presentation on working with parents. She figures that Tyler's mom and all the other parents who don't show up at school just don't care much about academic achievement and expect their kids to grow up and have jobs like theirs. She does not know that invitations from the teacher are the best predictor of parent involvement or that working class parents often expect the teacher to contact them. It is not evident to her that many of the parents, who she does not know because they do not come to school, do try to help their kids at home. The quality of her students' homework assignments does not necessarily reflect that because the families have no guidance for helping. Like many professionals, she does not even realize that words like affixes or structural analysis are jargon to parents. Ms. Cantor is an accomplished and caring teacher who works hard and is willing to do the right thing for her students. Learning about family involvement in homework and other ways of engaging would help her do a better job, and she might be more likely to follow up with a call or email to Tyler's mom.
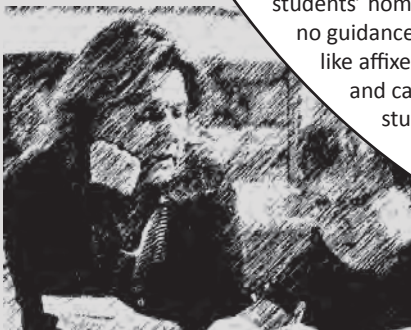
Engaging Families in Reading

Holly Kreider

Topic 5

Research clearly points to third grade as a watershed moment in children's education. Third grade reading fluency is highly predictive of children's long-term school success, including high school performance and college enrollment (Lesnick, Goerge, & Smithgall, 2010). Unfortunately, most children are not meeting proficient reading levels by the end of third grade, especially among students from low-income families (Feister, 2010). And although third grade is crucial to reading, the precursors to reading, and more broadly,literacy, actually begin much earlier in life (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

Parents and other primary caregivers are instrumental in fostering language, reading, and literacy skills so essential for school success (e.g., Caspe, Lopez, & Wolos, 2007). Research points to the positive literacy effects of family engagement at home, at school, and even in out-of-school time (Lin, 2003). Family engagement at home is perhaps the most influential to literacy outcomes and academic outcomes more generally (Shumow, 2010). Specifically, the provision of a literacy-rich home environment—including ample books, frequent and interactive shared reading between parents and children, and rich and frequent discussions with children—predicts language and literacy gains in the early years and early grades, as well as leisure reading habits of older children (Hart & Risley, 1995; Kirsch et al., 2002; Senechal, 2002). Parental help with homework has also been shown to help with language arts skills (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008).

Some research also suggests that family engagement activities in school, such as attending open houses and parent–teacher conferences and volunteering in the classroom, contribute to literacy achievement for elementary school children (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006). Further, family participation in extracurricular activities, like sports and scouts, has been linked with children's reading skills (Reaney, Denton, & West, 2002). A growing body of evidence also hints at how engagement might lead to more positive reading outcomes—for example, by improving children's behavior and feelings about literacy (Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, & Simpkins, 2004; Rabiner, Coie, & CPPRG, 2000).

Research shows that involvement in children's literacy development remains crucial regardless of the home language or reading ability of the parents and family (Dearing et al., 2006; Kreider, Morin, Miller, & Bush, 2011; Lin, 2003). In fact, positive literacy outcomes from family engagement tend to be most amplified for children at greatest educational risk, including those from low-income families, those with parents who have low levels of formal education, and children for whom initial literacy levels are below grade level.

Finally, successful interventions have emerged that promote family engagement and reading outcomes. Foremost, shared reading programs that support parents and other primary caregivers to read with their children—for example through book access, parent training, and library connections—have been shown to increase vocabulary and early literacy skills (Senechal, 2002). Also helpful are parent empowerment projects, for example, that engage parents and children in culturally meaningful writing projects, pique children's interest in books, and create positive perceptions and identities among parents and caregivers (Ada, 1988; Hurtig, 2004). Even family engagement programs with a behavioral focus count reading outcomes among their accomplishments (Rabiner et al., 2000).

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Partner with statewide parent centers that offer a host of parent and teacher training, events, informational materials, and general expertise on engaging families, often with a focus on literacy.

2. Seek competitive federal funding to implement evidence-based programs that change parent literacy behaviors (via book rotation, parent training, and library connections) and pair this with inexpensive book distribution (see proposed ESEA reauthorization, U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

3. Examine successful practices of Head Starts, state prekindergartens, and other early education settings to provide state and local data on kindergarteners' reading readiness and the early family engagement

strategies that can support this.

Local Education Agency

1. Build agency relationships districtwide that promote the 0–8 literacy continuum, as family engagement and literacy trajectories begin early and require sustained efforts. Coordinate and align the work of schools and early childhood education agencies and explore public/private partnerships with foundations to pilot this work.

2. Coordinate family engagement priorities and structures between elementary and secondary schools. Poor readers are likely to experience ongoing struggles in secondary school, and family engagement continues to be important to reading behaviors and academic achievement throughout adolescence.

3. Focus on those low-income populations who stand to benefit most from family engagement in literacy. Title I can support this goal, with guidelines (Section 1118(e)(2)) that mention "literacy programs that bond families around reading and using the public library." Moreover, Title I family engagement funds can support districtwide training for teachers and paraprofessionals in how to engage families in reading development.

School

1. Cast wide and deep in efforts to engage families in literacy. A welcoming environment, coupled with engagement that is meaningful and varied in format and timing, will increase access for and participation by families. For example, celebrating storytelling may be a way to honor the oral language traditions in some cultures and communities.

> Research shows that involvement in children's literacy development remains crucial regardless of the home language or reading ability of the parents and family.

2. Invest in supporting families' home involvement. As a type of engagement most predictive of literacy and other academic outcomes for children, schools and educators must support families' involvement at home, for example by encouraging shared reading.

3. Partner with community agencies to address families' own barriers to literacy, offering family literacy classes and other adult education opportunities. Mothers' reading level is the greatest predictor of children's future academic success, pointing to adult literacy education in low-income neighborhoods as a means to address the achievement gap (Sastry & Pebly, 2010).

4. Create opportunities for schools, libraries, religious groups, and other community-based organizations to collaborate and promote communitywide initiatives that highlight the everyday importance of reading, which happens not just in school but everywhere.

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Xiomara
Georganne Morin & Holly Kreider

Xiomara eagerly looks forward to kindergarten every single day. For years, she sat at the window of her grandmother's garden apartment and watched the kids walking to and from school. She often dreamed what it would be like, and now she was there! In so many ways it was more wonderful than she had imagined. She loved her new friends, her teacher, Ms. Davis, and all the fun new activities. It was so much better than spending the day watching telenovelas with her grandmother.

But parts of school were also difficult. It seemed to Xiomara that Ms. Davis expected her to be able to do things that she couldn't do, like write her name or all the numbers to 20. In fact, Xiomara could barely understand what Ms. Davis was saying most of the time as she had never really heard anyone speaking English before coming to Kindergarten.

But, all in all, Xiomara loved school. Her favorite time of the day was right after morning recess when Ms. Davis would read the class a story. No one had ever read Xiomara a story before and, even though she did not really understand the story, she would become mesmerized by the beautiful illustrations and Ms. Davis' lilting voice as she read the story. Xiomara would look at the pictures and imagine the story for herself.

Ms. Davis would watch Xiomara during story time and worry how she would be able to bring Xiomara up to grade level by the end of the school year. Each year, Ms. Davis had several Spanish-speaking children in her class who had never attended preschool, and it seemed so unfair that they began their school careers at such a disadvantage. She had already sent several notes to Xiomara's mother regarding her academic needs, but had not yet heard back from the mother. Ms. Davis had to admit she sent the notes half-heartedly; based on her prior experiences with families of children like Xiomara, she had already formed an opinion that these families rarely get involved in their children's academics.

A few weeks into the year, Ms. Davis began to send her students home each night with a book for their parents to read to them. Xiomara was so excited to show her book to her mother. After dinner, she proudly pulled it out and asked her mother to read it to her. Her mother glanced at the English title and then went back to her housework. Xiomara was disappointed, but felt better when her mother promised that they would look at the book the next night. However, over the next couple of weeks her mother was always too busy and tired and unsure about how to read a book in English to Xiomara.

Enriqueta, Xiomara's mother, was relieved when Xiomara eventually stopped pulling out the book and asking her mother to read to her. Enriqueta was a young, single mother who had immigrated to the U.S. with her own mother seven years ago from rural Mexico. She had a job cleaning houses with several other Mexican women and was able to get by in her job without having to learn English. She was excited for Xiomara to go to school in the U.S. and learn English and felt that the educational opportunities in the U.S. for Xiomara far outweighed the many hardships Enriqueta faced leaving her home country. But Enriqueta was also intimidated by the unfamiliar school and the foreign teachers. It seemed strange to her that Ms. Davis wanted her to help Xiomara with her school work. Back in Mexico, teaching the children academics was the job of the teacher, not the parents. Plus Enriqueta was afraid that if she tried to help Xiomara with her school work, she might do something wrong. *I really want Xiomara to do well in school*, Enriqueta thought. *It will be better if I leave the teaching to Ms. Davis.*

One day after school, Ms. Davis noticed Xiomara slipping her take-home book back into her desk. She asked Xiomara why she was not taking home her book. Xiomara looked at the floor and stammered that her mother did not have time for the books. Ms. Davis sighed. It would be nearly impossible to bring Xiomara to grade level without the support of her family. Ms. Davis would do her best but felt she could only get so far if her family did not care about her success in school. She decided to send one final note to Xiomara's family and, if her mother did not respond, she would just have to give up. *It is such a shame,* she thought, *when these families like Xiomara's don't care enough to help their children succeed in school.*

Reading and Literacy

Diana B. Hiatt-Michael

Reading and literacy are the heart of the educational process. Definitions of reading and literacy have expanded to encompass technology as well as the language arts (Kinzer & Verhoeven, 2008). The 21st Century's increasing reliance on technology skills for daily human interaction—such as cell phone communication, Internet searches, and decision-making—depend on the quality of a person's reading and literary skills. Content areas, such as science and the social sciences, as well as the humanities, rely on language knowledge to comprehend ideas and skills (Hakata, 2011; Vacca, Vacca, & Mraz, 2010). Thus, a person's level of reading and technology literacy is related to educational attainment, social status, political status, and economic status (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). Parents, community members, and policymakers believe that students should possess sufficient knowledge and skill in the language arts to enter college (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010; Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011). If so, reading and literacy should pervade the school environment in exciting and meaningful ways, utilizing multimedia.

But across the country, various groups express deep concerns about our present and future citizens' ability to read and be literate in a competitive global society. These reports reveal that declining student achievement in reading and low academic achievement in reading correlates to a sense of dissatisfaction with school, increased school behavior problems, increase in truancy, lack of completion of high school, lower future income, and higher probability of incarceration (Meyer, Carl, & Cheng, 2010). Citizens indicate that the state should be responsible for educational policy and that a school's academic quality is based upon reading as the core content area to be assessed (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010; Porter et al., 2011). Thus, educators and parents coupled with all community resources should focus on reading and literacy as the core area of schooling.

Family engagement in reading is strongly related to student achievement (Senechal, 2006). Early opportunities in the home to acquire and demonstrate language arts, including reading skills, give children a head start (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2006). Parents affect children's interest and reading

ability in a number of ways. Parental expectations, speaking and reading to children, number of books in the home, parental interest in written and oral communication, parental knowledge of language arts development, and parental enjoyment of reading foster student achievement in reading (Fernandez-Kaltenbach, 2009; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Xu, 2008). Also, proximity to a library, family/child visits to the library, and availability of a school library and librarians support student achievement in reading and literacy (American Library Association, 2009; Howard, 2010; National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, 2008; University of North Texas Digital Library, 2008). Parent education in the form of parent centers, workshops, and home visits have assisted all families, but especially lower socioeconomic or non- or limited-English-speaking families, to promote age-appropriate language arts experiences for their children (Hiatt-Michael, 2010b; Wisconsin Department of Public Education, 2005). Classes at school sites for English-language-learning parents bring these parents to the school site and provide natural opportunities to see and speak with school staff which may further support children's literacy learning (Hiatt-Michael, 2007). In addition, low-income parents may require funds to support their expenses related to their school involvement, such as child care, transportation, and food.

Two-way communication between family and school serves as a conduit for active dialogue and learning (Educational Leadership, 2004; Hiatt-Michael, 2010a). The most powerful communication is face-to-face. Thus, the school site should feature reading and literacy opportunities at every turn for families to directly mingle with school staff. Research indicates that parental involvement as school aides, visible and active parent centers at school sites, and

> The most powerful communication is face-to-face. Thus, the school site should feature reading and literacy opportunities at every turn for families to directly mingle with school staff.

school librarians managing a school library relate to student academic achievement (Heiss, 1982; Howard, 2010; Johnstone & Hiatt, 1997). Student-led parent conferences promote student goal-setting, communication skills, and open communication among school staff, parents, and their children (Tuinstra & Hiatt-Michael, 2004).

Psychologists and educators recommend using multiple modes of learning—oral, kinesthetic, tactile, and visual modes—in the form of multimedia to reach the learning style of students and adults in order to promote academic achievement (Veenema & Gardner, 1996). Students and their parents readily relate to technology devices that employ multiple modes of learning, such as laptop computers and tablets, and prefer the use of these devices in school/homework activities (Gulek & Demitras, 2005; Hamilton & Jago, 2010).

Out-of-school-time (OST) programs support reading/literacy opportunities between students and their parents (Kreider & Westmoreland, 2011). Many of these programs include supervised guidance with student homework, parent education workshops, and advisement sessions for students and parents. Best practices provide links that connect the regular day teachers with the OST teachers, the students, and their families.

Thus, the following action principles have been set forth for state departments of education, school districts, and school sites.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

To support parent engagement in reading and literacy, every state department of education should:

1. Develop policy that connects local public libraries to school sites staffed by credentialed librarians.
2. Assure that policy is created and funds are allocated so that every school site, commencing with Title I schools, has a family center organized by a coordinator.
3. Assure that Title I and other funds are directed to school districts to provide parent–student workshops in reading/literacy and payment to low-income parents

for any out-of-pocket costs to attend such workshops and activities.

4. Allocate Title I and other funds for the purchase of electronic devices for student use in reading, writing, and information retrieval.

5. Develop policy that connects parent engagement activities with regular school staff and out-of-school programs regarding reading and literacy development, including home visits for students new to a school.

Local Education Agency

Every school in the district should:

1. Be connected with a library and credentialed librarian that can conduct professional development opportunities for parents and school staff. Students come into regular contact with community members and other parents who utilize the library.

2. Designate a room readily visible to parents as a parent center with the primary focus on reading/literacy. Schools in areas with low literacy should hire parents as teacher aides as a way to connect parents and their children in a literacy-focused learning environment.

3. Develop regularly available parent–student–teacher workshops on school reading and literacy, topics determined by parent–teacher–student needs assessments.

4. Utilize multiple means for two-way communication between teacher and parents—such as parent contracts, podcasts, classroom newsletters/postings—regarding classroom activities and desired homework focused on literacy on a regular basis.

5. Provide supervised out-of-school programs for student homework that include parent involvement.

School

Every K–12 school should:

1. Have a library with a qualified librarian accessible throughout the school day and after hours. Family members as well as students should have access to online as well as other media resources so that the library serves as a hub of literacy acquisition.

2. Provide an array of literacy activities/workshops for parents and their children within the school setting. These parent-engagement activities should focus on the particular skills that their child should be acquiring in reading and literacy so that learning becomes a shared experience.

3. Provide a readily accessible and visible facility to be a family resource center, organized by a coordinator. A family center near the school entrance invites parents to be engaged and feel a part of the school. This family center, as well as the library, provides parental access to homework assignments, knowledge of upcoming projects or exams, and an array of parental information. The desired outcome is that parents perceive themselves as active participants in school life throughout the day.

4. Invite parents to an annual student-led conference so that their child has an opportunity to organize and share the year's literacy development. These conferences should include out-of-school time experiences as well as those required by state law.

5. Ensure that every child has an electronic device to store, use, and connect his activities at school and at home with family members.

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Alicia and Dan

Diana B. Hiatt-Michael

Concerned about the low mathematics test scores at her middle school, principal Alicia Jackson mused, "How can I help our students in math?" She knew that these low-scoring middle school students had a high probability of becoming future high school dropouts. She also knew that her mathematics teachers were "the best"—knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and devoted to their teaching. What changes could be made to increase these students' scores?

Dan Lim, the university supervisor for her school's student teachers, listened to Alicia's concern and delicately questioned her about the school's activities regarding parent involvement. "Oh," replied Alicia, "our parents aren't interested, as few attend school events, even parent conferences." Dan courageously retorted, "Today I overheard a discussion between the student teachers and the mathematics teachers. They were describing a need for parent/student workshops. They shared that some parents remarked during this year's teacher conferences that they did not understand their children's pre-algebra homework. These parents couldn't help their children." Alicia wondered about the validity of his observations, but she was willing to accept any reasonable idea. "If they are willing to do structured workshops for parents, not a one-event activity, I will support them under ESEA Title I. We are supposed to do such activities with these funds."

Dan met that day with the teachers and his student teachers to plan a weekly series of ten mathematics workshops. The mathematics teachers selected 23 students who were failing pre-algebra and began calling their parents that evening. To the teachers' delight, the parents' response to their request was that they wanted to attend the at-school mathematics workshops. However, several parents expressed concerns about the proposed time of the workshops, namely at 3:00, and childcare. Seeking Alicia's guidance, the teachers scurried to her office. Alicia was so pleased with their news that she offered her personal assistance and phoned the parents that evening. As part of her invitation to the parents, she mentioned that the workshops would be scheduled at their suggested time of early evening. Alicia added that she would host the first session, personally prepare her favorite supper recipe for them, and provide childcare during the workshop.

The effect of personal calls from the teachers and the principal brought the 23 at-risk students along with 27 family members to the first student-parent-teacher mathematics workshop. At the first session, Alicia facilitated casual discussion so that parents became acquainted with one another and the teachers. She believed that the social connections among parents as well as among teachers was important to group learning and personal support. The teachers' selected topic for this first night was parent supervision of homework—setting the stage for mathematics learning at home. Alicia asked the parents how they structured their childrens' time for homework such as limited TV, computer, and telephone time and providing a quiet space for homework. Parents shared their plans and struggles. Their children readily participated and expressed their points of view. Every family prepared an action plan for the following week. Result—the students began submitting daily homework.

The next week parents were raising more questions, and the content of pre-algebra became the focal point of all subsequent sessions. Teachers taught the pre-algebra concepts that were the instructional classroom's focus for the week. Thus, the parents knew the content before the homework was assigned and could work with their child on the new mathematics concept during the session. The enthusiasm and camaraderie continued for 10 sessions with parent/student attendance averaging 90%. At the second session, two mothers expressed their appreciation to Alicia for the food and offered to co-host the third session's meal. This led to subsequent meal participation hosted by the parents.

Results? The mathematics teachers reported that these students' attendance improved, and their work habits permanently changed: student homework was submitted on a regular basis. These teachers mentioned that the parent workshops helped them to better understand all their students' parents and how they should more frequently reach out to parents, not simply when a student problem occurred. In turn, these workshops opened the doors of communication for the parents. They felt that teachers were open to their concerns and were encouraged to directly contact them. After the ten sessions, the parents expressed positive satisfaction regarding the workshops, the desire for more mathematics sessions, and also sessions on English composition, English literature, and science. And, the students? These at-risk students were passing quizzes and feeling better about themselves, their teachers, parents, and mathematics. All students' grades improved, and 21 received a "C" or better in pre-algebra. All expected to graduate from high school.

Alicia and Dan recently reminisced how these workshops were the beginning, an impetus toward a wider scope of parent engagement at the middle school. Alicia's belief about parental disengagement was long shattered and replaced with faith that many ways exist to foster parent engagement.

College and Career Readiness

Mary R. Waters and John Mark Williams

European educators understand that "… most young people learn best in structured programs that combine work and learning, and where learning is contextual and applied. Ironically, this pedagogical approach has been widely applied in the training of our highest status professionals in the U.S., where clinical practice (a form of apprenticeship) is an essential component in the preparation of doctors, architects, and (increasingly) teachers. When it comes to teenagers, however, we Americans seem to think they will learn best by sitting all day in classrooms" (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011, p. 38). "When classroom time has no relevance to the students' legitimate aspirations, the resulting disengagement makes them casualties of the educational system" (Williams, speech given at the Technology Center of DuPage, 2010).

College Ready and Career Ready Is the Same Thing—Right?

Wrong! College ready is for four to six years; career ready is for 40 years. To be college ready and to be career ready are two closely related but not synonymous goals. College readiness is the command of those "academic skills necessary to pursue postsecondary education without remediation" (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2010, p. 1). In contrast, career readiness is the command of employability and job-specific skills in addition to college readiness skills (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2010).

Of Those Who Go to College, How Many Finish?

About 30% earn a bachelor's degree. College readiness is more closely linked with initial four-year college enrollment than to the completion of an undergraduate degree (Illinois Education Research Council, 2010). About 70% of ninth graders graduate from high school, and of those only about 50% are prepared for postsecondary education (Greene & Winters, 2005).

Failure rates at the postsecondary level are even higher. For all four-year colleges and universities, 56% of students graduate on time—within 6 years. For the most elite and selective four-year

institutions, the rate is 75% to 90%. At community colleges—the nation's largest postsecondary system—the on-time graduation rate (within three years) is less than 30%. The U.S. has the highest college dropout rate in the industrialized world according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Symonds et al., 2011).

Why Do Students Drop Out?

Boredom? Academic unpreparedness? Stress: financial, family, and/or job-related? Yes, yes, and yes. However, another factor is that students perceive "[no] clear, transparent connection between their program of study and tangible opportunities in the labor market" (Symonds et al., 2011, p. 11). Students who enroll in a remedial postsecondary reading course are 41% more likely to drop out of college than students enrolled in a college-level English course (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

Who Cares if I Drop Out?

Employers, parents, society, and, in time, the dropout—that's who cares. In urban areas of the U.S., up to 50% of students "evaluate" the high school curriculum by dropping out.

On the Big Picture Learning website (The Met Schools), a digital clock records that an American high school student drops out every 12 seconds. Among the Met Schools' graduates, 95% to 100% are accepted into college; about 89% actually enroll; and many are socioeconomically disadvantaged. A Met School student's high school experiences include (1) a small and positive school climate, (2) personalized curriculum, and (3) real-world internships. Dennis Littkey, founder of The Met Schools (Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center—a public school), identifies the five keys to encouraging students to "drop in" to high school as: (1) access to college- and career-transition counselors, (2) a

> When classroom time has no relevance to the students' legitimate aspirations, the resulting disengagement makes them casualties of the educational system.

college-preparatory curriculum, (3) college credits in high school, (4) active alumni engagement including the tracking of students' experiences to age 30, and (5) parent support. Encouraging students to drop in requires goal setting and regular monitoring (Big Picture Learning, 2011).

Is Schooling Boring?

Some is, some isn't. Picasso said that all children are artists and that the problem is to remain an artist as we grow up, not get educated out of it. It appears that rigorous elective courses—fine arts, career programs, and technical subjects—are not boring (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). The inherent high-level thinking—application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creativity—required by elective courses makes them more academically challenging than a typical lecture-based course. However, high-stakes, norm-referenced standardized tests typically do not assess higher-order thinking.

It is not in the best interest of the student to take only those courses in which specific content is assessed via such high-stakes test. To paraphrase Dr. Henry David, everything one says about education is true somewhere. Somewhere teachers are teaching; somewhere students are learning; somewhere teachers are boring; somewhere students are enduring, and so on.

Do I Have Course Choices in Addition to Those Taught in My High School or College?

Yes. Several options, including virtual courses and open courseware, are options to brick-and-mortar schooling. According to the World Futures Society, virtual education will enter the mainstream by 2015. "Only 10% of college education is now conducted online. But e-training accounts for 30% of corporate training, and will likely exceed 50% soon. The fact that 100 million Americans are taking continuing education suggests a healthy and growing market for online college courses" (The Futurist, 2011, p. 46).

Which Colleges and Universities Do Recruiters Prefer?

The top three are state universities: Pennsylvania State University, Texas A&M University, and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Why? Because of their big student populations, numerous majors, and a focus on teaching practical skills. Companies get more "bang" for their

recruiting buck at these public institutions. The Top 25 Recruiter Picks of schools where graduates are top-rated was revealed in a recent Wall Street Journal poll of recruiters from public, private, and nonprofit companies. The purpose was to "identify the schools that are most likely to help students land a job in key careers and professions; areas that are growing, pay well, and offer high levels of satisfaction" (The Wall Street Journal, 2010). The Top 25 did not include any Ivy League schools. The report infers that Ivy League graduates typically remain with a company for one year, learn the company's "secrets," and then move on. Training first-year employees is the highest cost to a company.

According to recruiters, graduates of the Top 25 had the most relevant training and internships, often through research partnerships with potential employers. Real-world teaching in the classroom—in the form of supervised internships and project-based learning—pays off when graduates apply for jobs. Postsecondary "internships are the new full-time hiring" (The Wall Street Journal, 2010).

How Do College Graduates Find Jobs?

Social media—it's the new resume. Job-hunting for graduates involves the use of social media: LinkedIn, Facebook, and so on. In 2011, 28% of Gen Y respondents to a USA Today News poll plan to use LinkedIn to seek employment, up from 5% in 2010. Seven percent plan to use Facebook to seek employment, up from 5% in 2010 (Petracca, 2011). Savvy job seekers use social media to find companies for which they wish to work, review company websites, read Facebook and Twitter updates from current and former employees, and read LinkedIn profiles.

Social media learning venues are becoming a way of life in organizations around the globe. For example, UPS revamped its recruitment to embrace Web 2.0 tools that better engage potential Gen Y applicants and as a result recruited 955 employees via social media in 2010, up from 29 in 2009 (Petracca, 2011). There is, however, a mismatch between schools' use and organizations' use of social media. In the U.S., 60% of Fortune 500 businesses use social media to reach out to customers, 95% of colleges and universities use social media to reach out to customers,

but 70% of school districts have specific policies that ban social media use.

Readiness for college and career is today's educational conversation.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Differentiate between readiness for college and readiness for a career.
2. Endorse college- and career-readiness tools for parents and students.
3. Sponsor forums to engage parents, educators, and employers in the conversation.
4. Endorse a statewide internship and/or work-based learning experience for all students.
5. Expand a statewide dual credit articulation system.
6. Explore additional e-learning opportunities.
7. Elevate engagement and higher-cognitive demand in classrooms by endorsing integrated curriculums.

Local Education Agency

1. Provide parents and students with college- and career-readiness tools.
2. Provide college- and career-counseling resources.
3. Recruit engaging teachers, and reward superior performance.
4. Foster college credit in high school.
5. Embrace e-learning options.
6. Partner with parents to help students set career goals.
7. Prune boring teaching.

School

1. Implement a college- and career-counseling and goal-setting focus for every student.
2. Assign a college- and career-counselor to every student.
3. Educate parents and students to the value of "stackable" industrial certifications.
4. Provide students with multiple postsecondary options (certificates, tuition-free colleges and universities, e-learning, etc.).
5. Implement a college-credit-in-high-school system for all students.

6. Personalize learning to keep students in school.

7. Partner with employers to engage mentors and internships for teachers and students.

8. Discover what interests students, then provide resources to investigate and prepare them for the appropriate college and career.

9. Increase the viable uses of social media in learning and job hunting.

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Part III:

Families and Schools

A Framework for Partnerships

Steven B. Sheldon

Topic 8

Despite the consistent findings that family and community engagement has a powerful effect on student success (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003, 2005), educational practitioners have tended to place the engagement of family members on a back burner, often viewing it as an afterthought or add-on to the delivery of instruction or outside the influence of teachers, school staff, or school administrators (Epstein, 2011). Research has shown, however, that family involvement is influenced by the actions of teachers and other school personnel and should be considered an important aspect of teachers' and administrators' professional roles (Epstein, 2011; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). In the majority of schools throughout this country, however, the implementation of family and community engagement practices are "random acts," dependent on the personal beliefs of teachers (National Family, School, and Community Working Group, 2010). For all students to benefit from a supportive home and community these efforts need to be coordinated across classrooms and supported by state, district, and school leaders (Epstein, 2011; National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group, 2010). For this to occur, educators need a framework that can support and sustain family and community engagement practices.

Components of Strong School Partnership Programs

At Johns Hopkins University, over 15 years of research and educational practice have focused on school, family, and community partnerships. Based on the theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 2011), a framework was developed about how family and community engagement can become a sustainable aspect of school organization and culture (Epstein et al., 2009). Four organizational principles can serve as the foundation for the development of a strong school, family, and community partnership program: (1) employing teamwork; (2) writing annual, goal-oriented action plans; (3) using a multidimensional definition of involvement or engagement; and (4) evaluating partnership practices. These principles have been shown to work with schools and districts to make family and community engagement a more integrated aspect of schooling.

Teamwork

As a first step in establishing a partnership program, schools need to form an Action Team for Partnership (ATP). The ATP members include teachers, school administrators, parents, community members, and, at the high school level, students. At least one member of the ATP should also be a member of the School Improvement Team (SIT) so that partnership efforts are in concert with other school improvement efforts. The ATP chair should communicate with the school principal and attend SIT meetings. A primary responsibility of the ATP is to construct an annual action plan in the spring that will coordinate, guide, and document the family and community engagement efforts the following school year.

Annual Action Plans

The annual action plan should link family and community involvement activities to specific goals, consistent with and supportive of those established by the SIT. Action plans with the same student and school goals as the school improvement team can work with, rather than in opposition to, other programs at the school. ATPs should set two academic goals (i.e., improved reading or math achievement test performance), one nonacademic goal (i.e., improved attendance or behavior), and a goal of improving the partnership climate at the school (see Epstein et al., 2009).

The Six Types of Involvement

For each goal on the action plan, schools should implement a variety of practices that will engage families in their children's schooling in multiple ways. A research-based framework outlines six types of involvement that help create effective school, family, and community partnerships (Epstein, 2011). Schools with comprehensive programs of partnership implement activities encouraging all six types of involvement across the four goals: (1) parenting—helping all families establish supportive home environments for children; (2) communicating—establishing two-way exchanges about school programs and children's progress; (3) volunteering—recruiting and organizing parent help at school, home, or other locations; (4) learning at home—providing information and ideas to families about how to help students with homework and other curriculum-related materials; (5) decision making—having family members serve as representatives and leaders on school committees; and (6) collaborating with the community—identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs.

In addition to providing opportunities for involvement, schools need to confront challenges associated with involving families in their children's education. Because research shows there is variation in family engagement according to the education levels of the child, educational attainment of the parents, and family structure (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Lareau, 2003), schools must examine their partnership practices and assess the degree to which they reach out to all of their students' families. For example, schools cannot solely provide family members volunteer opportunities at school, but need to develop ways in which families can support the school and students from locations including home, work, or the neighborhood (Epstein et al., 2009). By recognizing and addressing the challenges families face, schools can inform and involve parents across racial, educational, and socioeconomic groups.

Evaluation

Finally, school and ATP leaders need to conduct ongoing and end-of-year evaluations of their partnership program and practices. In evaluating the partnership program, ATP members are able to identify strengths and weaknesses, demonstrate outcomes from the activities, and send a message that partnerships are valued at the school (Epstein et al., 2009; Sheldon, 2009; Weiss, 1998). Studies demonstrate that partnership programs are more likely to improve and maintain a higher level of quality if the ATP

> By recognizing and addressing the challenges families face, schools can inform and involve parents across racial, educational, and socioeconomic groups.

participates in an end-of-year evaluation of the program and if feedback is obtained from families participating in family engagement activities (Sheldon, 2009; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004).

In addition to these four organizational principles, there are a variety of contextual factors within a school that are important to establishing a strong partnership program. Research shows that strong partnership programs have support from the principal (Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004), support from the school district (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011), and support among the teachers and school community (Sanders, Sheldon, & Epstein, 2005). Strong partnership programs, in turn, are more likely to get families involved at the school, have higher student performance on achievement tests, and are more likely to improve daily student attendance (Sheldon, 2003, 2005, 2007; Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004).

District Level Partnership Programs

Having multilevel leadership on family and community engagement reinforces the idea that this is a valued part of schooling. District leaders, therefore, have important roles in guiding and motivating principals and school teams to develop and implement strong partnership programs (Epstein et al., 2009; Epstein et al., 2011). District leaders for partnerships can develop clear policies to guide all schools' partnership programs, organize and offer professional development workshops to school teams, help teams write plans for goal-oriented partnership programs, share best practices, and help schools evaluate their program activities. These supports are also critical to sustaining the work in schools to support families in ways that can lead to improved student learning and achievement.

State Level Partnership Programs

Support for partnerships is also needed at the state level. Finding a consistent framework to guide the work of all states, however, is challenging, given variation in state size, the number of school districts, and numerous other factors. State leaders can support district and school implementation of the partnership framework described above by writing a state-level policy supporting family and community engagement practices. Also, states can offer or direct funding to provide district and school educators professional development on school, family, and community partnerships. Finally, at the state level, leaders can establish partnership advisory boards with representation from districts across the state. These boards can provide state leaders insight and perspectives about the local needs of educators to promote greater family and community engagement.

We know that schools and districts can develop and sustain strong school, family, and community partnership programs. The action principles described above set forth a foundation on which strong outreach to families and community partners can benefit all students. For further ideas about specific practices to engage families, visit the National Network of Partnership Schools on the web (www.partnershipschools.org). There you can find additional information about the principles described here, examine promising partnership practices, and see examples of strong school, district, and state programs.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Write a state-level policy supporting family and community engagement practices.
2. Offer or direct funding to provide district and school educators professional development on school, family, and community partnerships.
3. Establish partnership advisory boards with representation from districts across the state.

Local Education Agency

1. District leaders for partnerships develop clear policies to guide all schools' partnership programs.
2. Organize and offer professional development workshops to school teams.
3. Help teams write plans for goal-oriented partnership programs.
4. Share best practices.
5. Help schools evaluate their program activities.

School

1. Form an Action Team for Partnership.
2. Link family and community involvement activities to specific goals, consistent with and supportive of those established by the SIT.
3. Conduct ongoing and end-of-year evaluations of their partnership program and practices.

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Parent Leadership

Topic 9

Anne T. Henderson and Sam Redding

Shared or distributed leadership is a common element in school improvement research and practice (Walberg, 2007). Often that means distributing decision-making responsibilities beyond the people whose job titles identify them as "administrators." Lead teachers may assume quasi-administrative roles. Leadership and instructional teams make decisions and develop plans, extending leadership to groups with specific purposes. Sharing leadership with parents breaks new ground in many schools, but where it is prevalent, research demonstrates its power in boosting school improvement (Moore, 1998; Redding & Sheley, 2005). More than that, when a school invests in developing the leadership capabilities of parents, it accesses an untapped resource and lifts the life prospects of the parent leaders themselves (Corbett & Wilson, 2008; Henderson, 2010; Henderson, Jacob, Kernan-Schloss, & Raimondo, 2004).

Parents may be nurtured as leaders for a variety of purposes:

Deciding
1. Providing input to critical school decisions about curriculum, instruction, schedules, resource allocation, student services, school leadership, and cocurricular programs.
2. Making decisions, setting guidelines, developing plans, and implementing activities related to areas where the responsibility of the school and the home overlap.

Organizing
3. Planning and administering open houses, family-school nights, transition nights, college and career fairs, and other school events.
4. Building a strong, broad-based parent organization that can serve to create an inclusive school community, formulate positions, build consensus, develop proposals, and select leaders to serve on decision-making groups such as a school council or school improvement team.

Engaging

5. Providing outreach to engage other parents in support of their children's learning and in assisting with the school's functions.

6. Convening groups of parents in homes to meet with teachers in "home gatherings."

7. Organizing and conducting home visits, community walks, and other opportunities to build collaborative relationships between families and school staff.

Educating

8. Serving as leaders to facilitate workshops and courses for parents.

9. Participating in professional development for teachers related to teachers' work with families.

10. Planning and providing training for school personnel to make the school a more welcoming place.

11. Planning and providing training for volunteers who work in the school.

Advocating and Connecting

12. Advocating on behalf of the school and families with community and political leaders and groups.

13. Connecting school staff, students, and families to community resources for the benefit of the school and its families.

The personal benefits derived by parents in leadership roles also flow to their children and to the school itself. Parents and families acquire skills, confidence, and a sense of self-efficacy. Researchers Lee Shumow and Richard Lomax, in *Parental Efficacy: Predictor of Parenting Behavior and Adolescent Outcomes*, show the connection between parents' sense of efficacy and their children's higher achievement in school (2001).

Parent leaders also can:

- gain management and executive skills that they can transfer to their jobs or home-based issues;

- increase helpful contacts and build social networks that they can use to create opportunities for their children and themselves;

- develop closer ties to their communities and neighbors; and

- learn how to influence decisions made in their schools and communities (Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009).

Parent Leadership in Decision Making

Since 1988, Chicago schools have been governed by Local School Councils, the majority of members being parents elected by other parents. The councils serve many functions typically assigned to boards of education, such as selecting and evaluating the principal, developing school improvement plans, and developing and approving the school budget. A study of the Chicago experience found that elementary schools with more effective school councils were significantly more likely to have improved student achievement in reading, moving from 20% to 37% of students reading at the national average, compared to no significant increase for schools with ineffective councils (Moore, 1998).

The Academic Development Institute utilized School Community Councils with a majority of parent members to plan and administer a comprehensive family engagement initiative focused on student learning in reading and mathematics. The project included 123 low-achieving schools. A study of the schools' gains on state assessments showed that project schools outgained a control group of schools with similar beginning assessment scores and demographics by a significant margin over the two-year period (Redding & Sheley, 2005).

Preparing and Supporting Parent Leaders

As all leaders do, parent leaders require training and support (Henderson, 2010; Henderson, Jacob, Kernan-Schloss, & Raimondo, 2004; Redding, 2006). Well-designed parent leadership programs prepare parents for their leadership roles with training on:

- Human relations strategies;

- Effective team functioning;

- Communication skills;

- Research and practice on the family's influence on student learning;

- Use of a variety of data;

- Goal-setting, planning, and program evaluation;

- Developing organizational constitutions, bylaws, and procedures;

- Defining roles for parents and parent leaders; and
- Understanding and working with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

Coaching, mentoring, and follow-up support to training are key elements of a well-designed parent leadership program. Organizations that promote and train parent leaders offer on-site technical assistance and consultation. District and school personnel who serve as family facilitators, trained for the purpose, may also provide consistent training and support for parent leaders.

School Leaders as Proponents of Parent Leaders

The impetus for parent leadership must begin somewhere, and the most likely somewhere is with superintendents and principals. District and school leaders establish the importance of parent leadership, organize training for parent leaders, and set goals and expectations for decision-making bodies and other groups in which parents are members and actively participate with these groups. The district and school leaders convey the importance of parent leadership to the school board, faculty, and parents.

Parents as Advocates for Parent Leadership

Parents also take the initiative in insisting that parent leadership is given its due in their districts and schools. They advocate for parent participation in decision making and for training and support for parent leaders. Parents also seek offices of influence on school boards and school councils to ensure that family engagement is embedded in the operations of their schools.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Enforce the law by monitoring how districts carry out the Title I parent

> Coaching, mentoring, and follow-up support to training are key elements of a well-designed parent leadership program.

involvement requirements and the state's own requirements. Make it clear that Title I funds allocated for parent involvement can be used for leadership training.

2. Designate state personnel with specific duties that include the advancement of parent leadership and family engagement. Identify parent leadership training programs that can serve as models or be directly adopted.

3. Put parents on school councils by state statute or guidance and outline the responsibilities of the councils.

4. Get advice from the grass roots with a parent–community advisory council and encourage districts to create district councils. Go beyond "the usual suspects" to appoint authentic parent leaders.

5. Invite local parent and community leaders to meet with state leadership and meet with and speak at their events.

6. Hold a state conference every year or two to advance family and community engagement.

7. Offer parent leadership training across the state as a model for what districts and schools can emulate.

Local Education Agency

1. Commit the resources of time, staff, and funds to train and support parent leaders at the district and school levels.

2. Collaborate with community organizing groups to recruit parent leaders from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds.

3. Include a line item in each school's budget for family engagement with a portion allocated for training and support of parent leaders.

4. Include parents in the district improvement process.

5. Require schools to include parents on appropriate school teams and ensure that the teams represent the diversity of the community, and operate with bylaws, agendas, and minutes.

6. Require principals to report monthly on parent leadership and family engagement activities in their schools, including the

work of school teams that include parents. Keep the focus on improving student achievement.

7. Include in each monthly report to the board of education what the district and each school are doing relative to parent leadership and family engagement.

School

1. Include in the school's decision-making structure a School Community Council with parents as the majority of membership, operating with bylaws, agendas, and minutes.

2. Include parents on other appropriate school teams and groups and/or seek their input in decisions made by school teams and in plans for school improvement.

3. Provide training and support for parent leaders.

4. Include in the school budget a line item for family engagement with a portion allocated for the training and support of parent leaders.

5. Provide professional development for teachers on family engagement and work with parent leaders.

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Resources

Center for Parent Leadership, www.centerforparentleadership.org: The Prichard Committee's consulting and technical assistance unit including programs for parent leadership.

Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, www.cipl.org: Information about the work of the organization and brief reports.

Connecticut Commission on Children, www.cga.ct.gov/coc/parents_see.htm: Information about the leadership training program, Parents Seeking Excellence in Education (Parents SEE)

Institute for Educational Leadership, www.iel.org: Program areas include parent and community leadership.

Families and Schools, www.families-schools.org: Resources for parents and schools and new issues and archive for *School Community Journal*.

Parent Institute for Quality Education, www.piqe.org: Information about this leadership training program that focuses on parents as leaders at home.

Maximum Homework Impact: Optimizing Time, Purpose, Communication, and Collaboration

Frances L. Van Voorhis

Topic 10

"Have you done your homework?" Homework is typically associated with students in school, but "doing your homework" describes proper preparation for a task in any setting. Because design and implementation are not always optimal, homework may require more time than planned, lack clear purpose or adequate direction, or stray too far from classroom learning. Teachers play critical roles in homework design, student perception, and encouraging appropriate levels of family involvement. This article provides research-based guidance on promoting healthy school homework habits. By understanding process issues of time, purpose, communication, and collaboration, teachers can help maximize homework's overall impact and minimize challenges.

How Much Is Enough?

In addition to classroom instruction and students' responses to class lessons, homework represents one important factor that increases achievement (Marzano, 2003). Several meta-analyses suggest a positive relationship between homework and achievement, with percentile gains from 8% to 31% (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006; Marzano & Pickering, 2007). Studies of time spent on homework also reveal positive associations with academic achievement for secondary school students (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006). Therefore, teachers expect students to do more homework as they move from elementary to secondary grades.

Supported by research and the National Parent Teacher Association, many schools follow the "10-minute rule," which advises that teachers assign roughly 10 minutes of total nightly homework per grade level (i.e., 30 minutes for a third grader and 80 minutes for an eighth grader). While recommendations for high school students generally follow this rule, students enrolled in challenging classes can expect more homework.

Research which evaluates time spent on homework reveals that some students, at all grade levels, spend over 2 hours per night on homework (5% of 9-year-olds, 8% of 13-year-olds, and 11% of

17-year-olds). Other students are assigned no homework or fail to complete assignments (24% to 39%). The remainder fall in the middle, completing less than 1 hour (28% to 60%) or between 1 and 2 hours nightly (13% to 22%) (Perie & Moran, 2005). Comparing these patterns to the "10 minute rule," we note that some students at all age levels are not practicing skills through homework, either by choice or lack of opportunity. In contrast, other students may have excessive homework. These disparities should encourage teachers to examine and discuss their homework policies and to periodically monitor homework time so all students have the chance to practice skills without being overburdened (Van Voorhis, 2004).

Homework on Purpose

Most elementary and secondary teachers (85%) report that they use homework to help students practice skills or prepare for tests (Markow, Kim, & Liebman, 2007). While adults understand that homework's primary purpose is practice and learning, children's understanding of homework's purposes develops through school (Warton, 2001). In addition to improving performance, research suggests that homework may assist students in developing achievement motivation and self-regulation, competencies essential for students to manage their behaviors and emotions to reach academic goals (e.g., Bempechat, 2004; Ramdass & Zimmerman, 2011; Xu, 2007).

Therefore, homework may address both instructional (practice, preparation, participation, and personal development) and noninstructional purposes (parent–child relations, parent–teacher communication, policy) (Corno & Xu, 2004; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). Students typically complete homework independently, but some teachers utilize interactive assignments to periodically engage students and peers or adults in learning. Therefore, one assignment may effectively address multiple purposes: helping students learn, building study skills, managing time, and encouraging parent–child discussion. Teachers, students, and parents would benefit from assignments with more clearly defined homework purposes so home learning is more focused, enjoyable, and better connected with school practice.

Engaging Families

Because homework is often completed at home, parents or other family partners become involved in monitoring its completion, assisting with an interaction, or checking its accuracy. In general, students with parents who are involved in their schooling are more likely to: attend school regularly, earn higher grades, be promoted, go on to postsecondary education, and have better social skills (Epstein et al., 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). However, parental involvement plays a detrimental role when it undermines student learning and responsibility. Studies indicate that parents often feel unprepared to help, or they provide inappropriate homework assistance.

Numerous studies demonstrate that, when teachers invite family participation and provide clear direction or training, families usually respond (Epstein, 2011; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008). Productive family involvement in well-designed, standards-based homework can promote academic achievement and generate positive emotional benefits for both students and parents (Van Voorhis, 2003, 2011a, 2011b). These findings underscore the need for consistent teacher–parent communication about how to support student learning and professional development time for teachers to become skilled at creating engaging assignments (Epstein et al., 2009; Van Voorhis, 2004).

Sharing Best Practices

In an online strategy session of education leaders, teachers noted that the following actions would provide the most improvement for homework (Markow, Kim, & Liebman, 2007): ensure that assignments are relevant to the course and topic of study; build in daily

> Productive family involvement in well-designed, standards-based homework can promote academic achievement and generate positive emotional benefits for both students and parents.

time for feedback on assignments; and establish effective homework policies at the curriculum, grade, and school levels (p. 136). Other strategies include offering teachers time to effectively plan and prepare assignments, allowing teachers time to share best practices, ensuring that students have effective home support, and creating ongoing homework communication with parents (Markow, Kim, & Liebman, 2007). These improvement strategies highlight the importance of state, district, and school-level support for teachers to collaborate and discuss homework practices and to create ongoing partnerships with students' families regarding homework and school learning (Epstein, et al., 2009; Van Voorhis, 2011c).

These general homework research findings regarding time, homework's varied purposes, ongoing student–teacher–family communication, and collegial collaboration translate into specific actions for state/district and school-level leaders and educators. Using our knowledge, people, and time resources helps to increase homework's impact and student success.

Action Principles

State Education Agency/Local Education Agency

1. Review or develop a state and district homework policy with input from teachers, principals, students, and families. Include guidelines about time, purpose, feedback, and ways for students and families to communicate concerns. Consider multiple formats for distributing information, use family-friendly language, and translate the document as necessary to reach all students' families.

2. Include homework design and implementation in professional development offered at the state, district, and school levels.

3. Recognize teachers who have met homework challenges, and provide them a forum to share lessons learned.

4. Consider ways to guide families in supporting their children's learning at home, including online assignment posting, homework hotlines, newsletters, or workshops.

5. Periodically conduct formal and informal surveys that include student, teacher, and parent views about homework practice

and effects. Use results to improve future policy and practice.

School

1. Develop clear school and classroom homework policies (linked to state/district policies) and share them with students and families.

2. Conduct a homework inventory and identify various purposes in assignments. Edit or discard unsuccessful assignments, and consider ways to make homework more enjoyable. Guide families in how to assist in the process without doing homework for students.

3. Communicate regularly about homework expectations and respond to student and family concerns as issues arise.

4. Share homework challenges and successes with colleagues over the course of the school year. Coordinate assignments across teachers or subjects to avoid overburdening students with multiple projects simultaneously.

5. Evaluate the strength of homework assignments and policy through student achievement and student and family feedback. Revise and improve each year.

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Differentiating Family Supports

Topic 11

Patricia A. Edwards

Differentiation is a "hot topic" in education right now. It is the practice of modifying and adapting instruction, materials, content, student projects and products, and assessment to meet the learning needs of individual students (Tucker, 2011). The rationale for differentiating family supports comes from theory, research, and educational common sense. Today's classrooms are becoming more academically diverse in most regions of the United States. Many, if not most, classrooms contain students representing both genders and multiple cultures. They frequently include students who do not speak English as a first language and with a range of exceptionalities and markedly different experiential backgrounds. These students almost certainly work at differing readiness levels, have varying interests, and learn in a variety of ways. Educators know that one standard approach to teaching will not meet the needs of all—or even most—students. Unfortunately, most educators still have one standard approach to dealing with parents.

We, as educators, must understand that parents are not all the same. Parents are people, too. They have their own strengths and weaknesses, complexities, problems, and questions, and we must work with them and see them as more than "just parents." In my work with parents, I coined two terms, *differentiated parenting* and *parentally appropriate* to help teachers find new ways to think about who parents are (Edwards, 2004, 2009). I proposed the concept of *differentiated parenting* as a way to urge schools not to place all parents into one basket. When schools design programs for parents, one size does not fit all. I used the term *parentally appropriate* to stress the point that "because parents are different, tasks and activities must be compatible with their capabilities" (Edwards, 2007, p. 64). This is not to say that parents' goals for their children vary greatly (they all want their children to succeed in school), but it's clear that their situations, perspectives, and abilities affect their capacity to support their children in particular ways. For example, asking parents to read to their children appears to be a simple request. But some parents never experienced proper modeling of how to read interactively with children. They might not know what materials are most appropriate for children to read. They may also underestimate the positive effects of talking with their children about what the children have read. More than 15 years

ago in my work with parents at Donaldsonville Elementary School in Louisiana, I learned from personal experience how uncomfortable parents felt when teachers asked them to read to their children. Such parents require different support than parents who might readily respond to the request to "read to your child" because of their own positive past experiences.

The point I make is more subtle and significant than merely matching the school's request of parents with each parent's ability to respond. The greater point is that parents, like students, are best served when treated individually. This means knowing them, listening to their stories, and understanding what will be most helpful to them in raising their children and supporting their children's school learning. Parents' needs are not static; they change over time with the advancing age of their children. Parent programs require a scope and sequence and differentiation to meet the needs of the parent relative to the age and progress of the child.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Require that teacher preparation programs have pre- and in-service teachers participate in cross-cultural conversations and interactions.
2. Require teacher preparation programs to provide training for pre- and in-service teachers to effectively work with parents.
3. Develop guidelines for helping schools to create family-friendly schools.
4. Require teacher preparation programs to integrate community action projects in their educational programs in order to connect with and support community agencies (i.e., service-learning opportunities).
5. Develop guidelines for prioritizing issues of equity, diversity, and language differences in funding opportunities.

Local Education Agency

1. Encourage parents and students to create a vision statement with schools about family involvement.
2. Support and utilize parent focus groups to make important decisions at the schools.

3. Encourage family events and invite parent stories.
4. Determine parent capabilities, interests, willingness, and responsibility in order to make home-to-school connections.
5. Conduct a school climate assessment survey to understand family perceptions and open dialogue about family involvement.

School

While state and local education agencies have an important role to play in supporting parent involvement, it is ultimately the schools that provide the front line contact with parents. The following action principles will help schools to proactively engage families in their childrens' education:

1. Define parent involvement so that everyone understands what it means in your school. For instance, you need to ensure that the teacher's and school's definition of family involvement do not conflict. In a broad sense, parent involvement includes home-based activities that relate to children's education in school. It can also include school-based activities in which the parents actively participate, either during the school day or in the evening.
2. Assess parent involvement climate. Many of the parents at your school may not become involved if they do not feel that the school climate—the social and educational atmosphere of the school—is one that makes them feel welcomed, respected, trusted, heard, and needed.
3. Consider the needs of parents. Before launching any program, first consult with a group of parents to identify the needs of the children and their families. Remember that any programs your school offers to benefit adult family members also will

> The greater point is that parents, like students, are best served when treated individually.

have positive effects on the children in the school. When the parents or guardians receive support, they become empowered and develop better self-esteem. This affects the way they interact with their children.

4. Ask questions. As J. L. Epstein noted in a 1988 issue of Educational Horizons, "Schools of the same type serve different populations, have different histories of involving parents, and have teachers and administrators with different philosophies, training, and skills in involving parents" (p. 59). Epstein's observation should encourage teachers/schools to consider several questions:

   - What is our school's history of involving parents and families?
   - What is our school's philosophy regarding parents' involvement in school activities?
   - What training and skills do we need for involving parents in school affairs?

5. Create a demographic profile. This is a short questionnaire that compiles information about the school's families. There are two different types of demographic profiles—one is conducted at the school level and the other at the classroom level (Edwards, 2009). Gathering this information has several benefits:

   - **Set your scope and sequence.** It is vital to help teachers and parents "get on the same page" by organizing and coordinating parent informant literacy groups, which will make school-based literacy practices and skills more accessible to parents. In essence, the goal is to make the school's "culture of power" (Delpit, 1995) explicit to parents so that they can familiarize themselves with school-based literacy knowledge (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991). You need to have a clear plan and a set of goals that you would like to achieve at each grade level and decide how parents can assist.
   - **Raise awareness.** Once you've identified the needs of your school's families, make community members aware that they

can help. Make announcements on local radio stations and cable TV channels. Print ads in local newspapers. Meet with the "movers and shakers" of the community—political leaders, religious leaders, business owners, or influential parents.

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Angela
Patricia A. Edwards

Angela was so tired of teachers telling her to read to her child and assuming that she knew how to do it. She felt like no one at the school would listen to her or understand her frustration.

Donaldsonville Elementary School had been recognized for its "good curriculum," even though teachers were disappointed with the progress of their students. Eighty percent of the student population was African-American, and 20% was white; most were members of low-income families. Teachers felt that they were doing all they could to help these children at school. Without parental assistance at home, the children at Donaldsonville were going to fail. The teachers' solution was to expect and demand that parents be involved in their children's education by reading to them at home.

The teachers felt that this was not an unreasonable request. There is good evidence of positive gains made by "disadvantaged" elementary students when parents and children work together at home on homework or simply read together. What the teachers did not take into account was that 40% of the school's parents were illiterate or semi-literate. When the parents didn't seem willing to engage in reading at home, teachers mistook parents' behavior as a lack of interest in their children's education. The school continued to demand that parents read to their children at home, which had a particular meaning in teachers' minds. This sparked hostility and racial tensions between teachers and parents. Each group blamed the other for the children's failures; each felt victimized by the interactions. Children were caught between their two most important teachers—their classroom teacher and their parent.

Angela, a 32-year-old African American mother with 5 children ranging in ages from 22 months to 16 years old, becomes fearful and sometimes defensive when her child's teacher requests that she read to her child. The mother quietly admitted to me something that mirrors the reality of some parents:

"I'm embarrassed, scared, angry, and feel completely helpless because I can't read. I do care 'bout my children, and I want them to do well in school. Why don't them teachers believe me when I say I want the best for my children? I know that my children ain't done well in kindergarten and first grade and had to repeat them grades. My older children are in the lowest sections, in Chapter 1, and are struggling in their subjects. My children are frustrated, and I am frustrated, too. I don't know how to help them especially when the teacher wants me to read to them. These teachers think that reading to children is so easy and simple, but it is very difficult if you don't know how to read."

Mrs. Colvin, a first grade teacher at Donaldsonville Elementary School, expressed her frustration with parents or other caregivers like Angela:

"Year in and year out these parents who are mostly low-income African American and white send their children to school with serious literacy problems. It seems as if the children have no chance of passing. They don't recognize letters of the alphabet, numbers, and they can't even recognize the letters in their own name. Consequently, it is not surprising that most of them have had to repeat kindergarten and first grade. All of the kindergarten and first grade teachers have seen similar behaviors in these children. These behaviors include limited language skills and the inability to interact with adults. We feel that these children have not been read to and have rarely engaged in adult-child conversations. Each year, when we see parents at the beginning of the school year we tell them the same old thing, "Please read to your child at least two to three times per week. It will make a world of difference in how well your child does in school." We know the parents hear what we are saying, but we don't think they have read or plan to read one single book to their children. We, as kindergarten and first grade teachers, cannot solve all of these children's literacy problems by ourselves. The parents must help us."

If a child comes from a reading family where books are a shared source of pleasure and part of every day, he or she will have an understanding of the language of literacy world in schools. They will then respond to the use of books in a classroom as a natural expansion of pleasant home experiences. Neither Mrs. Colvin or Angela knew how to approach the other to understand why reading in the home was not taking place or why it was so important.

Donaldson Elementary School realized that by providing the parents with tools and classes to help them read to their children at home, then the response to asking them to read to their children at home might have very different outcomes. They implemented a reading program that showed parents how to read to their children and how to make a difference in their children's education.

Angela attended the classes. She remarked, "I stopped pretending that I knew how to read to my child. I admitted to myself that I needed to take the time to participate in the reading program so that I could learn how to do what teachers expected me to do... read to my child. The program made me feel that I was my child's first teacher, and now I feel more comfortable in this role. I've always loved to read, but I didn't read as effectively to my child as I should have. But now I know it; now I'm always reading a child's book, and I'm enjoying it because of what I've learned."

116
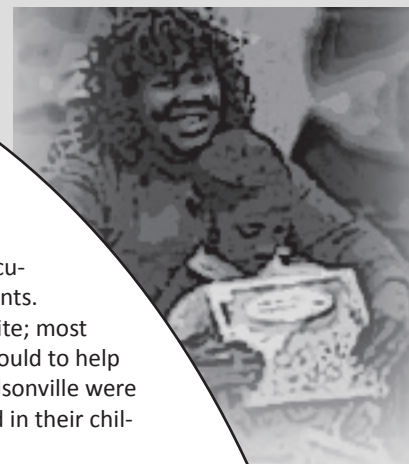
Bridging Language and Culture

Patricia Gándara

12

The United States is home to the largest number of immigrants of any nation (United Nations, 2006). In 2005, 38.5 million residents of the U.S. were foreign born. As a result, more than one of every five children in the public schools is either an immigrant or the child of immigrants. Most of these children come from homes and communities in which English is not the primary language spoken, and more than half at any one time are designated as English Learners (or ELs); that is, they do not speak enough English to allow them to succeed in the mainstream English classroom. Almost 75% of all immigrant children and English learners are Latino and speak Spanish. The next largest language group is Chinese, accounting for just 3.8% of students.

There are also extremely large variations in the characteristics and needs of immigrant families and students depending on their countries of origin. For example, almost half (47.8%) of Mexican immigrant fathers have only 0–8 years of education, and 44% of Hmong fathers have similarly low education levels, while 78% of Taiwanese and 70% of South Asian fathers have at least a college degree (Hernandez, Denton, & McCartney, 2009). Moreover, one-third of Mexican children of immigrants (32%) were living under the poverty line in 2008 compared to only 8% of children from East Asian immigrant families (Chaudry & Fortuny, 2010). The variation among Latino subgroups is nearly as wide as that among Asians. Cuban children are only about one-third as likely to be poor as Mexican children, for example. Differences in parental education and income serve to explain why some immigrant students consistently perform better than others. It also suggests that different strategies may be needed to address the needs of distinct groups.

Obviously, the children of very well-educated immigrant parents, and especially those who have been recruited into good jobs in the U.S., have very different needs than those of extremely poor and undereducated parents. Well-off Asian children are very likely to attend highly resourced schools with mostly white peers, while poor Hmong and Mexican children are likely to be clustered into poor, inner-city schools that are virtually all minority (Orfield & Lee, 2006). In ethnically isolated schools,

students have few opportunities to interact with mainstream American students and families, which places them at a significant disadvantage both culturally and educationally. However, just as immigrant children who have strong educations when they enter the U.S. tend to do very well in U.S. schools even when they do not initially speak English, so do well-educated immigrant parents tend to have the social capital that allows them to provide academic support for their children. Our greatest concern must be with those parents and children who do not have the social capital or the English skills to be able to navigate the education system.

Low-income (and some middle-class) immigrants tend to be more wedded to traditional culture and to lack experience with the norms, expectations, and mores of mainstream American society. In such cases, parents may not trust the schools to inculcate the proper rules of behavior for their children. Many traditional immigrant parents decry the freedom extended to children in American schools and find it disrespectful and undermining of their authority (see Olsen, 1999). This, of course, creates obvious challenges for schools in bridging cultures and incorporating these parents as allies in student learning. Too often schools find the challenge too overwhelming and thus ignore the problem rather than confront it.

Although there is absolute consensus that parental involvement is a key component of academic success for most U.S. students, many immigrant parents with low human and social capital are reluctant to approach the schools, some because they do not speak English, some because in their country of origin parents were not expected to play a role in school decisions, and others because they have multiple home, child, and job responsibilities that must take priority. This failure to come to school or meet with teachers is often interpreted by the schools as "not caring" about their children's education. However, most immigrant parents care deeply about their children's schooling. For example, based on National Household Education Survey Data for 2007, 81% of immigrant parents of native-born children expected their child to earn a bachelor's degree or higher compared to just 68% of children in native-born families (Child Trends Data Bank, 2011). So what is to be done

to convert these high expectations into success at school and help connect these immigrant parents to the schools?

One recent multistate study (Hopkins, 2011) shows that bilingual teachers are more likely to reach out to immigrant parents than are non-bilingual teachers, believing that this is an important part of their role. Moreover, immigrant parents are also more likely to share their concerns about their children with a teacher who speaks their language. Bringing a third person translator into the relationship is almost certainly better than no teacher–parent contact, but confidences are more likely to be shared in a direct teacher-to-parent relationship.

Programs like PIQE (Pee-Kay) (Parent Institute for Quality Education) train immigrant parents (in their own language) about their rights and responsibilities with respect to their children's education, how to promote higher academic achievement, how to advocate for their children, and how to prepare them for college. A critical component of the program is that it trains parents to train parents, thereby building social capital in communities and creating strong bonds and trust among parents.

Efforts at the school level can also be highly effective. In one evaluation of particularly effective schools, we found that a critical component of success in one school serving Spanish-speaking immigrant families was a special room set up for parents. The principal had gotten donated sewing machines and fabric and asked parents to help to make uniforms, curtains, and such for the school. But they were also invited to use the material for their own needs as well. Parents who would not normally come to school came in droves. The parent room was always full, and this school had extremely high parent involvement for all events (Armor et al., 1976).

> Our greatest concern must be with those parents and children who do not have the social capital or the English skills to be able to navigate the education system.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Regardless of the type of language program provided for EL students, the state should place a priority on recruiting and training bilingual teachers that match the languages spoken in the schools.

2. Teacher training curricula need to incorporate information about the major cultural and linguistic groups in the state's schools—demographic backgrounds, cultural characteristics, and group assets.

3. Highly effective educators of culturally and linguistically different students should be pulled together to develop model programs and lessons to be used in teacher training and professional development programs to help teachers reach out to immigrant parents.

4. SEAs can support carefully designed (see Hamann, 2008) teacher exchange programs (especially with Mexico, which has the highest percent of immigrant families) to help teachers better understand the cultural context from which immigrant students are coming.

Local Education Agency

1. Superintendents and principals should do a "needs assessment" of every school to develop a profile of the immigrants in the school, their academic achievement, and set specific goals for these students.

2. LEAs need to examine options for breaking the isolation of their low-income immigrant students and families; school assignment policies using tools such as magnet dual language programs, which incorporate English speakers and English learners, have great potential for bringing immigrant students' families into close contact with native-born students/families in an equal status context.

3. LEAs should all have an Office for Immigrant and Diverse Families to coordinate information and support for schools in reaching out to families.

School

1. Schools with immigrant populations should place a priority on hiring bilingual/bicultural teachers.

2. Schools with immigrant populations should hire or seek volunteers for parent liaisons who can connect the school to the local immigrant communities.

3. All schools should offer a PIQE-type program to help parents understand how to support their children's education; in immigrant communities, these should be run by parents from those communities to the extent possible.

4. Create a safe and welcoming space for immigrant parents to meet, and provide an attractive activity that will bring them in.

5. Schools that serve immigrant and English learner students should have plenty of grade appropriate reading materials in the students' home languages. At the elementary level, this will help parents to share in reading and story-telling with their children, and at the secondary level, this is important to help students engage and maintain interest in school subjects when English is still developing. Research has demonstrated unequivocally that reading in *any language* supports learning and strengthens English reading (see August & Shanahan, 2006).

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Minority Families and Schooling

Susan J. Paik

Topic 13

Educational reforms, such as those included in Race to the Top (R2T) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are aimed at closing the achievement gap, especially for minority students. A large number of minority families who reside in low-income areas tend to have less education and lower English proficiency levels (Simms, Fortuny, & Henderson, 2009). As the achievement gap persists between minority and nonminority students, minority families are a growing concern in the United States.

Challenges and Concerns for a Growing and Diverse Population

Minority students, particularly immigrant children, are a growing and diverse population in U.S. schools. Representing 19% of school children, one in five are immigrant students in K–12. There are over 10.5 million immigrant students—one-fourth are foreign-born and three-fourths are U.S. born (Fix & Passel, 2003). The U.S. 2010 Census reports Latinos represent the largest minority population (16%) followed by the U.S.-born Black population (14%). The Asian and Pacific Islander Americans constitute almost 5% of the population. Although these three groups are the most visible minority groups, there are many students of diverse cultures, languages, and abilities even within cultural groups.

Many minority families, particularly immigrants, tend to reside in poor neighborhoods. Facing cultural, language, and economic barriers, the achievement gap widens throughout the school years. Research from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Kindergarten (ECLS-K, 1998-1999) found that achievement gaps grew wider over the first four school years (Rathbun, West, & Germino-Hausken, 2004). While the achievement gap regarding Latino and Black populations is well cited, there is also growing concern over some Asian populations (Lee, 2007; Lew, 2006). Given the limited research and services available for some minority groups, there is a need to disaggregate the data (Paik & Walberg, 2007). Many believe minority students will continue to be marginalized with limited opportunities. How can we support minority students and their families?

Minority Families, Schools, and Communities: Research, Policy, and Practice

In order to have effective policies and practices, it is important to understand, support, and partner with minority families. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners from interdisciplinary fields need to work together to comprehensively support minority families and their schooling experiences. Based on a synthesis of research and earlier work (Paik & Walberg, 2007), some recommendations are offered below.

Research and Policy Implications

Conducting good research can help identify alterable factors that promote achievement. Rigorous research on minority families and students can provide data-driven policies and practices (Subotnik & Walberg, 2006). Having access to data systems and research is also key in effective dissemination and knowledge of what works for minority families and schools (Redding & Walberg, 2008).

Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners inform us that real change must be systemic on macro to micro levels from national levels to state, district, school, and the home (Walberg, 2011). Systemic changes must include *all* stakeholders with common goals and the belief that all children can learn (Goodlad, 1984). New policies and programs can only be developed effectively when stakeholders (including minority parents) work together. Focused leaders, funding, resources, monitoring, accountability, and partnerships are some ways to build capacity for underserved communities (Walberg, 2011).

Practical Implications

As minority populations continue to grow in the U.S., collaborative efforts must occur at all levels. Targeting alterable factors in the early

> *Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners from interdisciplinary fields need to work together to comprehensively support minority families and their schooling experiences.*

years is also helpful in understanding home and school practices (Walberg & Tsai, 1984; Reynolds, 2000). In working with diverse students and communities, we must also go beyond a "one size fits all" model (Hildego, Siu, Bright, Swap, & Epstein, 1995; Paik & Walberg, 2007).

Families. Several federal initiatives (i.e., National Goals 2000, NCLB, R2T) have included parents as partners. For years, research has told us that parenting practices and involvement in the home make a significant difference (Jeynes, 2011; Walberg, 2011). How can we enforce this message further? Cultivating a partnership with minority families, schools can reinforce the importance of parent participation in the school and home (Epstein et al., 2002; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davis, 2007; Hildego et al., 2007). To build this bridge, it is important for schools to understand the home culture and ethnic community (Grant & Ray, 2010; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005). Some alterable factors include workshops, events, early intervention and other programs, parent liaisons, interpreters, translated newsletters, or English classes, to name a few.

Schools. Low-income, minority students often attend under-resourced schools. School change must be systemic involving all stakeholders to develop a schoolwide community (Redding, 2006). The Center for Public Education (2005) found high-poverty schools using a schoolwide community approach increased their achievement. Some alterable factors include high expectations, a safe and disciplined environment, strong leadership, committed teachers, focused curriculum, increased instructional time, ongoing assessment, parents as partners, professional development, and teacher and staff collaboration. In working with minority families, schools should also include partnerships, diversity awareness training for teachers, relevant curriculum, events, and other opportunities to engage parents and students (Grant & Ray, 2010; Hiatt-Michael, 2001).

Communities. Communities are important resources for both families and schools. Examining ethnic communities in particular may provide insight into the social structures and learning opportunities of minority students (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Taylor, 1995; Zhou, 2007). By partnering with communities (i.e.,

universities, businesses, faith-based organizations, etc.), families and schools can maximize their efforts at providing support for minority families (Epstein, 2001). Some alterable factors include partnering and locating programs and services for low-income, minority families.

Research shows that students can benefit greatly when all stakeholders work together. Statewide, districtwide, and schoolwide efforts are necessary for effective policy and practice. Developing partnerships on different levels, using comprehensive and interdisciplinary approaches, providing training to relevant stakeholders, conducting rigorous research, supporting diverse communities, intervening early, and targeting alterable factors are promising practices.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Provide *systemwide infrastructure and support* to build capacity in minority districts (i.e., leaders, funding, resources, monitoring, accountability, technical assistance, direct support, partnerships, early intervention programs, etc.).
2. Collaborate with and involve *all* stakeholders (including minority parents) towards common goals to improve schools and communities.
3. Conduct rigorous research to link policies and practices; focus on alterable factors regarding minority families, schools, and achievement.
4. Create data systems and disseminate research to all stakeholders for data-driven policies and practices; disaggregate data on diverse populations.
5. Offer training programs to school leaders, teachers, and parents in underserved communities.

Local Education Agency

1. Provide *districtwide infrastructure and support* to build capacity in minority schools (i.e., school leaders, funding, resources, monitoring, accountability, aligned curriculum and assessment, direct support, partnerships, early intervention programs, etc.).

2. Involve minority parents, teachers, and school leaders in supporting district initiatives.
3. Conduct rigorous research and/or access information to support schools and communities; focus on alterable factors.
4. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of each school, develop a realistic plan of action, and sustain ongoing work with minority families and students.
5. Provide districtwide professional development and diversity awareness training to teachers and staff.

Schools

1. Provide *schoolwide community support* to minority families (i.e., parent and teacher leaders, resources, monitoring, accountability, direct support, partnerships, etc.).
2. Partner with and invite parents to get involved in the school community; identify a parent liaison to help facilitate language and cultural barriers through different venues (i.e., newsletters, conferences, meetings, events, etc.).
3. Disseminate and utilize research to provide knowledge and tools for teachers, counselors, and parents (i.e., workshops, training programs, college access info, ESL classes for parents); focus on alterable factors.
4. Incorporate relevant events, projects, and curriculum that value ethnic diversity (combined with academic rigor and high expectations).
5. Address individual students' needs *early on* and believe that *all* children can learn.

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Association of Poverty with Family Relations and Children's and Adolescents' Socioemotional Adjustment

Topic 14

Ronald D. Taylor

Poverty and the social problems associated with economic disadvantage (e.g., exposure to crime, lack of access to services, poor health care) remain serious and seemingly intractable challenges with important implications for children's education and well-being. In 2008, the official poverty rate was 14.3%, marking the third consecutive year in which poverty increased in the U.S. Blacks and Hispanics had the highest rates of poverty, with each group having rates of 24.7% and 23.2%, respectively. For Asians the poverty rate was 11.8% percent, while non-Hispanic Whites had a rate of 11.2%. Poverty tends to weigh most heavily on the young, particularly Black and Hispanic children, whose rates of poverty (34.7% and 30.3% respectively) are the highest of all groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

In the past 25 years, a substantial body of research has grown examining the effects of poverty on child development and the processes through which economic hardship has its impact. Much of the work has been guided by important theoretical models (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Elder, 1974; McLoyd, 1990, 1998) designed to elucidate the factors in a process chain, linking poverty to family relations and family processes, and in turn, to children's outcomes. In Elder's (Elder, 1974; Elder, Nguyen, & Caspi, 1985) work on the effects of income and job loss during the Great Depression and in research on contemporary families facing adverse economic circumstances (Conger et al., 1994; Lempers, Clark-Lempers, & Simons, 1989; McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo, & Borquez, 1994; McLoyd, 1998), the effects of poverty and economic problems on children are indirect and operate through their impact on parents' adjustment, interpersonal relations, and parenting practices. The Family Economic Stress (FES) model (Conger et al., 1992; Conger et al., 1994) suggests that economic hardship (e.g., low income, negative financial events) increases the likelihood of economic pressure in families, including unmet material needs, unpaid debts, or difficult cutbacks. The lack of financial resources may also increase the likelihood that families will be exposed to stressful experiences including dangerous neighborhoods and criminal activity. Economic pressure and related stressors, in turn, are positively linked to parents' psychological distress. Parents experiencing economic pressure may be more prone to emotional or behavioral problems, including depression, anxiety, or substance abuse. According to the model,

emotional distress experienced by parents is disruptive to relations in the family and, as a result, marital conflict is more likely. Parents are also prone to be harsh and inconsistent in their parenting. Finally, interpersonal conflict and harsh, inconsistent parenting, in turn, increase the likelihood that children will display emotional and behavioral problems and lower competence.

Empirical support for the FES model has shown that financial pressure experienced in families is significantly associated with negative outcomes in children and adolescents, including socioemotional problems, teenage pregnancy, problem behavior, and lower school achievement (Brody et al., 1994; Gutman, McLoyd, & Tokoyawa, 2005; McLeod & Shanahan, 1993; Mistry, Vandewater, Huston, & McLoyd, 2002; Nievar & Luster, 2006; Sameroff, Seifer, Baldwin, & Baldwin, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1994; Taylor, Seaton, Dominguez, & Rodriguez, 2004). For example, low income is significantly linked to behavioral problems and problems in reading recognition in middle school children (Nievar & Luster, 2006).

Research has also examined the proposed relations mediating the links between families' economic problems and children's and adolescents' functioning. Findings have shown that economic pressure is significantly associated with parents' psychological well-being (Brody et al., 2002; Conger, Wallace, Sun, McLoyd, & Brody, 2002; Gutman et al., 2005; Mistry et al., 2002; McLoyd, 1998; Taylor et al., 2004). For example, Mistry et al. (2002) found that financial strain is significantly associated with parents' psychological distress. Similarly, Taylor et al. (2004) found that inadequate financial resources are significantly associated with mothers' depression and pessimism about the future. Also, neighborhood stress (e.g., violence, vandalism, lack of services) is negatively associated with parents' socioemotional well being (Gutman et al., 2005). Other research has assessed the link between the stress of financial pressure and the potential negative impact on marital relations (Brody et al., 1994; Conger et al., 2002). Conger et al. (2002) found that economic pressure is significantly linked to distressed relations (e.g., conflict, withdrawal) in the home.

In addition to the negative effects of financial pressure on relations between children's

caregivers, economic pressure is also disruptive to parenting practices in the home (Conger et al., 2002; Gutman et al., 2005; Lempers et al., 1989; McLoyd et al., 1994; Mistry et al., 2002; Nievar & Luster, 2006; Taylor et al., 2004). Findings have shown that financially distressed parents report feeling less effective in administering discipline and are less affectionate in parent–child interactions (Mistry et al., 2002). Also, parents experiencing economic problems are less nurturant and child-centered and tend to be more rejecting, harsh, and inconsistent (Lempers et al., 1989). Also, inadequate financial resources have been linked to less structure and organization in the home (Taylor et al., 2004). Structure, order, and family routine are important predictors of adolescent's school achievement and engagement (Taylor & Lopez, 2005).

The final link in the FES model suggests that parenting and parent–child relations diminished by the families' strained finances have significant negative links to children's and adolescents' adjustment and school performance. Findings have shown that harsh parenting is positively associated with children's behavioral problems and negatively related to their receptive vocabulary (Nievar & Luster, 2006). Also, lack of family cohesion and lower parental involvement and nurturance are significantly linked to internalizing and externalizing in adolescents (Brody et al., 1994; Conger et al., 2002).

Research has also examined social resources and relations that may attenuate the impact of economic strain and neighborhood stressors on parents' and children's adjustment (Brody, Kogan, Chen, & Murry, 2008; Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Taylor, 2010). Findings have shown that in periods of economic distress families are more likely to receive social and financial assistance from extended family (Dressler, 1985).

...intervention strategies aimed at enhancing the parenting practices of parents at risk for economic problems are effective in improving parents' child-rearing practices...

Also, social and emotional support is linked to lower psychological distress in parents (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Taylor, 2010). Research has shown that intervention strategies aimed at enhancing the parenting practices of parents at risk for economic problems are effective in improving parents' child-rearing practices and attenuating parents' depressive symptoms (Brody et al., 2005; Beach et al., 2008).

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Identify and support policies and practices to improve economic conditions of low-income communities (e.g., incentives for businesses and institutions to invest resources in low-income areas).

2. Strengthen early intervention and preschool intervention programs (e.g., Head Start, Parents as Teachers), especially family support services, which aim to enhance family functioning and blunt the stresses of poverty.

3. Locate comprehensive family resource centers in low-income communities for the administration of services (e.g., parenting education, adult education and literacy, mental and physical health care).

4. Establish regular assessment of the effectiveness of services provided and the evolving needs of the community.

Local Education Agency

1. Partner with local social agencies and universities in the implementation of evidence-based family prevention and intervention programs in high-risk communities.

2. Solicit and support implementation of early intervention and preschool intervention programs.

3. Identify common and unique challenges of communities (crime, safety, lack of services) to develop integrated strategies.

4. Employ strategically located schools to serve as hubs of services to encourage social network development in isolated, poor neighborhoods.

School

1. Conduct service seminars for teachers and administrators on the processes linking poverty to family relations and children's outcomes.

2. Develop opportunities to enhance parental involvement with the school and its resources (e.g., parenting education, adult education and literacy, mentoring).

3. Solicit and establish community involvement in the implementation of family intervention and prevention programs.

4. Host services based on assessment of community challenges (e.g., crime, safety, health care, nutrition, fitness).

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Billy

Sam Redding

Heroic acts by parents and teachers are largely invisible, committed every day in ordinary circumstances in ways never brought to light. Children's life trajectories take tiny turns because of the simple deeds of their parents and teachers. They grow to adulthood unaware of all that their parents and teachers have done to pave their path, all of the little things. The heroic things. Parents and teachers like it that way; their motivation is love, not recognition.

Bill Allen, a middle-aged father, established in his career, sat near his mother on one of his rare but treasured visits to see her. They talked about days gone by, when Bill was a boy. Bill remembered a turning point in his boyhood, when he was a fourth grader. He mostly remembered his feelings—sadness that miraculously turned to contentment. Things must have just worked out, he thought. Then his mother told him the story of her meeting with his teacher early in that school year. Bill learned that when things work out, sometimes a parent and a teacher are seeing that they do. Bill's mother told him this story.

"Billy is a smart boy and a diligent student," Mrs. Brown said to reassure Billy's mother who stood at the doorway of the classroom with a note clutched in her hand. "But I asked you to stop by and see me because I am concerned. Billy is the saddest, loneliest little boy I have ever seen."

"We have four sons, Mrs. Brown, and Billy is the oldest. Moving here this summer from Kansas was easy for the other boys, but Billy has not done so well. He feels torn away from his friends and the family we left behind. He says that when he goes to bed at night he pretends he is still in Kansas so he will have happy dreams."

"All children are different," Mrs. Brown said, "and Billy is bright and sensitive. He is also very proud of his family. You should know that."

"He was upset when he came home from school yesterday," Mrs. Allen reported. "Did something happen at school?"

"Yes, and I take the blame for it. When he arrived in the morning, he seemed unusually cheerful. Not that he said much, but he was grinning ear to ear. I called him to my desk, and he said he was wearing a shirt you had made for him. So I asked him if he would tell the class about it. He did. He said that the shirt had pictures of ships on it because his dad had been in the Navy. Unfortunately, one of the boys snickered and said the buttons were crooked. The other children laughed. Billy plopped down at his desk and opened a book. I knew he was shattered."

"He reacts to such little things. Last year, he came home whimpering because boys made fun of the patches on his jeans. I told him that patches were signs that someone cared enough about him to mend his clothes. But I knew it bothered him."

"He needs to make new friends here so he can forget about the ones he left in Kansas. My son Jimmy is in his class, and we live on a farm. I'll have Jimmy invite Billy to spend the weekend with us."

"That would be wonderful. Billy loves farms and animals. He wants a pony."

"We have a pony, and I'll see that he gets to ride it."

"Billy is so lucky to have a teacher like you. I can't thank you enough. He comes home and tells us about the books you read to the class. Billy likes to read, and you make reading seem important to him. You have made a big impression on him. He studies hard to please you."

"I am glad about that. Teachers can be taskmasters. I know I can be. But when the class has worked very hard, I like to reward them by reading stories."

"There is no better reward for Billy."

"Teachers also care about children in ways that go beyond their reading and their schoolwork."

"You certainly know Billy well enough to notice that he is struggling, and you know just what he needs."

"I can't do it alone. Billy is fortunate that he has a good family behind him."

"We will do our part."

"I know you will, and that's what it takes. Teachers and parents working together. Thank you so much for stopping by to chat with me."
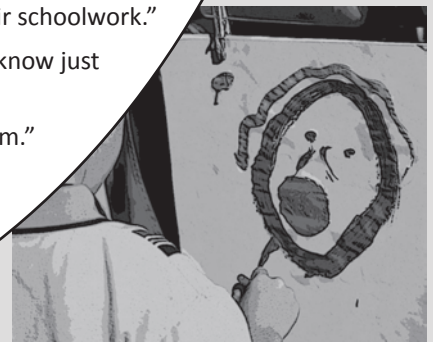
Families of Children with Disabilities: Building School-Family Partnerships

Topic 15

Eva Patrikakou

Within the ecological perspective of human development, social institutions such as families and schools have a major impact on children's learning, as well as on their cognitive, social, and emotional development. In addition to the absolute influence these institutions exert, the interrelationships between them play decisive roles in human development and, therefore, in children's success in school and life. This relationship becomes even more important in cases of students with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) requires parents or guardians of children with disabilities to be equal partners on the team that makes educational decisions for those students, including developing the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). In addition to being mandated by law, home–school partnerships have been established as an effective practice across the developmental span (Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005). Collaboration between parents and families of children with disabilities must serve as the cornerstone for providing students with quality services and for ensuring the continuity of practices across settings (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Kyzar, 2009). Such continuity maximizes the academic, social, and emotional benefits for children and adolescents with disabilities. It is through family-centered, school-based interventions that benefits for students across the developmental spectrum are enhanced and at-risk behaviors, such as antisocial behavior and substance abuse, are minimized (Stormshak et al., 2011; Tomasello, Manning, & Dulmus, 2010). Family-focused interventions that tend to the unique needs of each student are also the greatest predictor of positive family outcomes such as overall well-being, satisfaction with parenting, and family unity (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009).

A key factor in establishing and maintaining home–school partnerships is ongoing and productive communication. The need for communication between educators and families becomes even greater for students with disabilities (Horowitz, 2008). Establishing and maintaining effective communication avenues may not be easy, but it is necessary, as ongoing, positive, respectful, and productive communication is an indispensable part of establishing a trusting relationship with families. Effective

communication has quantitative components (e.g., being regular and predictable) and qualitative components (e.g., being positive, specific, and respectful) (Turnbull et al., 2009).

Another element in establishing and maintaining communication and collaboration between schools and families is the degree to which school leaders are involved. Principals' involvement is critical for both the communication and collaboration aspects for students with special needs and their families. When assuming a more active, rather than a delegating, role in cases of students with disabilities, a relationship of trust between home and school can be considerably enhanced. Principals' direct involvement in IEP meetings and their willingness to learn specifics about students with disabilities can have a significant impact on the educational support these children receive (Shelden, Angell, Stoner, & Roseland, 2010).

In spite of legislative mandates and supportive research evidence, the actual level of collaboration between home and school has been called into question. It has been indicated that generalizations and stereotypes held by professionals are influencing decisions made about children (Harry, 2008). The deficit view of families based on perceptions regarding socioeconomic, marital status, and other factors often influence placement and service delivery (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Frequently, there is mistrust from both sides that leads to suspicion and resistance to engage in constructive discussion about placement and service options (Lake & Billingsley, 2000). These tensions can become intensified and complicated even further by cultural or linguistic differences (Olivos, Gallagher, & Aguilar, 2010).

There is another crucial factor that often gets ignored by schools and agencies when working

Compliance with the law should not be the only professional emphasis when working with exceptional students and their families.

with families that have children with disabilities. That is the broader impact that a student's exceptionality has on the family unit. It has been noted that characteristics such as the nature, onset, and degree of the exceptionality have an effect on the family unit and on individual family members (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, & Soodak, 2006). These effects may include a host of emotional reactions such as parental guilt, tension, and stress among all family members (Dyson, 2010). In forming home–school partnerships, professionals must take into account the impact that exceptionality has on the family and its members. Improved coordination of information, programs, and services helps families better understand the child's disability and make informed decisions about placement and supports.

Compliance with the law should not be the only professional emphasis when working with exceptional students and their families. Characteristics such as respect for families, building trust by listening to family perspectives, establishing and maintaining ongoing communication, honoring cultural and linguistic diversity, directly involving school leaders, and addressing stereotyping can lead to meaningful partnerships between families and schools, and improve services and outcomes for exceptional students.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. As special educators and school administrators play such a crucial role in facilitating collaboration among school personnel, families, and other professionals involved in a student's case, a course on collaboration should be required for certification or licensure for administrators and special educators.

2. Professional development in the area of collaboration for in-service educators and administrators should be required.

3. Guidance to families regarding all steps and processes involved in diagnosing and placing a child in special education should be provided. Such resources must not be limited to reciting policy, but simple, user-friendly advice on what to expect and questions to ask. Providing vignettes of

cases with different types and degrees of disability will further help parents understand the issues involved.

Local Education Agency

1. Distribute informational, family-friendly materials, including materials translated into the family's language.

2. Centralize services to families so that services are easily accessible, including access to social services.

3. Support capacity-building for school personnel, such as special educators and administrators, to facilitate ongoing, meaningful communication and collaboration with families. Site visits by the district's director of special education services can further enhance services rendered to students with special needs and their families.

School

1. Provide resources such as time, planning support, and professional development to enable special educators to collaborate with families, general educators, as well as other professionals involved in a child's case.

2. Establish a predictable communication routine with families. This should include (a) contacting families before the school year starts to let them know that school personnel are looking forward to working with them as partners in educating their child; (b) offering who the point person/s will be for the year, as well as the best ways to contact them; (c) setting up times or intervals for regular communication (it is important that such communication throughout the year also includes positive aspects of the child's academic progress or socioemotional adjustment); and (d) any information pertaining to the review or reevaluation of the child's case.

3. In order to foster the continuity of academic, social, and emotional learning across environments, provide parents with specific ways through which they can help the child at home. This should include concrete suggestions about how to handle academic and behavioral issues. Having family members observe how these

strategies are applied in the classroom, and also modeling such techniques for them, will further enhance the probabilities that families will practice those approaches at home.

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Tony

Lori G. Thomas

Tony is a happy little boy who just turned 5 years old. He loves to play with dump trucks and dig in the sandbox at the playground down the street from the aging bungalow where his family lives. He enjoys wrestling with his daddy when he arrives home from work and helping his mommy set the table. His parents, Tom and Anne, enrolled Tony in the school district's Early Childhood Education (ECE) program after he performed poorly at a preschool screening. The program had been recommended by a neighbor whose daughter attended ECE the previous year. Now, Tom and Anne are preparing for their first IEP meeting; the teacher told them they will need to make decisions about Tony's kindergarten placement because at age five, he is no longer eligible for prekindergarten services.

Tom is busy working two jobs to help make ends meet—neither of his jobs provides group health insurance. He thinks Tony will be just fine, saying, "he just needs a chance to catch up." The speech therapy Tony received in ECE has made him easier to understand—the tantrums resulting from the frustration of not being understood have nearly disappeared.

Anne is worn out trying to keep up with Tony and his little sister, Molly. Neither of them stays with an activity for very long, and it seems like they can make two new messes while she cleans up one. Tony's grandparents live too far away to help. Anne used to agree with Tom, that Tony was just learning in his own way and time, but now that Molly, age 2 ½, is beginning to do some of the same things as her older brother, Anne is admitting that perhaps something more serious is wrong with Tony. So far, the testing done by the specialist recommended by their family doctor has not produced any conclusive results, and Tom and Anne are still making monthly payments to meet their huge deductible. Anne wishes they had some kind of diagnosis to help them find resources and a plan to help her son. She hasn't even had time or energy to go to the library to try to do some research on the Internet; who would watch the children anyway?

Anne has mixed feelings about Tony's ECE class. Tony seems to enjoy going, but it is hard to know if it has helped him. The one conference the teacher offered during the school year was on an evening that Tom had to work, and Molly was sick, so Anne was unable to go. The only notes Anne receives from the teacher are when something is wrong. For example, one day when another boy brushed his arm against Tony's as he walked by, Tony started screaming, "He hit me! He hit me!" The teacher explained that she had been standing right there when it happened, and so she had confronted Tony. She told Tony that the other boy had not hit him, he barely touched him at all. Tony had received a time out for lying.

Anne's favorite part of Tony's ECE has been speech. The speech teacher, Mrs. Martin, made a point of introducing herself to Anne after the preschool screening and of explaining how she would be working with Tony and another boy from the ECE class in her little speech room twice each week. She also had explained that a speech folder would be sent home each weekend with an activity for Tony and his family to do together to help Tony practice the same skills they had worked on that week at school. Someone in the family was to sign the activity page and send it back to school, and if they wanted to write questions or express concerns that was fine, too. Often Mrs. Martin would include a brief note in the pocket of the folder relating something cute Tony had said in speech or praising his progress and encouraging further practice at home. Anne had found herself looking eagerly in the folder each week for these notes.

Now, facing this IEP meeting, Anne is nervous and frustrated. What are they expected to do? Who is going to watch Molly and Tony while they go to the meeting? Tom is always so tired, and he clearly prefers not to discuss Tony's issues. The one neighbor she knew with a child who had been in ECE had moved away, and Anne has not had a chance to meet any of the other parents in Tony's class. She didn't even know if they were all required to have IEPs or if her family was the only one. The notice they received in the mail told them when and where the meeting would be held and showed a long list of other people who would be there, most of them with fancy initials or titles like "pathologist" at the end of their names. It also came with a huge stack of papers about privacy and other things that she had no idea what they meant. Anne thinks they must have been written by lawyers. Anne finally decides to call the school and see if she can talk to Mrs. Martin. Unfortunately, it is still summer vacation, and the speech teacher is not there. The secretary cannot give Anne her home phone number.
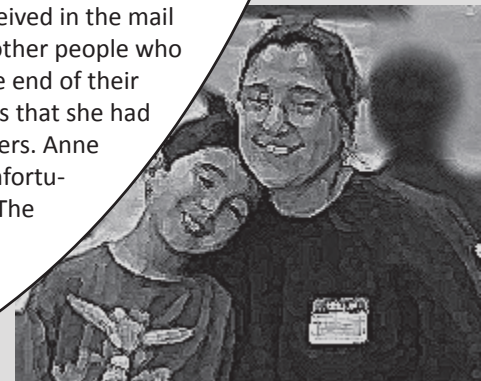
Linking Schools to Early Childhood

Topic 16

Kate McGilly

    A child who is ready for school is socially, emotionally, and cognitively ready. Vast bodies of research indicate that the contexts in which children develop from birth—the relationships they form, the environments in which they are placed, the responsiveness of those environments—are predictive of readiness for and later success in school. In other words, preparing children to be ready for school legitimately starts at birth. So, too, can and should the process of preparing their parents for that transition. In fact, school readiness can be interpreted as preparing families and parents as well as children for school—enhancing parental skills and competencies as much as helping children acquire and maintain competencies (Brooks-Gunn, Berlin, & Fuligni, 2000). To a large extent, that means getting parents involved and engaged in their child's education from the very beginning. Parental involvement (or investment) in early childhood programs is the foundation upon which any good program rests, which is, in part, reflected by the relationships among parents, staff, and children (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2000). But school readiness efforts also need to be intentional about building connections and continuity between the schools and the various early childhood settings that children and their families experience well before entering the formal school system—home, formal and informal child-care settings, preschools, Early Head Start and Head Start programs, and other pre-kindergarten settings. In reality, a successful transition to school is a multi-person, multi-year process (Ramey & Ramey, 1999).

    Successful efforts to link schools to early childhood include School of the 21st Century (www.yale.edu/21C), First 5 California (www.ccfc.ca.gov), and SPARK Georgia (www.smartstartga.org/spark.aspx). What these programs have demonstrated is that, to succeed, efforts need to be coordinated across institutional and disciplinary boundaries, there needs to be systemic reform, and all parties have to have the long view in mind, rather than a short-term fix (Kagan & Neuman, 2000). They also have to address challenges associated with the diversity in family structure, compounding issues related to families in poverty, and the increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the population (Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000).

The SPARK Georgia initiative used three strategies to promote ready schools, ready communities, and ready kids and families: family-centered home visitation using the evidence-based Parents as Teachers model, research-based school transition models, and parent leadership training. Key to the success of SPARK Georgia was involving a large number of existing community organizations and encouraging collaboration among community entities that serve families (United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, n.d.).

Informed by successful initiatives such as SPARK Georgia and by more than 25 years' experience developing an evidence-based home-visiting model proven effective at impacting school readiness outcomes, the national office for Parents as Teachers has developed a logic model for an Early Childhood System that links early childhood to schools. This logic model can serve as a blueprint for State and/or Local Education Agencies who want to develop a seamless, well-integrated early childhood system that supports parent engagement, healthy child development, and school readiness (see Appendix 16.1).

Within this system, the key activities are:

1. Parent educators trained and certified in the evidence-based Parents as Teachers model providing home visitation services, group connections, health and developmental screening, and resource referrals to families with children prenatal to kindergarten entry.

2. School-based early childhood educators and parent liaison staff—including those serving the special education population—also trained in the Parents as Teachers approach, to ensure a shared understanding of child development, the importance of parent engagement, and how to work with parents; to provide for continuity of information shared with families; and to increase consistency of care across settings.

3. Support for formal and informal child-care providers in the form of training and home visits using the Parents as Teachers approach. Home visits to care providers, using the Parents as Teachers Supporting Care Providers and Supporting Infant/Toddler Care Providers Curricula, are designed to increase the quality of care that children receive. And because these curricula are grounded in the Parents as Teachers philosophical approach, this again helps to ensure consistency and continuity of information shared across settings.

4. Staff from early childhood settings meeting regularly for additional training and professional development, to increase communication with each other and parents, and to ensure a shared vision.

5. Outreach to parents from the elementary schools, preschools, and other early childhood settings designed to minimize home–school discontinuity and increase parent involvement in their children's learning and education. This outreach can be in the form of school transition teams, parent leadership opportunities, and the like. Outreach efforts to involve fathers are particularly important.

6. All children screened annually in developmental, hearing, vision, health, and social-emotional domains. Children are referred on to further services, and parent educators help reduce barriers to accessing those additional resources.

Features critical to the impact of the Parents as Teachers Early Childhood system include:

- Involvement of all players in the early childhood system: parents, parent educators, formal and informal care providers, early childhood educators, and special education providers, as well as local schools, child-care settings, and other community resource organizations.

- A shared philosophical approach implemented across the different settings. The Parents as Teachers approach is a good fit for such a system because:

> Parental involvement (or investment) in early childhood programs is the foundation upon which any good program rests, which is, in part, reflected by the relationships among parents, staff, and children.

- It is interaction and relationship focused.
- The Parents as Teachers parent educator has a role within the family's larger social context—the parent educator is part of the family's social support network.
- Parents as Teachers services are delivered by professionals housed within organizations or agencies in the same community as the families, connected to the broader community. Often this is the local school district or a family resource center.
- Parents as Teachers services are adapted to the broader social, cultural, and societal contexts in which families exist and incorporate resources beyond the immediate family members.

- Continuity and consistency of training and information shared in the different settings, particularly around child development, the roles that parents and early childhood educators play in that development, and the importance of parent involvement and engagement in ensuring the best developmental outcomes and school success.

The expected outcomes from such a system are ready children, ready families, and ready schools and communities.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Incorporate school–home relationships standards into state early childhood standards.
2. Adopt policies related to the use of federal funds to support parent involvement and engagement, school transition teams, and professional development for staff around promoting school readiness and parent involvement.
3. Incorporate accountability measures that address the state early childhood system in evaluation systems for Commissioners.

Local Education Agency

1. Commit to investing in parent education and involvement starting before school entry.
2. Be intentional about building linkages with other early childhood and family service providers in the community.
3. Create recognition opportunities and incentives for schools adopting model early childhood system features.

School

1. Prioritize the development of school transition teams.
2. House parent educators within the school. They become school ambassadors, building connections between families and schools well before the children enter preschool or kindergarten. They also serve as the liaison between school personnel, families whose children are not yet formally in the school system, and other community resources.
3. Build relationships with formal and informal child-care providers in the community. Expand parent education services to include services to child-care providers.
4. Create opportunities to develop and engage parent leaders.

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Appendix 16.1: Logic Model for a Parents as Teachers Early Childhood System

Goal: Seamless Well-Integrated Early Childhood System That Supports Parent Engagement, Healthy Child Development, and School Readiness

Activities	Outcomes		
	Short-Term Ready Schools and Communities	Intermediate Ready Families	Long-Term Ready Children
Parent educators are trained and certified, and families with children prenatal to kindergarten entry receive Parents as Teachers services. All early childhood educators and parent liaison staff are trained in the Parents as Teachers model to ensure shared philosophical basis pertaining to the importance of parent engagement in the crucial early years and to increase consistency of care across settings. Formal and informal child-care providers receive training and individualized visits using Parents as Teachers' Supporting Care Providers and Supporting Infant/Toddler curriculum designed to increase the quality of care that children receive. Staff from early childhood settings meet regularly for training and professional development and to increase communication with each other and parents and to ensure a shared vision. Outreach to parents from the elementary schools, preschools, and other early childhood providers designed to increase parent involvement in their children's learning and education. All children are screened annually in developmental, hearing, vision, health, and social-emotional domains. Children are referred on to further services and parent educators help reduce barriers to additional resources.	As a result of the training and professional development received, parent educators, pre-school teachers, and child-care providers: • Increase knowledge and skills about how to involve parents in their children's learning and education. • Improve skills to help children and parents transition smoothly from one early care and education setting to the next. • Increase knowledge of how to link families with concrete support in times of need. • Develop and implement new recruitment strategies and techniques. • Identify children with potential delays and health issues.	Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their young children's educational, physical, and mental health needs. Specifically: • Parents have increased knowledge of age-appropriate child development. • Parents demonstrate increased resilience, confidence, parent leadership abilities, and competence in their parenting. • Parents display improved interaction with their child, including parent-child attachment, positive discipline techniques, and increased involvement in child's care and education. • More children receive services and interventions for identified delays and, as a result, children's delays are remediated.	Higher visibility of and commitment to early childhood within the community. • Communities provide multiple well-integrated avenues for children's healthy development. • Increased parent involvement in their children's education. • Children have increased school readiness. • Children show increased student achievement in third grade and lower levels of special education placement.

Family Engagement in High School

Mavis Sanders

Topic **17**

Family engagement practices at home and at school have been found to positively influence high school students' academic progress and achievement. This chapter briefly describes this influence, barriers to family engagement in adolescents' education, and high school outreach practices that can assist families in overcoming these barriers. The chapter concludes with action steps to guide high school, district, and state leaders in developing effective family engagement programs.

Influential Home and School-Based Engagement Practices

Adolescents' success in high school is enhanced by several home-based family engagement and communication practices (Fan & Chen, 1999; Hill & Chao, 2009; Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007; Patrikakou, 2004). Jeynes (2007), for example, found that, of the family involvement practices commonly measured, parental expectations showed the strongest and most consistent impact on urban adolescents' achievement as measured by grades and standardized tests. Although its impact was not as great, Jeynes also found consistent and positive effects for a "supportive and helpful" parenting style on adolescents' achievement (also see Deslandes, Royer, Turcotte, & Bertrand, 1997; Spera, 2005). Catsambis (2001) also reported a strong and persistent relationship between parents' educational expectations and adolescents' school progress. Specifically, she found that, when comparing students with similar socioeconomic, family, and individual characteristics, those whose parents held higher expectations for them in middle school completed more credits in core subjects during high school.

Several studies have also found that communications about school and postsecondary plans between parents and adolescents and among parents, adolescents, and school teachers are positively associated with students' school success (Jones & Schneider, 2009; Simon, 2004; Stone, 2006). For instance, using nationally representative student, parent, and school administrator data from follow-up surveys of the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS), Plank and Jordan (1997; also see Jordan & Plank, 2000) found that communication among adolescents, parents, and educators about academic courses and postsecondary preparation increased students' chances of graduating from high school

and enrolling in four-year colleges or other post-secondary educational institutions.

Catsambis (2001) reported interesting findings related to other home-based family engagement practices as well. She found that adolescents whose parents were aware of their coursework, encouraged college attendance, and obtained information about postsecondary opportunities completed more course credits in science and mathematics. She also found that parental supervision at home was strongly associated with academic achievement in 8th grade, but not in 12th grade. This finding emphasizes the importance of parental engagement practices that are developmentally appropriate and responsive to maturing adolescents' needs (Hoover-Dempsey, Ice, & Whitaker, 2009).

Simon (2004) found that high school students' academic and behavioral outcomes were also positively influenced by school-based family engagement practices. For instance, the more often parents accompanied teens to school activities (e.g., plays, sports), the more regularly students attended school. Moreover, Catsambis (2001) found that parents' visits to the school and participation in high school activities were positively associated with adolescents' completion of course credits in mathematics, science, and English. According to Catsambis, through such visits, parents may acquire important information about the school curriculum or the coursework required for postsecondary educational success. These parents are thus better able to guide their adolescents' course selections.

Barriers to Family Engagement in Adolescents' Education

Despite growing evidence of its importance for adolescents' school success, family engagement often declines as youth transition to high school. Researchers have provided several explanations for families' declining involvement in their adolescents' schooling, including teenagers' preferences for greater autonomy (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Ramirez, 2002; Xu, 2002); competing home demands and parents' decreased feelings of efficacy (Eccles & Harold, 1996); larger, more complex school buildings and schedules (Epstein & Sanders, 2002); and parent, teacher, and school beliefs challenging the relevance and benefits of family engagement in high school (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Halsey, 2005).

Yet, studies show that high schools can mitigate declining family engagement through proactive outreach practices (Hill & Chao, 2009; Sanders, 1998; Sanders & Lewis, 2004). When high schools reach out to involve families, families across ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds become more meaningfully engaged in their teenagers' educations (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Simon, 2001, 2004), and adolescents and their families value and benefit from the assistance provided (Epstein, 2007; Sanders, Epstein, & Connors-Tadros, 1999).

Successful High School Family Engagement Strategies

High schools that implement successful family engagement programs attend to the basics of good practice. They identify the needs of their students and families in order to develop outreach activities that are meaningful and relevant. They identify resources within their buildings, among their families, and in their local communities that will help them to achieve their objectives and overcome challenges to effective and inclusive practice. They also evaluate their family engagement activities, either formally or informally, to assess their quality and usefulness (Sanders & Epstein, 2000; Sanders & Lewis, 2004; Sanders & Simon, 2002).

High school outreach activities that address the particular needs of teenagers and their families include workshops on adolescent health and development, effective communication strategies for parents and teens, and college and career planning. Effective activities also help adolescents and their families to manage transitions from middle school to high school and from high school to postsecondary education programs and employment. Activities that

> When high schools reach out to involve families, families across ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds become more meaningfully engaged in their teenagers' educations.

inform parents of adolescents about the importance of their continued involvement in their teenagers' education, school policies and rules, course selection and graduation requirements, and methods to monitor student achievement and progress as well as communicate with teachers and administrators also support families' engagement in their adolescents' education (Crosnoe, 2009; DeCastro & Catsambis, 2009; Epstein, 2007; Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007; Simon; 2004; Stone, 2006).

For family engagement to become mainstream practice in high schools, school, district, and state leaders must become actively involved. Below, action principles that are essential for a comprehensive systems approach to school, family, and community partnerships are identified. These complementary actions can enhance families' engagement in their adolescents' academic, social, and emotional development, facilitating these students' success in and beyond high school.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Establish a state policy for family engagement that explicitly includes high schools.
2. Identify state-level personnel to build the capacity of district leaders to support the implementation and evaluation of family engagement practices at high schools.
3. Identify and allocate funds to support family engagement in high schools.
4. Organize events and opportunities (e.g., conferences, workshops, newsletters, and websites) where district and high school leaders can share strategies and promising practices for family engagement.

Local Education Agency

1. Establish a district policy for family engagement that explicitly includes high schools.
2. Identify district personnel responsible for helping high schools to build comprehensive family outreach programs.
3. Provide professional development on family engagement for high school personnel.

4. Help schools to identify funds and resources to carry out family engagement activities.
5. Include family engagement in high school principals' performance evaluations.
6. Recognize high schools that successfully engage families and disseminate their promising practices.

School

1. Establish a school policy and expectation for family engagement.
2. Create a committee or team to help plan, implement, and evaluate schoolwide family engagement activities.
3. Provide professional development for faculty and staff to build their capacity to work effectively with students' families.
4. Develop activities that are responsive to the needs of all families, including those that are ethnically, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse.
5. Identify funds and resources needed to implement effective family engagement practices.
6. Acknowledge and support faculty and staff efforts to engage families.

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Family and Community Engagement in Charter Schools

Topic 18

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Increasing the levels of family and community engagement in schools has been an important rationale for the creation of charter schools from the beginnings of the movement in the early 1990s (Weil, 2000; Wohlstetter & Smith, 2010). While charters often have more flexibility than district-run schools, they too face challenges related to family engagement. This chapter briefly outlines some areas in which charter schools are well-suited to high levels of engagement as well as some unique challenges they face.

Schools of Choice and Hyper-Alignment

Charter schools have been envisioned as potential incubators for educational innovation generally (Lubienski, 2003), and family and community engagement specifically (Moore & Carr-Chellman, 1999). Family and community engagement in low-income communities has been a challenge we have not met (Ferrara, 2009; Sarason, 1995). As schools of choice, charter schools would be expected to attract more involved families because they generally were involved in the initial student application process, rather than passively accepting their district-assigned school. For this fact alone, charter schools are well-suited to be successful in family engagement. Somewhat differently, hyper-alignment in charter schools results when charters create a specific and desirable niche in a local education market. Hyper-aligned schools can be organized thematically based on curriculum or pedagogy or a combination of both. Examples of curricular themes include media arts, environmental studies, or a particular language or culture (Davenport & Bogan, 2005; Kana'iaupuni, Ledward, & Jensen, 2010; Murawski, Lockwood, Khalili, & Johnston, 2010; Voigt, 2009). Pedagogical themes include the integration of new media, social media, project-based learning, expeditionary learning, service learning, and design thinking (Carroll et al., 2010; Garran, 2008; Peebles, 2004; Pernu & Maloy, 2010; Stewart, 2002; Voigt, 2009).

Niche charters provide opportunities to align curriculum and pedagogy with community strengths and needs and to foster meaningful family/community engagement. Davenport and Bogan (2005) report practices at an Afro-centric school in Michigan where parents were engaged in consensus-based

decision making and participating in specially designed rites of passage for students. Hawaiian language and culture schools (Kana'iaupuni, Ledward, & Jensen, 2010) leverage the linguistic and cultural knowledge of families and community members to accomplish their educational mission. Unsurprisingly, engagement is likely to be high when charter schools draw on a community's cultural wealth (Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009).

Novel Engagement Approaches in Charter Schools

Some novel approaches to engagement have become associated with charter schools, including: board governance, home visits, and parental involvement contracts. Each of these is discussed briefly here.

The governance structure of charter schools is, at least theoretically, an innovation in and of itself (Abernathy, 2004; Fuller, Gawlik, Gonzales, & Park, 2004). Having school-level boards rather than district-level boards creates many more "seats at the table" for those interested in formal decision-making roles. Parental involvement in school governance is embedded into some state charter school legislation (Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). Participation on school governing boards by minority parents has been found to increase overall parental involvement in a school (Marshall, 2006). However, because charter schools tend to serve low-income communities and board members are often recruited for their fundraising and management skills, there is a lack of low-income parents on charter school boards (Scott & Holme, 2002; Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011).

Some charters, as well as many non-charters, use home visits as a means to promote family engagement with the school. Home visits can have multiple functions: student recruitment, communicating expectations, and establishing/maintaining relationships between school personnel, students, and their families (Henke, 2011; Matthews, 2009). Given the predominantly low-income communities served by charters, home visits can be particularly important for bridging cultural gaps by providing educators with firsthand knowledge of students' home cultures (Baeder, 2010).

Similarly, parental involvement contracts (or compacts) are a common charter school tool. Compacts have been required of all Title I schools for nearly 20 years (Moles, 2005) and have been described as an opportunity to improve student outcomes by making expectations for parents and educators clear (Henderson, Carson, Avalone, & Whipple, 2011). In charter schools, they have also been decried as instruments of compliance that screen out poor families (Becker, Nakagawa, & Corwin, 1995; Wells, 2002). This is somewhat controversial because, in a context of school choice, there is a clear perverse incentive to select only higher performing students, and forcing families to meet contractual obligations could be one way to accomplish that (Becker, Nakagawa, & Corwin, 1997; Green & Mead, 2004; Weil, 2000).

Challenges Faced by Charters

Family and community engagement is likely to be as varied within the charter schools as it is within district-run public schools. There are several challenges that are particularly salient for charter schools, however. These include: geographic challenges, the way in which charter schools are authorized, and the growing influence of no excuses charter schools.

Geographic Problem

Geographically, charter schools often serve a wider area than neighborhood schools. As schools of choice, charters generally draw their student population from multiple school attendance zones, rather than primarily from one or two, as would traditionally be the case. While this form of school choice liberates students from being assigned to failing schools by their zip code, it means that individual charter schools are forced to interface with multiple elected officials, to forge bonds with multiple dispersed community groups, and to help transportation-challenged families get to school for meetings.

Charter School Authorization Problem

Recently, many charter schools have followed a path to inception that inhibits community participation (Beabout, 2010a). Individuals aspiring to serve as the principal of a charter school apply for an incubation fellowship, receive leadership training, select a board, submit a charter, and then, when the charter is approved, a school site

is assigned; then families are recruited and the school opens. This timeline front-loads decision making so that very little is left to be negotiated by the time families come into the picture. The school leader has had his or her ideas encoded in the approved charter and has selected a board that will supervise the implementation of the plan. Parents can help implement the plan, but this is less meaningful than helping to revise it. The last-minute assignment of school buildings to new charters by districts presents additional constraints on building local relationships. Community development or community organizing approaches to charter school creation provide an alternative development path (Fabricant, 2010; Oakes & Lipton, 2002; Shirley, 1997; Warren, 2005).

No Excuses Problem

A rapidly growing piece of the charter school universe (often called the no excuses schools) has framed urban schooling with three axioms: (1) educational inequity can be rectified at the school site, (2) low-income students can and will meet state standards at all costs, and (3) educators need to do whatever it takes. This statement, for all of its power and good intentions, places the school as an interloper in—rather than a part of—the community it serves. The community is seen as a problem to be fixed (Warren, Thompson, & Saegert, 2001). Such thinking predisposes schools to use state-articulated goals as the primary (or sole) objectives of schooling, and stakeholder engagement is beneficial only to the extent that it furthers progress towards achieving these goals. For example, a review of research studies from the National Charter School Research Project, based at the University of Washington, found that those dealing with community issues tended to focus on parent selection factors and parental evaluation

surveys, with nearly a total absence of research on family and community engagement. This go-it-alone philosophy is potentially exacerbated in schools run by charter management organizations (CMOs), where decisions are made at the corporate level and not at the school site (Anderson, 2005).

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Incentivize the formation of strong community partnerships in the authorization and renewal of charters. These relationships provide curricular and pedagogical supports, rather than auxiliary services like tutoring and healthcare (see Beabout, 2010b).
2. Provide legal guidance to charters on the use of parental involvement compacts, particularly focusing on any failure to comply clauses that might present constitutional problems or serve to screen out low-income parents.
3. Earmark funds in charter school start-up grants for parent/community liaisons in charter schools.
4. Work with state-level funding agencies to create charter school incubation fellowships so that local leaders, with community connections, can create charter school applications that can compete with those created by some of the national fellowships.
5. Allow charters to create attendance zones so that students can attend schools close to home.

Local Education Agency

1. Be proactive about supporting strong community-based organizations as they partner with charter schools and/or apply for their own.
2. Make school building assignment decisions for charter schools as early as possible to facilitate community engagement. Minimize the shuffling of charter schools between buildings as this disrupts delicate relationships.
3. Support the school choices of parents by providing a comprehensive guide to

> Increasing the levels of family and community engagement in schools has been an important rationale for the creation of charter schools from the beginnings of the movement in the early 1990s.

local schools that includes school locations, grades served, academic and other school performance data, and entrance requirements.

4. Bring together community resources to provide board service training and development for low-income parents wishing to serve on charter school boards.

School

1. Facilitate faculty–parent–community discussions about issues of power and how they impact school engagement levels.

2. Create a specific community relations plan that involves two-way communication with parents, even when this is not required in a charter application. These can include the formation of a parents' cabinet, monthly coffee chats, home visits, and focus groups on potential school initiatives, and should include purely social gatherings as well.

3. If using parental involvement compacts, allow for multiple forms of participation so as not to deter low-income families from enrolling in the school. If compacts have a failure to comply clause, seek legal guidance or else do not include this type of provision.

4. Seek out specific neighborhoods that need a good school when writing a charter application. This focuses the search for community-based partners and helps recruit students from a narrow geographic area, simplifying future engagement efforts.

5. Seek out community-based organizations when recruiting students and community partners. These intact constituencies can help to mitigate some of the power differential that often thwarts successful engagement efforts.

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Family Engagement in Rural Schools

Amanda L. Witte and Susan M. Sheridan

The importance of family–school partnerships for student success is unequivocal. Given the limited resources evident in many rural communities, family–school partnerships can be especially beneficial for students in rural schools. Decades of research has documented the positive effects of parent participation in children's academic endeavors for diverse populations (for reviews see Fan & Chen, 2001; Pomerantz, Grolnick, & Price, 2005), and research investigating family–school partnerships specifically in rural communities yields similar results. For example, in a study of high-performing, high-needs rural schools, supportive relationships with families were among the most important factors for rural school success (Barley & Beesley, 2007).

Rural schools are uniquely positioned to foster and benefit from family–school partnerships. Because of their centrality within the community, rural schools routinely connect with families in multiple capacities as part of typical daily routines. Rural schools provide opportunities for community communication and participation. In many rural communities, the local school building is a point of pride for the community and houses sporting and cultural events, civic activities, and shelter during severe weather. Teachers serve as coaches and club sponsors, which means that they have frequent and varied contact with students at multiple age and academic levels and with their families. Administrators are often highly accessible, active members of the community, allowing them to connect with families in a variety of ways.

Rural schools have many strengths, which can be leveraged as they face hardships such as high teacher turnover, newly credentialed teachers, and inadequate resources (Monk, 2007). Additionally, school closures and school consolidation paired with increased pressure on student achievement in core subject areas means that rural schools are expected to do more with less (Barley & Beesley, 2007). Families in rural communities struggle with similar challenges. Poverty rates in rural America are on the rise (Schafft, Prins, & Movit, 2008), and social and behavioral services for these families are either nonexistent or impractical (DeLeon, Wakefield, & Hagglund, 2003). The geographic isolation of rural

communities means that many rural families are forced to travel a great distance to access necessary parenting and behavioral health services. Furthermore, there is often stigma associated with seeking outside help for mental health or parenting problems, and rural culture often encourages families to deal with problems internally rather than pursue professional help. Schools, on the other hand, tend to be more easily accessible to families. Often rural communities depend on schools to serve many functions in addition to their primary mission of education (National Education Association, 2008).

Because the educational and behavioral needs in rural communities are so great and the demand placed on rural schools to meet the educational, behavioral, and social needs of students is high, rural communities must tap all available resources. One natural and abundant resource is the family. Despite the centrality of rural schools and the relatively small student populations, some studies indicate that rural schools are failing to connect effectively with families. For example, Prater, Bermudez, and Owens (1997) found that, even though rural parents attend school events more often than their suburban and urban counterparts, they talk with their children about school programs and interact with teachers less frequently than other parents. The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) found only 54% of rural parents reported being satisfied with the way that school staff interacted with them. Some rural cultures instill distrust of "outsiders" and fear of being judged by others, which may inhibit families from closely collaborating with teachers, especially in tight-knit rural communities where privacy can be difficult to maintain (Owens, Richerson, Murphy, Jageleweski, & Rossi, 2007). Similarly, teachers in rural schools report that they lack the training needed to communicate effectively with parents, especially if they are not from the community in which they teach (Agbo, 2007). Teachers and administrators without adequate training may only welcome parent involvement when it occurs under conditions tightly controlled by the school (Dornbusch & Glasgow, 1996).

Despite the challenges, it is time for rural schools to enact policies and practices to partner with parents in a way that will reinforce and extend students' learning. Schools must set high expectations for home–school partnerships and share responsibility for student success with families. Indeed, the very idea of family–school partnerships must be embraced by rural schools. The partnership concept implies shared roles and responsibilities among families and schools and an environment where collaboration and cooperation between individuals across home and school settings is established (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). In an environment where family–school partnerships are established, families and school staff are committed to constructive connections and relationships (Semke & Sheridan, in press). Once the importance of partnerships is established, it becomes apparent that meaningful collaboration between home and school is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

Fortunately, many rural schools have mechanisms already in place which can be extended to promote family–school partnerships. Specifically, teachers and administrators in rural schools often use creative methods to meet the needs of their students with existing resources. They often have a "do what it takes" attitude when it comes to serving their students, which provides a prerequisite openness to effectively partnering with parents. Additionally, the isolated nature of rural communities often means that teachers and administrators frequently have overlapping relationships with families. They may interact with parents at school and community events, providing opportunities to establish trust through frequent contact and communication. Additionally, teachers in rural schools see their roles in students' lives extending beyond the classroom to support the educational, social, and behavioral needs of their students (Roeser & Midgley, 1997). To maximize these advantages,

> Teachers in rural schools see their roles in students' lives extending beyond the classroom to support the educational, social, and behavioral needs of their students.

rural schools must establish policies and procedures that promote power-sharing and decision-making with families. Teachers in rural schools should be trained in culturally sensitive parent communication, especially in districts wherein a majority of teachers are recruited from outside the community. Schools can also invite families to help establish policies and share in communicating the partnership goals to all parents.

Action Principles

State Education Agency

1. Establish policies requiring family–school partnerships.
2. Allocate resources for two-way family–school communication, including funds to cover travel expenses and distance communication technology in homes and schools.
3. Mandate the incorporation of culturally sensitive family–school partnership training in administrator and teacher education programs.
4. Establish a system for reviewing the availability, accessibility, and flexibility of family–school roles in diverse school districts, including rural, suburban, and urban districts.
5. Create programs to recruit and retain local community members as teachers and administrators in local schools.

Local Education Agency

1. Include family–school partnership in mission statements.
2. Create paid positions to promote family engagement in rural schools.
3. Identify existing human resources such as translators, parent volunteers, and bus drivers. Train them to promote family-school partnerships that engage all families.
4. Provide training to parents on family-school partnerships.
5. Ensure that the practices of specialists—such as school psychologists, counselors, and social workers—engage families in all direct student services.

School

1. Set high partnership expectations for all families. Identify and evaluate existing biases as well as existing partnerships.
2. Establish a "family space" within the school, with resources for families, a schedule of events, and open times for parent–parent and parent–teacher interactions.
3. Establish regular, bidirectional communication mechanisms between home and school, such as two-way home–school notes.
4. Identify ways to extend educational goals through existing events frequented by families, such as athletic events. Eliminate the separation between academics and extracurricular activities.
5. Create a structure for parent–teacher meetings that allows for sharing of information, goals, plans, and solutions for all children, and especially those developing learning or behavioral challenges.

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Bridging Two Worlds for Native American Families

Pamela Sheley

Topic **20**

There is a danger in attempting to describe effective strategies for any classification of families or schools, since no two are really alike. For American Indian families and schools, that is especially true. Native Americans are not only affiliated with more than 500 tribes and multiple tribal bands, each with its own cultures and customs, they also are found in every strata of American society, every residential situation, and every walk of life. As for schools, most Native American children attend regular district schools along with non-Native children, while some attend schools operated by their tribes or the Bureau of Indian Education. A few attend boarding schools.

For purposes of this discussion, we will focus on Native American children living on reservations or in areas where Native Americans constitute the majority of residents and maintain an identity with their tribes. This is often called "Indian country" and is typically characterized as remotely rural and too often associated with poverty.

Much of the earlier research on American Indian parent engagement tells the story of parents who are disengaged from the school system through which their children must navigate. Poor experiences with the federally mandated boarding schools scarred an entire generation of American Indian parents and left them mistrustful of the educational system (Chavers, 1998; Tippeconnic, 2000). However, more recent research paints a new picture of parents who are engaged in their children's learning and have aspirations for them that include graduating from high school and attending college (State Advisory Council on Indian Education, 2004; Chavers, 2000; McInerney, McInerney, Ardington, & Rachewiltz, 1997; Chavers, 2000).

While a cookie-cutter approach is not applicable for any school, this becomes even more apparent for schools serving American Indian students. Indian students may attend public or parochial schools (approximately 93%), or Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) operated schools, or Tribally Controlled (contract) schools (remaining 7%). Of the BIE operated schools and Tribally Controlled schools, some are boarding schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Each type of school represents

a different experience for both students and parents. These schools serve students from over 500 recognized tribes with different cultures and languages (Oakes & Maday, 2009; Kitchen, Velasquez, & Myers, 2000). However, when all these differences are stripped away, there is still a teacher, a student, and the student's family who all want the student to succeed.

While American Indian parents interviewed for the Indian Education Report (State Advisory Council on Indian Education, 2004) believed it was their responsibility to teach their children about their heritage and culture, they also felt that the schools needed to incorporate more of American Indian culture and history into the curriculum. At the minimum, teachers need to be educated in the prevailing culture so they can avoid applying stereotypes and misconceptions to their students (Coggins, Radin, & Williams, 1996; Gay, 2000; Huffman, Sill, & Brokenleg, 1986; Ward, 1994). Parents and community leaders can inform teachers about their histories and cultures (State Advisory Council on Indian Education, 2004; Oakes & Maday, 2009).

Educators also need to understand the role that economic depression plays on both the current conditions in which the student exists and in what hopes and aspirations the student may perceive for his or her future. Michelle Fine (1991) gives a picture of the role of poverty:

> For these students, the opportunity to a public education is hollow. It asks them to abandon family and community responsibilities; to sacrifice language, identity, and pride; to ignore the pain and suffering they witness around them and the culture and pleasure they take comfort in; and to deny fundamentally all that sits between their dreams and their circumstances, between the ideologies

they so want to believe and the contradictions they so need to confront. (p. 21)

School staff can learn how to communicate effectively with their students' families. The State Advisory Council on Indian Education (2004) gives these suggestions from their interviews with parents:

> Lastly, our interviews indicated that families are learning about their children's academic performance primarily through written communications like notes, progress reports, and performance reports. When schools communicate with families in writing, they are inadvertently excluding a sector of their parent/family population. If schools can find a way to communicate more with families through personal phone calls, visits, or other non-written means—particularly among those families who appear to be entirely disengaged from education—they may be far more effective in increasing family participation in education. (p. 42)

Communication between the school and home should also be perceived to be two-way rather than just communication (often negative) being sent from the school to the parents (Cockrell, 1992; Chavers, 2000). Schools must make a concerted effort to communicate positive behaviors of the student, as well as encouraging parents to share their perceptions and knowledge of their child with the teacher. Schools must initiate the effort to make parents feel welcome and respected (Cockrell, 1992).

Persistence matters. Enlist the willing parents who attend school functions to get their feedback on what types of involvement they would like and to help communicate with other families. Talk to the tribal council and involve them in the school. Speak to the elders and include them when possible in teaching the students of their heritage and culture. Invite parents in to share special skills related to supporting at home their children's success at school. Keep track of those activities that garner the best response. Offer classes to the parents on how to help their students form solid habits of studying and reading and to maintain regular conversation with their children about school (Redding, 2000). Be willing to discuss learning standards and lessons without educational jargon. Listen when parents do not understand the relevance of a lesson or

> *Schools must make a concerted effort to communicate positive behaviors of the student, as well as encouraging parents to share their perceptions and knowledge of their child with the teacher.*

grade. Listen. Train all school staff to treat all parents with courtesy and respect.

The burdens of poverty and cultural diffusion weigh heavily on many Indian children. Attending to their social and emotional learning is essential, and it also is necessary to their receptiveness for academic learning. Bridging the gap between the school and the families it serves is not easy work, but it is essential work that requires ingenuity, sensitivity, and persistence. Indian children must learn to successfully navigate two worlds, in many ways, and this creates both a challenge and an exciting opportunity for their schools.

Action Principles

State Education Agency (or Bureau of Indian Education)

1. The State Education Agency includes a state-funded Indian education coordinator.

2. The state's academic and social-emotional standards address Native American culture and history.

3. The state provides targeted funding of Indian education programs, including programs for family engagement (Smiley & Sather, 2009).

4. The state's resources and programs for family engagement include practices and examples relevant to Indian families and schools.

5. The state ensures that remotely located schools possess adequate Internet access and equipment and families are given access to and training on the use of this equipment.

Local Education Agency (or Education Line Office)

1. Curriculum includes native culture and languages as part of the education program (Smiley & Sather, 2009).

2. Curriculum guides assist teachers in integrating culture and language into their standards-aligned instruction (Smiley & Sather, 2009).

3. All teachers are educated in the history and culture of the communities they serve.

4. All schools are expected to include parents in shared leadership opportunities.

5. School budgets include line items for family engagement, and the district provides guidance for effective family engagement practices.

School

1. The school uses multiple means of communicating with parents (websites, notes to home, bulletin boards, face-to-face meetings, home visits) that are two-way, allowing for parental input and feedback.

2. The school offers workshops for parents to learn about and discuss their role in their child's education, including studying at home, reading at home, parent–child interaction, school–home compact, and learning standards.

3. The school maintains a School Community Council consisting of the principal, teachers, and parents who have currently enrolled students, to discuss and develop meaningful activities and ways for families and schools to interact.

4. The school selects and evaluates all staff based on their ability to work effectively with families and to attend to the social and emotional development of their students.

5. The school trains all staff on Native American culture, effective relationships with families, and the importance of children's social and emotional development, and expects the training to be demonstrated in daily work.

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Marie

Pamela Sheley

Marie is six years old. She lives in a two-bedroom trailer that sits on a wind-swept plain. The land is beautiful. Bluffs frame the horizon and change colors with the rising and setting sun. Eagles sweep the sky. Sunrise lights the ground with fire. Marie's family has lived on this land for several generations. She lives with her mother, grandmother, two siblings, and two uncles. Every morning she gets up just as the sun peaks over the edge of the world, brushes her teeth and her hair, and sits down with her mother and siblings for breakfast. At 7:00 a.m., the bus arrives to take her to school. It will take an hour and a half for the bus to make its rounds and deliver her to the school door.

Marie loves school. She loves her schoolmates, her teacher, and even the new principal. She loves the smell of the chalk on the chalkboard, and especially the smell of the new crayons that fill the container on the shelf marked "Supplies." She works hard at her studies and enjoys learning new things. Sometimes she has trouble understanding the teacher – in her home, her grandmother speaks only in their native language, and other adults bounce between that language and English in the same sentence. Marie mostly thinks and speaks in English, but wishes she were more fluent in both languages. Her teacher works with her individually when she doesn't understand.

Mrs. Johnson recently accepted the position as principal at Marie's school. She is excited about her new job and about the students and staff with whom she is working. Most of the teachers seem engaged and eager to try her ideas for school improvement. The students, for the most part, are hard-working and well behaved. She has not had much time to learn about her new community since she just moved to the reservation a few weeks before the school year began. As part of her plan for school improvement, Mrs. Johnson has proposed an Open House for the families, with interactive activities for parents and children. It will give her a chance to meet some of the parents of the students as well as become more familiar with the people in the community. Some of her staff responded less than enthusiastically to her ideas for the Open House, which confuses her, but does not deter her from her plans. Mrs. Johnson forges ahead with energy and enthusiasm and chalks up the resistance to nervousness about a new venture.

The Open House is planned for 6:00 p.m. on a Tuesday evening. Mrs. Johnson prints up colorful flyers with all the information and makes sure all the teachers send them home with their students. She posts the information on the school website.

On Tuesday evening, Mrs. Johnson eagerly waits to welcome the parents of her 175 students. She has brought cookies for refreshments and rehearses in her mind the speech she wants to deliver to the parents to tell them how excited she is to be serving in their school. At 6:10, a small smattering of parents arrives. At 6:30, a few more dribble in. By 6:40, Mrs. Johnson expectantly observes the teachers who have mingled with the students and parents, who now total 35 – students included. Mrs. Johnson steps to the front of the room and delivers her speech with a little less enthusiasm than she intended when the evening began. After the group dispersed, Mrs. Johnson cleaned up the leftover cookies and wondered what had gone wrong.

Marie received the flyer for the Open House from her teacher one week before the event. She loved the bright colors and pretty pictures even if she didn't understand all the words. She put the flyer in her backpack and was the first to run off the bus at 5:00 p.m. (when the bus normally dropped her off) to give it to her mom when she got home. Grandmother was there to greet her, and her mother got home from work at 6:00. Her mother put the flyer on the refrigerator and told Marie she would try.

On the day of the Open House, Marie's mother was not home from work yet when Marie got off the bus. Grandmother was in the kitchen cooking supper. Marie asked about the Open House. Grandmother said Marie would have to ask her mother when she got home. Marie's mother got home shortly after Marie. When Marie asked about the Open House, her mother explained that they would not be able to attend. Marie's family only owned one car. The car was needed by one of Marie's uncles to drive to work that evening. Marie's mother assured her that she would speak with her teacher just as soon as she was able to let her know why they did not attend. Marie's grandmother and mother both knew that Marie was disappointed so they spent the evening looking over all her schoolwork and drawing new pictures she could give to her teacher the next day.

Family engagement is not always easy to understand. On the surface, Mrs. Johnson could assume that the majority of her students' parents did not attend the Open House because they were not committed to their children's education. She might believe that the parents of her students did not want to be "engaged." However, she would be wrong.
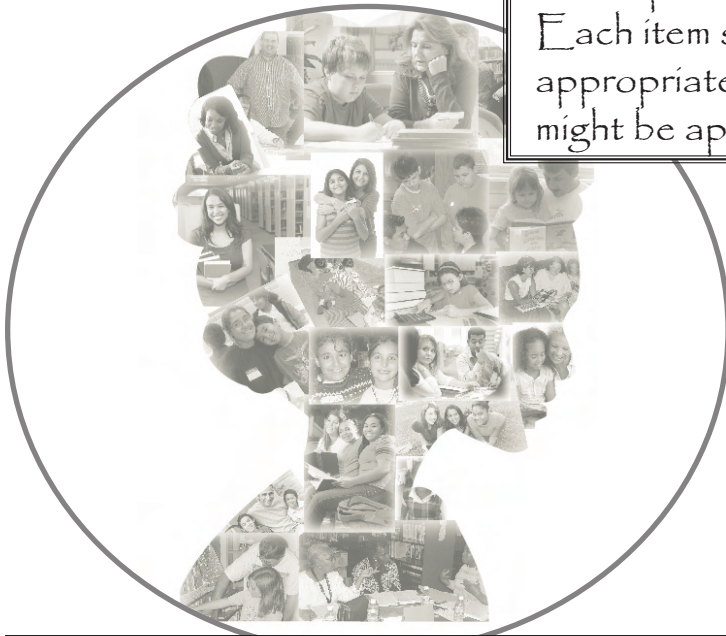
Part IV:

Suggested Practices

This chapter provides a checklist of suggested practices derived from the action principles in the preceding chapters. Each item should be considered for its appropriateness to the context in which it might be applied.

Checklist of Suggested Practices

Sam Redding

The *Handbook on Family and Community Engagement* includes the best thinking by leading experts on a full range of topics relevant to family and community engagement. Each contributor brought to the project his or her own passions, special interests, personal background, and experience. The contributors synthesized the research and offered practical action principles for State Education Agencies, Local Education Agencies, and Schools. This chapter provides a checklist of suggested practices derived from the action principles in the preceding chapters. Each item should be considered for its appropriateness to the context in which it might be applied. For greater understanding of the suggested practices, see the related chapters in the *Handbook*.

The suggested practices are organized into three sections: State Education Agencies, Local Education Agencies, and Schools. Within each section, the practices are organized as follows:

Shared Leadership: Building strong, distributed leadership for family and community engagement.

Goals and Roles: Setting family and community engagement priorities and defining the roles of leaders, teachers, parents, and others in meeting goals.

Communication: Promoting communication among leaders, teachers, parents, students, and others and providing information and guidance for them.

Education: Providing education and professional development for leaders, teachers, parents, and others to advance their knowledge and skills relative to the roles they play in family and community engagement.

Connection: Bringing together people and groups to advance the goals of family and community engagement and sharing their experiences.

Continuous Improvement: Establishing policies, systems, and procedures to evaluate and continuously improve family and community engagement efforts.

State Education Agencies

Shared Leadership

1. Appoint a leader to coordinate home and community efforts throughout the state.
2. Identify state-level personnel to build the capacity of district leaders to support the implementation and evaluation of family engagement practices at high schools.
3. Seek competitive federal funding to implement evidence-based programs that change parent literacy behaviors (via book rotation, parent training, and library connections) and pair this with inexpensive book distribution
4. Designate state personnel with specific duties that include the advancement of parent leadership and family engagement. Identify parent leadership training programs that can serve as models or be directly adopted.
5. Put parents on school councils by state statute or guidance and outline the responsibilities of the councils.
6. Invite local parent and community leaders to meet with state leadership and speak at their events.
7. Earmark funds in charter school start-up grants for parent/community liaisons in charter schools.
8. Appoint a state-funded Indian education coordinator.
9. Make it clear that Title I funds allocated for parent involvement can be used for parent leadership training.

Goals and Roles

1. Allow those about to be married to get their marriage license fees waived if they take a series of parenting classes either from a member of the clergy or a licensed family counselor.
2. Make and act on a public commitment—of intellect, time, and resources—to equip school administrators, teachers, and support staff for effective collaborative work with students' families.

3. Assure that policy is created and funds are allocated so that every school site, commencing with Title I schools, has a family center organized by a coordinator.

4. Write a state-level policy supporting family and community engagement practices.

5. Establish a state policy for family engagement that explicitly includes high schools.

6. Review or develop a state and district homework policy with input from teachers, principals, students, and families.

7. Develop guidelines for helping schools to create family-friendly schools.

8. Allow charters to create attendance zones so that students can attend schools close to home.

9. Establish a system for reviewing the availability, accessibility, and flexibility of family–school roles in diverse school districts, including rural, suburban, and urban districts.

Communication

1. Employ mass media to point out how parents can encourage their children's academic success.

2. Construct separate websites for parents and for educational administrators and teachers devoted to the curriculum of the home.

3. Provide technical assistance for selecting and managing electronic communication systems.

4. Develop and provide a resource bank on parent involvement with homework.

5. Allocate Title I and other funds for the purchase of electronic devices for student use in reading, writing, and information retrieval.

6. Endorse college- and career-readiness tools for parents and students.

7. Provide guidance for families in supporting their children's learning at home, including online assignment posting, homework hotlines, newsletters, or workshops.

8. Provide legal guidance to charters on the use of parental involvement compacts, particularly focusing on any failure to comply clauses that might serve to screen out low-income parents.

9. Allocate resources for two-way family–school communication, including funds to cover travel expenses and distance communication technology in homes and schools.

10. Provide targeted funding of Indian education programs, including programs for family engagement.

11. Ensure that remotely located schools possess adequate Internet access and equipment and families are given access to and training on the use of this equipment.

Education

Family Education

1. Produce or provide books on parental involvement and high expectations that are addressed to both parents and teachers, designed to help them raise family aspirations.

2. Recommend a broad list of books on parental involvement and expectations that teachers can read to better familiarize themselves with the topic.

3. Assure that Title I and other funds are directed to school districts to provide parent–student workshops in reading literacy and payment to low-income parents for any out-of-pocket costs to attend such workshops and activities.

4. Offer parent leadership training across the state as a model for what districts and schools can emulate.

5. Strengthen preschool intervention programs (e.g., Head Start), especially family support services, which aim to enhance family functioning and blunt the stresses of poverty.

6. Provide guidance to families regarding all steps and processes involved in diagnosing and placing a child in special education.

7. Incorporate school–home relationships standards into State Early Childhood Standards.

8. Include Native American culture and language in academic and social-emotional standards.

9. Include practices and examples relevant to Indian families and schools in the state's resources and programs for family engagement.

Teacher and Leader Pre-Service Programs and Professional Development

1. Ensure that basic knowledge of families' roles in students' learning—and schools' roles in supporting parents' self-efficacy for involvement—is an essential component of all educators' professional preparation in the state.

2. Mandate teacher education about how to work with parents on homework.

3. Offer or directly fund professional development for district and school educators on school, family, and community partnerships.

4. Include homework design and implementation in professional development offered at the state, district, and school levels.

5. Recognize teachers who have met homework challenges, and provide them a forum to share lessons learned.

6. Require that teacher preparation programs have pre- and in-service teachers participate in cross-cultural conversations and interactions.

7. Require teacher preparation programs to provide training for pre- and in-service teachers to effectively work with parents.

8. Require teacher preparation programs to integrate community action projects in their educational programs in order to connect with and support community agencies (i.e., service-learning opportunities).

9. Recruit and train bilingual teachers that match the languages spoken in the schools.

10. Incorporate in teacher training programs information about the major cultural and linguistic groups in the state's schools—demographic backgrounds, cultural characteristics, and group assets.

11. Pull together highly effective educators of culturally and linguistically different students to develop model programs and lessons to be used in teacher training and professional development programs to help teachers reach out to immigrant parents.

12. Require a course on collaboration with families and communities for certification or licensure for administrators and special educators.

13. Require professional development in the area of collaboration with families and communities for in-service educators and administrators.

14. Require culturally sensitive, family–school partnership training in administrator and teacher education programs.

15. Commission or conduct workshops for local educators on the curriculum of the home.

16. Provide training, assistance, and materials (including video demonstrations and translated materials into high incidence languages) to help schools help marginalized parents.

17. Support carefully designed teacher exchange programs (especially with Mexico, which has the highest percent of immigrant families) to help teachers better understand the cultural context from which immigrant students are coming.

Connection

1. Enlist the cooperation of community centers, houses of worship, and women's clubs to offer parenting courses helping families raise their expectations and becoming more communicative and supportive in their interactions with their children.

2. Examine successful practices of Head Starts, state prekindergartens, and other early education settings to provide state and local data on kindergarteners' reading readiness and the early family engagement strategies that can support this.

3. Partner with statewide family centers that offer a host of parent and teacher training, events, informational materials, and general expertise on engaging families, often with a focus on literacy.

4. Develop policy that connects local public libraries to school sites staffed by a credentialed librarian.

5. Establish family and community engagement advisory boards with representation from districts across the state.

6. Get advice from the grass roots with a parent–community advisory council and encourage districts to create district councils.

7. Collaborate with and involve all stakeholders (including minority parents) towards common goals to improve schools and communities.

8. Organize events and opportunities (e.g., conferences, workshops, newsletters, and websites) where district and high school leaders can share strategies and promising practices for family engagement.

9. Incentivize the formation of strong community partnerships in the authorization and renewal of charters.

10. Work with state-level funding agencies to create charter school incubation fellowships so that local leaders, with community connections, can create charter school applications that can compete with those created by some of the national fellowships.

11. Create programs to recruit and retain local community members as teachers and administrators in local schools.

12. Hold a state conference every year or two to advance family and community engagement.

13. Locate comprehensive family resource centers in low-income communities, for the administration of services (e.g., parenting education, adult education and literacy, mental and physical health care).

Continuous Improvement

1. Include homework policies and practices in school improvement planning and monitoring requirements.

2. Request regular information (from school personnel and school families) regarding specific steps LEAs and individual schools are taking to support parents' self-efficacy for involvement and their involvement efforts.

3. Monitor how districts carry out the Title I parent involvement requirements and the state's own requirements.

4. Periodically conduct formal and informal surveys that include student, teacher, and parent views about homework practice and effects, and use the results to improve future policy and practice.

5. Establish regular assessment of effectiveness of family and community engagement services provided and the evolving needs of each community.

6. Incorporate accountability measures that address the State Early Childhood System in evaluation systems for Commissioners.

7. Conduct rigorous research to link policies and practices; focus on alterable factors regarding minority families, schools, and achievement.

8. Provide statewide infrastructure and support to build capacity in minority districts (i.e., leaders, funding, resources, monitoring, accountability, technical assistance, direct support, partnerships, early intervention programs, etc.).

9. Create data systems and disseminate research to all stakeholders for data-driven policies and practices; disaggregate data on diverse populations.

Local Education Agencies

Shared Leadership

1. Appoint a leader to coordinate home and community efforts throughout the local agency.
2. Commit the resources of time, staff, and funds to train and support parent leaders at the district and school levels.
3. Require schools to include parents on appropriate school teams and ensure that the teams represent the diversity of the community, and operate with bylaws, agendas, and minutes.
4. Support and utilize parent focus groups to make important decisions at the schools.
5. Establish an Office for Immigrant and Diverse Families to coordinate information and support for schools in reaching out to families.
6. Identify district personnel responsible for helping high schools to build comprehensive family outreach programs.
7. Create paid positions to promote family engagement in rural schools.
8. Expect all schools to include parents in shared leadership opportunities.

Goals and Roles

1. Develop clear policies to guide all schools' partnership programs.
2. Focus LEA discussions on strategies for developing administrators' and teachers' self-efficacy for building: (a) interactive and respectful relationships with students' parents and (b) parents' self-efficacy for involvement.
3. Support school-based efforts to enhance parents' self-efficacy for involvement are most likely to be effective when: (a) the efforts are well-led (e.g., the leader—the principal or other source familiar with the school and respected by school personnel—is knowledgeable, draws out, and values individual responses and group discussion); and (b) leaders use individual contributions and group discussion to guide group development of goals and plans for subsequent implementation.
4. Develop explicit written policy and practices on agency, school, and parent opportunities and responsibilities for improving the home curriculum.
5. Provide supports for writing effective homework policies.
6. Coordinate family engagement priorities and structures between elementary and secondary schools.
7. Focus on those low-income populations who stand to benefit most from family engagement in literacy.
8. Help district and school teams write plans for goal-oriented partnership programs.
9. Include a line item in each school's budget for family engagement with a portion allocated for training and support of parent leaders.
10. Require principals to report monthly on parent leadership and family engagement activities in their schools, including the work of school teams that include parents. Keep the focus on improving student achievement.
11. Include in each monthly report to the board of education what the district and each school are doing relative to parent leadership and family engagement.
12. Review or develop a state and district homework policy with input from teachers, principals, students, and families.
13. Encourage schools to include parents and students in creating a vision statement about family involvement.
14. Examine options for breaking the isolation of their low-income immigrant students and families; school assignment policies using tools such as magnet dual language programs, which incorporate English speakers and English learners, have great potential for bringing immigrant students' families into close contact with native-born students/families in an equal status context.

15. Determine parent capabilities, interests, willingness, and responsibility in order to make home-to-school connections.
16. Create recognition opportunities and incentives for schools adopting model Early Childhood System features.
17. Establish a district policy for family engagement that explicitly includes high schools.
18. Recognize high schools that successfully engage families and disseminate their promising practices.
19. Help schools to identify funds and resources to carry out family engagement activities.
20. Include family–school partnership in mission statements
21. Ensure that the practices of specialists—such as school psychologists, counselors, and social workers—engage families in all direct student services.
22. Include in the curriculum native culture and languages as part of the education program.
23. Provide curriculum guides to assist teachers in integrating culture and language into their standards-aligned instruction.
24. Include in school budgets line items for family engagement and provide guidance for effective family engagement practices.

Communication

1. Provide counselors that can periodically meet with parents and children (if necessary) to help parents (and students) improve their communication and support skills (these would be distinct from guidance counselors who are designed to mostly help with student-based academic issues).
2. Identify effective two-way communication systems in schools and use them as examples for other schools.
3. Describe curriculum of the home activities in local media including newspapers and Internet sites.
4. Select and distribute publications directly to parents on improving the home curriculum.
5. Share best practices.
6. Develop and provide a resource bank on parent involvement with homework.
7. Utilize multiple means for two-way communication between teacher and parents—such as parent contracts, podcasts, classroom newsletters/postings—regarding classroom activities and desired homework focused on literacy on a regular basis.
8. Provide parents and students with college- and career-readiness tools.
9. Provide guidance for families in supporting their children's learning at home, including online assignment posting, homework hotlines, newsletters, or workshops.
10. Distribute informational, family-friendly materials, including materials translated into the family's language.
11. Support the school choices of parents by providing a comprehensive guide to local schools that includes school locations, grades served, academic and other school performance data, and entrance requirements.

Education

Family Education

1. Provide district-based parenting classes.
2. Connect with a library and credentialed librarian that can conduct professional development opportunities for parents and school staff.
3. Develop regularly available parent–student–teacher workshops on school reading and literacy, topics determined by parent–teacher–student needs-assessments.
4. Provide supervised out-of-school programs for student homework that include parent involvement.

5. Organize and offer professional development workshops to school teams that include parents.

6. Solicit and support implementation of preschool intervention programs.

7. Commit to investing in parent education and involvement starting before school entry.

8. Identify existing human resources such as translators, parent volunteers, and bus drivers. Train them to promote family–school partnerships that engage all families.

9. Provide training to parents on family–school partnerships.

Teacher and Leader Professional Development

1. Offer strong, explicit support for the development of school administrators', teachers', and other school staff members' knowledge of parental involvement's role in supporting student learning, teachers' roles in supporting parents' self-efficacy for involvement, and participants' skills in and commitment to supporting parents' self-efficacy for involvement.

2. Develop strong LEA and school-level (principal, teachers, other staff) understanding of four principles central to school members' effectiveness in supporting parents' self-efficacy for involvement: (a) parents' self-efficacy for involvement supports parents' decisions to become involved; (b) school and teacher support for parents' self-efficacy enhances parents' involvement and effectiveness; (c) effective parental involvement supports students' learning; and (d) there are many different ways in which families may be effectively involved in supporting their students' school success.

3. Conduct workshops for educators on improving academically stimulating activities in the home and community.

4. Provide workshops for teachers on parent engagement with homework.

5. Provide training, assistance, and materials (including video demonstrations and translated materials into high incidence languages) to help schools help marginalized parents.

6. Include homework design and implementation in professional development offered at the district and school levels.

7. Recognize teachers who have met homework challenges, and provide them a forum to share lessons learned.

8. Provide district-wide professional development and diversity awareness training to teachers and staff.

9. Provide training for school personnel, such as special educators and administrators, to facilitate ongoing, meaningful communication and collaboration with families.

10. Provide professional development on family engagement for high school personnel.

11. Provide teachers with education on the history and culture of the communities they serve.

Connection

1. Enlist the cooperation of community centers, houses of worship, and women's clubs to offer parenting courses helping families raise their expectations and becoming more communicative and supportive in their interactions with their children.

2. Work with community agencies to provide and align services for families around homework.

3. Designate a room readily visible to parents as a parent center with the primary focus on reading literacy.

4. Partner with parents to help students set career goals.

5. Collaborate with community organizing groups to recruit parent leaders from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds.

6. Encourage family events and invite parent stories.

7. Involve minority parents, teachers, and school leaders in supporting district initiatives.

8. Partner with local social agencies and universities in the implementation of evidence-based family prevention and intervention programs in high-risk communities.

9. Employ strategically located schools to serve as hubs of services to encourage social network development in isolated poor neighborhoods.

10. Centralize services to families so that services are easily accessible, including access to social services.

11. Build linkages with other early childhood and family service providers in the community.

12. Support strong, community-based organizations as they partner with charter schools and/or apply for their own.

13. Make school building assignment decisions for charter schools as early as possible to facilitate community engagement and minimize the shuffling of charter schools between buildings as this disrupts delicate relationships.

14. Bring together community resources to provide board service training and development for low-income parents wishing to serve on charter school boards.

15. Build agency relationships district-wide that promote the 0–8 literacy continuum, as family engagement and literacy trajectories begin early and require sustained efforts.

16. Coordinate and align the work of schools and early childhood education agencies, and explore public/private partnerships with foundations to pilot this work.

Continuous Improvement

1. Help schools evaluate their family and community engagement program activities.

2. Include parents in the district improvement process.

3. Periodically conduct formal and informal surveys that include student, teacher, and parent views about homework practice and effects, and use the results to improve future policy and practice.

4. Conduct district and school climate assessment surveys to understand family perceptions and open dialogue about family involvement.

5. Conduct a "needs assessment" of every school to develop a profile of the immigrants in the school, their academic achievement, and set specific goals for these students.

6. Provide district-wide infrastructure and support to build capacity in minority schools (i.e., school leaders, funding, resources, monitoring, accountability, aligned curriculum and assessment, direct support, partnerships, early intervention programs, etc.).

7. Conduct rigorous research and/or access information to support schools and communities; focus on alterable factors.

8. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of each school, develop a realistic plan of action, and sustain ongoing work with minority families and students.

9. Identify common and unique challenges of communities (crime, safety, lack of services) to develop integrated strategies.

10. Include family engagement in high school principals' performance evaluations.

School

Shared Leadership

1. Appoint a school leader to improve and coordinate activities designed to improve the curriculum of the homes of children attending the school.

2. Assert principal and teacher leadership in ensuring the success of group work to develop strategies for engaging parents in effective support of student learning.

3. Form an action team for partnership.

4. Include in the school's decision-making structure a School Community Council with parents

(primary care givers of currently enrolled students, not school employees) as the majority of members, operating with bylaws, agendas, and minutes.

5. Create opportunities to develop and engage parent leaders.

Goals and Roles

1. Establish a school policy and expectation for family engagement.
2. Develop a homework policy including grade-level guidelines for amounts of homework.
3. Ensure that teachers play a critical role in building parents' sense of self-efficacy for support of students' learning.
4. Assert the principal's leadership in teachers' development of personal self-efficacy for involving parents.
5. Assert the principal's leadership in family involvement and school-wide efforts to support parents' sense of efficacy for involvement, and include the topic in faculty discussions.
6. Develop detailed home curriculum policies and practices for school staff.
7. Understand that parents are often more involved in homework and less involved at school when their children are struggling and that marginalized parents do attempt to assist their children.
8. In planning, link family and community involvement activities to specific goals, consistent with and supportive of those established by the School Improvement (or Leadership) Team.
9. Emphasize the importance of families' home involvement to children's school success.
10. Include in the school budget a line item for family engagement with a portion allocated for the training and support of parent leaders.
11. Develop clear school and classroom homework policies (linked to state/district policies) and share them with students and families.
12. Define parent involvement so that everyone understands what it means in your school.
13. Create a demographic profile with a short questionnaire that compiles information about the school's families.
14. Establish school transition teams that include parents to assist in student transitions between schools and beyond school.
15. Develop activities that are responsive to the needs of all families, including those that are ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse.
16. Identify funds and resources needed to implement effective family engagement practices.
17. Acknowledge and support faculty and staff efforts to engage families.
18. In school compacts, allow for multiple forms of participation.
19. Identify ways to extend educational goals through existing events frequented by families, such as athletic events; eliminate the separation between academics and extracurricular activities.
20. In schools with immigrant populations, place a priority on hiring bilingual/bicultural teachers.
21. Before launching any program, first consult with a group of parents to identify the needs of the children and their families.
22. Ask questions, including: (a) What is our school's history of involving parents and families? (b) What is our school's philosophy regarding parents' involvement in school activities? (c) What training and skills do we need for involving parents in school affairs?

Communication

1. Write and regularly distribute home curriculum practices for parents including material on homework expectations.
2. Provide specific, accessible information, guidelines, and resources to help parents help their children with assigned homework.

3. Ensure that every child has an electronic device to store, use, and connect his activities at school and at home with family members.

4. Increase the viable uses of social media by parents and students in learning and job hunting.

5. Communicate regularly about homework expectations and respond to student and family concerns as issues arise.

6. Share homework challenges and successes with colleagues over the course of the school year and coordinate assignments across teachers or subjects to avoid overburdening students with multiple projects simultaneously.

7. Raise awareness about the needs of your school's families, and make community members aware that they can help.

8. Establish a predictable communication routine with families, including: (a) contacting families before the school year starts to let them know that school personnel are looking forward to working with them as partners in educating their child; (b) offering who the point person/s will be for the year, as well as the best ways to contact them; (c) setting up times or intervals for regular communication; and (d) any information pertaining to the review or reevaluation of the child's progress.

9. Establish regular, bidirectional communication mechanisms between home and school, such as two-way home–school notes.

10. Use multiple means of communicating with parents (websites, notes to home, bulletin boards, face-to-face meetings, home visits) that are two-way, allowing for parental input and feedback.

11. Provide parents with specific ways through which they can help the child at home, including. concrete suggestions about how to handle academic and behavioral issues.

12. Create a specific community relations plan that involves two-way communication with parents.

Education

Family Education

1. Initiate school-based parenting classes that teach parents how to: (a) raise expectations of their children and (b) speak and act in a way that is supportive of their children and their accomplishments.

2. Conduct an in-school workshop series for parents on improving the curriculum of the home.

3. Provide an array of literacy activities/workshops for parents and their children within the school setting focusing on the particular skills that their child should be acquiring in reading and literacy so that learning becomes a shared experience.

4. Educate parents and high school students to the value of "stackable" industrial certifications.

5. Provide training and support for parent leaders.

6. Set your scope and sequence for family education programs.

7. Provide programs to help parents understand how to support their children's education; in immigrant communities, these should be run by parents from those communities to the extent possible.

8. Offer workshops for parents to learn about and discuss their role in their child's education, including studying at home, reading at home, parent–child interaction, school–home compact, and learning standards.

9. Train and use parents as leaders in family education programs.

10. House parent educators within the school.

Professional Development for School Personnel

1. Train teachers and administrators to become more familiar with the research on parental involvement.

2. Conduct workshops for teachers and other educators on the home curriculum.

3. Provide professional development for teachers about family engagement in homework.
4. Provide professional development for teachers on family engagement and working with parent leaders.
5. Conduct service seminars for teachers and administrators on the processes linking poverty to family relations and children's outcomes.
6. Provide resources such as time, planning support, and professional development to enable special educators to collaborate with families, general educators, as well as other professionals involved in a child's case.
7. Provide professional development for faculty and staff to build their capacity to work effectively with students' families.
8. In schools with Native American students, train all staff on Native American culture, effective relationships with families, and the importance of children's social and emotional development, and expects the training to be demonstrated in daily work.

Connection

1. Establish mechanisms for two-way communication with parents about homework.
2. Provide a welcoming environment, coupled with engagement that is meaningful and varied in format and timing, to increase access for and participation by families.
3. Partner with community agencies to address families' own barriers to literacy, offering family literacy classes and other adult education opportunities.
4. Create opportunities for schools, libraries, religious groups, and other community-based organizations to collaborate and promote communitywide initiatives that highlight the everyday importance of reading.
5. Connect with a library with a qualified librarian accessible throughout the school day and after hours for family members as well as students.
6. Provide a readily accessible and visible facility to be a family resource center, organized by a coordinator.
7. Invite parents to an annual student-led conference.
8. In schools with immigrant populations, hire or seek volunteers for parent liaisons who can connect the school to the local immigrant communities.
9. Create a safe and welcoming space for immigrant parents to meet, and provide an attractive activity that will bring them in.
10. Provide school-wide community and support to minority families (i.e., parent and teacher leaders, resources, monitoring, accountability, direct support, partnerships, etc.).
11. Partner with and invite parents to get involved in the school community; identify a parent liaison to help facilitate language and cultural barriers through different venues (i.e., newsletters, conferences, meetings, events, etc.).
12. Incorporate relevant events, projects, and curriculum that value ethnic diversity (combined with academic rigor and high expectations).
13. Solicit and establish community involvement in the implementation of family intervention and prevention programs.
14. Build relationships with formal and informal child-care providers in the community.
15. Facilitate faculty–parent–community discussions about issues of power and how they impact school engagement levels.
16. Establish a "family space" within the school, with resources for families, a schedule of events, and open times for parent–parent and parent–teacher interactions.
17. Create a structure for parent–teacher meetings that allows for sharing of information, goals, plans, and solutions for all children, and especially those developing learning or behavioral challenges.

Continuous Improvement

1. Conduct ongoing and end-of-year evaluations of family engagement programs and practices.
2. Include parents on appropriate school teams and groups and/or seek their input in decisions made by school teams and in plans for school improvement.
3. Conduct a homework inventory and identify various purposes in assignments; edit or discard unsuccessful assignments, and consider ways to make homework more enjoyable.
4. Evaluate the strength of homework assignments and policy through student achievement and student and family feedback; revise and improve each year.
5. Assess the parent involvement climate with surveys, focus groups, and interviews.
6. Disseminate and utilize research to provide knowledge and tools for teachers, counselors, and parents (i.e., workshops, training programs, college access info, ESL classes for parents); focus on alterable factors.
7. Host services based on assessment of community challenges (e.g., crime, safety, health care, nutrition, fitness).
8. When writing charter school applications, seek out specific neighborhoods that need a good school, focus the search for community-based partners, and helps recruit students from a narrow geographic area.
9. Selects and evaluate all staff based on their ability to work effectively with families and to attend to the social and emotional development of their students.

About the Authors

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William Jeynes is a Professor of Education at California State University, Long Beach, and has graduate degrees from Harvard University and the University of Chicago. He graduated first in his class from Harvard University. He has more than 100 academic publications, including 70 articles, 10 books, and 25 book chapters. His articles have appeared in journals by Columbia University, Harvard University, the University of Chicago, Cambridge University, Notre Dame University, and other prestigious academic journals. He is a well-known public speaker, having spoken in nearly every state in the country and in every inhabited continent. He has spoken for the White House, the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, the National Press Club, UN delegates, members of Congress, the Acting President of South Korea, Harvard University, Cambridge University, Columbia University, Duke University, and many other well-known universities. He has spoken for both the G.W. Bush & Obama administrations and interacted with each of these presidents. He has been a consultant for both the U.S. and South Korean governments. His 4-point

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Kate McGilly, Ph.D., is a developmental psychologist and an experienced project manager with a particular focus on education nonprofit project management. As Senior Manager for Special Projects, she has responsibility for managing all federally funded grants as well as most other grant-funded projects and contracts at the national office. She also contributes to research and quality initiatives, curriculum and program development, strategic planning efforts, grant writing, and advocacy work. She has been with the national office for Parents as Teachers for 15 years. Prior to Parents as Teachers, she helped coordinate an economic development campaign at the St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association, conducted visitor research at the St. Louis Science Center, and coordinated the Cognitive Studies in Educational Practice program at the James S. McDonnell Foundation. She holds a Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA.

Oliver C. Moles, Jr. is now a consultant in social research and educational issues after a long federal research career beginning with studies of low-income families. He retired in 2002 from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education. At OERI he monitored national R&D centers on inner-city education, students placed at risk of failure, and effective secondary schools. He managed the development of large comprehensive school reform models for secondary schools. He has conducted studies and written on parent involvement in education, youth development, student conduct, and school crime. At OERI he co-edited a set of workshops for urban educators on creating school–family partnerships. He has analyzed K–12 programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education regarding the involvement of parents, and written three related reviews over the last 10 years. He is a Ph.D. social psychologist, and a Fellow of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, a member of the American Sociological Association, and an associate of the Social Science Research Group, LLC. He chairs the

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Sam Redding, Ed.D., is the executive director of the Academic Development Institute, an organization he founded in 1984. He is also the director of the Center on Innovation & Improvement, one of five national content centers funded by the U. S. Department of Education. Since 1991 he has served as executive editor of the School Community Journal.

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Sam has authored books, chapters, and articles on school improvement, state systems of support, school turnarounds, parent involvement, and the school community. Sam served on the expert panel on school turnarounds for the Institute of Education Sciences. He has consulted with more than 30 state education agencies and many districts. He lives in Lincoln, Illinois, where he and his wife, Jane, a former special education teacher, are the parents of four grown children and 11 grandchildren.

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Herbert J. Walberg, a distinguished visiting fellow at the Stanford University Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, taught for 35 years at Harvard and the University of Illinois at Chicago. He was awarded a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, where he is a member of the Fellows Society. Author or editor of more than 60 books, he has written extensively for educational and psychological scholarly journals on factors in the home, community, and school that raise student achievement and human accomplishments. For the United Nations International Bureau of Education in Geneva, he edits a series of practical pamphlets on educational practices, which is distributed in more than 100 countries. His most recent book is *Tests, Testing, and Genuine School Reform* (Hoover Institution Press, 2011). He is the only American to be appointed both a member of the National Assessment Governing Board and a member of the National Board for Educational Sciences. He is a fellow of several scholarly groups, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the International Academy of Education, and the Royal Statistical Society, and he chairs the Beck Foundation and the Heartland Institute in Chicago.

Mary R. Waters is the Director of the Illinois Career and Technical Education Curriculum Revitalization Project and, in that capacity, coordinates the project website, product development, structured group interviews to develop curriculum materials, and writer and publisher interfaces. She is also the President of WatersEdge Consulting and Training in Geneva, IL, which specializes in instructional and professional development, third-party evaluation services, and onsite assessment walkthroughs for grant projects nationwide. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Stout and Le Cordon Bleu École de Cuisine, Paris, France. She currently teaches graduate education courses for the George Williams College of Education at Aurora University, Aurora, IL, specializing in courses related to group facilitation skills, learning styles, teamwork, college and career readiness, and coaching the explicit and conscious integration of academic skills into career and technical education programs (such as NRCCTE's Math-in-CTE protocol). In her capacity as a Senior Curriculum Specialist for Jostens Learning Corporation, she created and directed the development of 34 technology-oriented K–8 curriculum modules for the

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Heather Weiss is the Founder and Director of the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) and is a Senior Research Associate and Lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. From its beginning in 1983, HFRP's mission has been to support the creation of more effective practices, interventions, and policies to promote children's successful development from birth to adulthood. A key emphasis of HFRP's work is the promotion, documentation, and assessment of complementary learning—strategies that support children's learning and development in nonschool as well as school contexts. Dr. Weiss and her colleagues are well known for their work building the demand for and use of evaluation as a cornerstone of social change, to which end HFRP also provides strategic planning and evaluation services for foundations and communities. Their current evaluation portfolio includes evaluations of national foundation efforts to scale up universal prekindergarten services and extended learning opportunities. Dr. Weiss writes, speaks, and advises on programs and policies for children and families, and serves on the advisory boards of many public and private organizations. Her recent publications focus on reframing research and evaluation to support continuous improvement and democratic decision making, examining the case for complementary learning from a research and policy perspective, and assessing new ways of providing and evaluating professional development. She is a consultant and advisor to numerous foundations on strategic grantmaking and evaluation. She received her doctorate in Education and Social Policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and she was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Yale Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy.

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Helen Westmoreland is Director of Program Quality at Flamboyan Foundation, a private family foundation with the mission of improving educational outcomes for children in public and public charter schools. As part of the Washington, D.C. team focused on family engagement and education advocacy to accomplish this mission, Helen identifies partners, strategies, and exemplary programs that will help Flamboyan achieve broad impact and measure results. Helen has authored numerous publications on the topics of family engagement, education organizing, and out-of-school time and has consulted with a variety of organizations. In 2011, she was asked to join the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group, a leadership collaborative whose purpose is to inform the development and implementation of federal policy related to family, school, and community engagement in education. Before coming to Flamboyan, Helen worked for the Harvard Family Research Project, where she provided research, evaluation, and technical assistance support to non-profits, philanthropies, government agencies, and research policy organizations across the country. Prior to that, Helen oversaw student tutoring services and site evaluations for community-based afterschool programs in the Duke–Durham Neighborhood Partnership. Helen received a master's degree in education policy and management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

John Mark Williams is a former high school teacher and administrator who has served for six years as Illinois State Director of Career and Technical Education. During his tenure, he has been a founding member of the Coalition for Illinois High Schools, a member of several Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Taskforces devoted to addressing the critical skills shortages of Illinois. Most recently, he has focused on the Illinois Curriculum Revitalization Project as well as the development of STEM Learning Exchanges in Illinois.

Amanda Witte received her M.A. in 2005 and is currently pursuing a doctorate in Educational Psychology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She is in her sixth year with the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, and Schools. She is currently serving as the Project Coordinator of "CBC in Rural Communities", a multi-year, randomized, clinical trial funded by the Institute of Education Sciences. In this position she contributes to research examining the role of parent and teacher collaboration through Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) on academic and behavioral outcomes for students with behavioral concerns in rural schools. This involves managing collaborative teams of consultants, parents, and teachers; maintaining partnerships with rural school personnel; and developing working relationships with new schools and communities. She also helped develop and implement the training and ongoing coaching of the consultants on this project. Additionally, she conducts family–school partnership trainings, workshops, and presentations regionally and nationally.

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