SECOND EDITION

Preparing Educators and Improving Schools

STUDENT ECONOMY EDITION

Joyce L. Epstein

School, Family, and Community Partnerships

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SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Preparing Educators and Improving Schools

SECOND EDITION

JOYCE L. EPSTEIN

Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
Johns Hopkins University

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
New York London

First published 2016 by Westview Press

Published 2018 by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Type set in 10 point Sabon by the Perseus Books Group.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Epstein, Joyce Levy.
School, family, and community partnerships : preparing educators and improving schools / Joyce L. Epstein. — Rev. ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-8133-4447-8 (alk. paper)
1. Community and school—United States. 2. Home and school—United States. 3. School improvement programs—United States. I. Title.
LC221.E68 2010
371.190973—dc22
2010023427

ISBN 13: 978-0-8133-5025-7 (pbk)

This book is dedicated to the memory of Mollie C. and Edward P. Levy, whose love and support helped three sisters set and reach their goals, and to Paul Jerrold Epstein, who turned my research on school, family, and community partnerships into treasured real-life experiences.

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Preface and Acknowledgments

THIRTY YEARS SOUNDS LIKE A LONG TIME to work on a topic, but it is not very long to build a field of study on school, family, and community partnerships. My colleagues and I began our research on parental involvement in elementary schools in 1981. We followed with studies of involvement in the middle grades in 1987 and in high schools in 1990. Since that time, we conducted research and development activities with state and district leaders, and we continue this work with educators at all policy levels.

In 1996, with useful results from many studies, I established the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. NNPS guides schools, districts, states, and organizations to use research-based approaches to build goal-oriented partnership programs that contribute to student success. Members of NNPS not only develop programs and improve practices of family and community involvement, but also identify new questions and challenges that influence our research. These connections—research that improves practice and practices that extend research—are often discussed in academic circles but rarely accomplished. NNPS is showing how these connections can be organized and conducted to benefit all partners.

Funding and Collegial Support

My work at Johns Hopkins University has been funded over the years by various governmental agencies, including the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and its predecessor, the National Institute of Education (NIE) in the U.S. Department of Education, and by a recent five-year grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). At Johns Hopkins, my program on family and community involvement has been housed at the Center for Social Organization of Schools (CSOS) in centers that changed names with each new governmental grant, including the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (CREMS); Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students (CDS); Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning; and Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR). To give research on partnerships a permanent home, I established the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships within CSOS in 1995.

Grants from the Lilly Endowment, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Leon Lowenstein Foundation, National Endowment of the Arts, Disney Learning Partnership, Wallace–Reader's Digest Funds, and MetLife Foundation also supported my research and development projects. Over the years, many funders became colleagues

in helping me think about needed directions for school, family, and community partnerships. They included Oliver Moles and Ron Pedone at OERI; Joan Lipsitz, Gayle Dorman, and Kent McGuire at Lilly; John Van Gorder at Lowenstein; Hayes Mizell at the Clark Foundation; Jane Quinn and Catherine Pino at Wallace–Reader's Digest Funds; Laurie Lang, Tony Jackson, and Pamela Rubin at Disney Learning Partnership; and Rick Love at MetLife Foundation. I value their ideas and support.

Special thanks are due to educational leaders in Baltimore who supported, assisted, and inspired me for many years. They included Jerry Baum, who directed the Fund for Educational Excellence and who was a partner in fieldwork for nearly 10 years; Lucretia Coates, the first facilitator for school, family, and community partnerships in the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), whose deep knowledge about schools and families continues to influence this work; and Vivian Jackson, who assisted middle schools for several years in implementing interactive homework. Other talented facilitators for school, family, and community partnerships worked with more than 160 elementary, middle, and high schools in Baltimore City to learn how leadership on partnerships could, in fact, be organized in a large, urban school district and how all schools in nine areas could organize teams of educators, family members, and community partners to plan and implement effective partnership programs. They included (by history of participation) Marsha Powell-Johnson, Paula Williams, Brenda G. Thomas, Joyce Bowyer, Marsha Greenfeld, Patricia Kidd-Ryce, Joann E. Brown, Sandra E. Morgan, and Anjali Patel. Their knowledge and talents helped many schools turn research into action and helped me learn about the real world of district leadership and school-based program development.

Other district leaders in Baltimore supported the work of their facilitators and schools in developing programs of partnership. They included (by history of participation) Gary L. Thrift, Clifton Ball, Cynthia Janssen, Christolyne Buie, Charlene Cooper Boston, Sandra L. Wighton, Ellen D. Gonzales, Anne Carusi, Jeffrey Grotsky, Barry Williams, Patricia E. Abernathy, Cecil Ramsey, Irby Miller, and Carole Seubert. These area superintendents and other administrators taught me valuable lessons about how different district leadership styles contributed to improving schools' connections with families and communities.

Several local foundations in Baltimore also supported fieldwork conducted with my community-based partner, the Fund for Educational Excellence. I owe a great debt to the Fund and to BCPS for making it possible to systematically gather ideas and data from countless teachers, principals, parents, other family members, and students. Baltimore was a "learning laboratory" for school, family, and community partnerships for more than a decade and helped identify the challenges and possibilities for organizing district programs of school, family, and community partnerships in elementary, middle, and high schools. Knowledge gained in BCPS contributed to the development of NNPS and underlies many of the processes that are used, now, in districts and schools across the country.

At this writing, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University has grown to include about 1,200 schools and 150 school districts located in more than 35 states, as well as 21 state departments of education and over 50 organizations that work with schools and districts on partnerships. I

am grateful to thousands of teachers, administrators, parents, and students who have worked with me and my colleagues over the years. They showed that with skill and will it is possible to develop programs that engage all families in ways that help students succeed in school. Their trials, tribulations, and triumphs contributed to the practical approaches that are included in this volume.

Many colleagues and students at Johns Hopkins University worked with me on studies in this volume and on countless other publications that are referenced here. I am indebted to all of them, especially Henry Jay Becker, who met the challenge in 1981 to start our research program with a survey of educators and parents. His creative work and collaborative spirit helped generate many questions for the studies that followed. Other valued research partners at Hopkins included Susan L. Dauber, Susan C. Herrick, Seyong Lee, Lori Connors-Tadros, and many other helpful graduate and undergraduate students.

Colleagues who worked with me from 1990 to 1995 in the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning included codirector Don Davies and researchers Carole Ames, Josephine Bright, Melvin Delgado, Larry Dolan, Charles Glenn, Nitza Hidalgo, Vivian Johnson, Sharon Lynn Kagan, Colleen Morisset, Saundra Nettles, Diane Scott Jones, Sau-Fong Siu, and the late Susan M. Swap. These researchers conducted many studies that deepened an understanding of the scope of school, family, and community partnerships from birth through high school. Their work and that of many other researchers cited throughout this volume influenced my thinking about the content of courses to prepare teachers, administrators, social workers, school psychologists, sociologists of education, and other education professionals to understand and conduct school, family, and community partnerships.

Ongoing Research and Development

Special thanks are due to my colleagues at the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, currently including researchers Mavis G. Sanders, Steven B. Sheldon, and Frances Van Voorhis; facilitators Marsha Greenfeld, Darcy Hutchins, Brenda Thomas, and Jenn Ganss; and, in recent years, Claudia Galindo, Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn, Cecelia S. Martin, Mary G. Nesbitt, Karen Clark Salinas, Beth S. Simon, and Kenyatta Williams. The work we did together influenced the topics, discussions, and activities in chapters throughout this volume and new research underway.

Other longtime colleagues and valued friends at Johns Hopkins University supported and encouraged my work for many years, including James M. McPartland, Edward L. McDill, and the late John H. Hollifield. All of the researchers and facilitators at CSOS are working to show that social and educational research can help educators improve schools for all students and benefit families and communities.

I am convinced that researchers learn most about schools by collaborating with educators, parents, students, and others who implement programs, evaluate their efforts, and report their results. All that we know or ever will learn about school, family, and community partnerships depends on researchers, educators, families, students, and others sharing the role of expert. All of my projects, publications,

presentations, and collaborations with other researchers, educators, parents, and others have been a true delight, making thirty years seem like a very short time indeed.

My family's interest in my work has been most appreciated, including my late parents' unconditional support and my sisters' ongoing encouragement. My son Paul's experiences in school literally brought my theories and research to life. He showed how important it was for his mom and dad to be positively involved in his education and how crucial it is for every child—all students—to be the focus of school, family, and community partnerships. Now Paul and daughter-in-law Adrienn continue to support my work that is built on family history.

What Is New in the Second Edition?

A direction-shaping survey that Mavis Sanders and I conducted asked over 160 deans and other leaders in colleges of education across the country how well their institutions prepared future teachers and administrators to involve families and communities in children's education. Their responses revealed a dramatic gap between their belief that family and community involvement is a very important topic for future teachers and administrators to master and their honest reports that their graduates were unprepared to conduct effective programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Those data inspired the completion of the first edition of this book as one way to help new teachers and administrators begin their professional lives with a better understanding of useful approaches to family and community involvement.

Some progress has been made since the publication of the first edition of this book. Research on partnerships has improved each year, as more and better studies using ever more rigorous methods are completed. Inservice education has increased to help practicing educators improve their plans and partnership programs. And there are more preservice and advanced education courses on partnership program development—*but not enough*. Most new teachers and administrators are inadequately prepared to work effectively with all students' families in communities across the country.

At the end of the first edition of this book, published in 2001, I noted: "Today's students are tomorrow's parents. They are witnessing and experiencing how their schools treat their families and how their families treat the schools. They are learning by example how parents are involved at school and at home in their education."

Some who were middle and high school students in 2001 now are reading this book—preparing to be teachers! They need to know how to engage their future students' families and communities in productive ways. In this edition, some readings, comments, and activities were retained from the first edition to ensure that future teachers, administrators, and researchers of school, family, and community partnerships understand the history and development of this field of study. Other sections are "new and improved" to share the progress that has been made in research, policies, and practical programs of family and community involvement.

- New readings include a literature review that discusses new directions for partnership program development; a summary of research on homework; and new approaches to district-level leadership, state-level leadership, and policies on family and community involvement.
- Comments, discussion topics, activities, references, and projects were added and updated to enable future teachers and administrators to "think new" about and delve deeper into many aspects of school, family, and community partnerships.

The new edition of this book aims to encourage more professors of education, sociology, psychology, and related fields to incorporate topics covered across chapters in required courses that will prepare the next generation of education professionals to understand and implement programs and practices of family and community involvement to increase student success in school.

Joyce Levy Epstein
Baltimore, October 2010

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PART ONE

Understanding School, Family, and Community Partnerships

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1 Introduction

WHOSE DREAMS ARE THESE? Children will like school; work hard; do the best they can; graduate from high school; continue their education; gain employment; and become good citizens, friends, and members of their families. Countless surveys and projects with thousands of educators, families, and students reveal that these are common goals and dreams. Too often, though, these ideals are unattained by this nation's children. How can more students be helped to meet these goals?

To answer questions about goals, we must ask questions about roles: What should families do, what should schools and communities do, and what should students do to reach their common objectives for children's success in school and in the future? These questions are the reasons for studying, implementing, and improving school, family, and community partnerships.

MATCHING RHETORIC WITH PRACTICE

No topic about school improvement has created more rhetoric than parental involvement. Everyone says that it is important. In study after study, teachers, parents, administrators, and even students from elementary through high school say that parental involvement benefits students, improves schools, assists teachers, and strengthens families. There are basic beliefs and agreements about the importance of families and the benefits of parental involvement.

There also are some clearly expressed hopes and wishes for parental involvement. Teachers would like families to assist, guide, and influence their children to do their schoolwork. Families want teachers to let them know how to help their children at home. Students wish their families were knowledgeable about their schools and helpful to them on school matters at home. These desires are expressed in numerous studies with diverse samples, in varied communities, and at all grade levels.

There is some confusion and disagreement, however, about *which* practices of involvement are important and *how* to obtain high participation from all families.

Some educators expect parents to become involved in their children's education on their own. If they do, they are "good" parents. If not, they are irresponsible, uninterested, or "bad" parents. Some educators and parents expect the school to "tell parents what to do" and that parents will simply respond. Neither of these approaches—waiting for involvement or dictating it—is effective for informing or involving all families.

Research shows that *partnership* is a better approach. In partnership, educators, families, and community members work together to share information, guide students, solve problems, and celebrate successes. Partnerships recognize the shared responsibilities of home, school, and community for children's learning and development. Students are central to successful partnerships. They are active learners in all three contexts—at home, at school, and in the community. They link members of these groups to each other. Students are not bystanders but contributors to and actors in the communications, activities, investments, decisions, and other connections that schools, families, and communities conduct to promote children's learning.

What should programs of partnership look like? How can they be developed and sustained? How could teachers, administrators, parents, other family members, and others in communities be prepared to initiate and maintain productive relationships in their work to benefit students? How would teachers, administrators, and others who work with children and families put the best knowledge and practices to work? How must practices change over time as students proceed through the grades? How can research address these questions to continue to increase knowledge and improve practices? These are the questions this book will address. Research, to date, informs the answers; new research will enrich, confirm, or redirect practice.

THE NEED

All teachers and administrators have one thing in common, whether they are in Maine or California; work with students in grade 1 or grade 12; teach Anglo, Latino, African American, Asian American, Native American, or other students; or have advanced or struggling students: All teachers' students have families.

Students' families, however, are not all the same. Some students live with two parents, and others have only one parent at home. Some parents are employed, and some are unemployed; some speak English, and some speak other languages at home. Students come from many different family structures. Indeed, there are important variations in the characteristics and situations of students, families, schools, and communities.

However configured, however constrained, families come with their children to school. Even when they do not come in person, families come in children's minds and hearts and in their hopes and dreams. They come with the children's problems and promise. Without exception, teachers and administrators have explicit or implicit contact with their students' families every day.

All students and their families live in communities, whether close to or distant from schools, that are diverse in geography and history and in economic and social char-

acteristics. Wherever they are located, all communities include individuals, groups, and organizations that care about children; share responsibility for children's futures; and are potentially valuable resources for children, families, and schools. Children, families, and schools also are valuable resources for their communities.

Educators need to understand the contexts in which students live, work, and play. Without that understanding, educators work alone, not in partnership with other important people in students' lives. Without partnerships, educators segment students into the school child and the home child, ignoring the whole child. This parceling reduces or eliminates guidance, support, and encouragement for children's learning from parents, relatives, neighbors, peers, business partners, religious leaders, and other adults in the community.

THE GAP

Teachers learn to teach reading, math, science, and other specialties. They learn to teach students in kindergarten and in all other grade levels. Administrators learn how to manage the school as an organization, create schedules, and supervise many tasks and many people. Most teachers and administrators, however, are presently unprepared to work positively and productively with one of the constants of life in school—their students' families.

Consequently, many educators enter schools without adequately understanding the backgrounds, languages, religions, cultures, histories, structures, races, social classes, and other characteristics and goals of their students and families. Without such information, it is impossible for educators to communicate effectively with the people who matter most to the children in their schools, classrooms, and communities (Bryk and Schneider, 2002).

Few educators enter their profession with an understanding of how they and their colleagues can develop and maintain partnership programs that inform and involve all families every year that children are in school. Without such programs, it is impossible for all families to remain active in their children's education and development.

Few educators are prepared to work with businesses, agencies, and institutions in their students' communities to promote student success in school and beyond. Without these connections, students are underserved and disconnected from opportunities that enrich their schoolwork and prepare them for the future.

An early survey conducted in the southwest region in 1980 found that only 4 to 15 percent of teacher educators taught a full course or part of a course on parent involvement, and only 37 percent of the teacher educators included even one class period on the topic. In the same region, just about all of the practicing teachers and administrators who were surveyed agreed that teachers needed to be better prepared to understand and work with families. And over 70 percent thought that there should be a *required* course on the topic in undergraduate education (Chavkin and Williams, 1988).

Another early study of elementary school teachers in Maryland indicated that few attributed their practices of partnership to their formal education. Most teachers

who had even one class on the topic of parental involvement specialized in early childhood or special education or took administrative or other courses as part of an advanced degree. Sometimes the topic was limited to families' legal rights and responsibilities to make specific decisions about children with special needs (Becker and Epstein, 1982; see Reading 3.1).

Little change occurred in the 1980s and 1990s in preparing educators to understand and work with families and communities to support their children's education, despite considerable progress in research, policy, and practice. An informal survey of six campuses of the University of California that prepared teachers found that few courses or even classes-within-courses were offered on family and school partnerships (Ammon, 1990). In Minnesota, more than half of the 27 colleges and universities with degree-granting undergraduate education programs offered no course related to parent involvement for prospective teachers of kindergarten through grade 12, and only one had a required course on the topic (Hinz, Clarke, and Nathan, 1992). Most courses that were offered were for future teachers in early childhood education or special education. Only 6 of 1,300 course listings focused on comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

A companion study of the 50 states indicated that no state required an entire course in family involvement for the certification or licensing of teachers. According to these reports, nine states required coverage of the topic in some course, with a few more specifying that requirement for teachers of early childhood (11 states) and special education (15 states). Approximately one-quarter of the states identified the need for elementary educators to show competence (however attained) in school, family, and community partnerships. Fewer states expected middle or high school educators to have competence in family involvement. Only seven states required principals or central office administrators to study parent involvement or demonstrate proficiency in promoting parent involvement in their schools. No state included this competency in recertification or renewal of certification, thereby reducing the likelihood that practicing educators will update their family and community involvement skills (Radcliffe, Malone, and Nathan, 1994).

A study of official certification materials from all states in 1992 found similar patterns and concluded that parental involvement was not a high priority in state certification (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, and Lopez, 1997). The researchers conducted follow-up inquiries with leaders of about 60 teacher education programs in 22 states that mentioned family involvement in their certification requirements. The results indicated that teacher education programs responded to state policies by teaching topics of parental involvement in some courses. Only nine of the universities in that sample reported having a required course on family involvement, usually for teachers of young children.

At the start of the new decade, a study of 161 deans and chairpersons in schools, colleges, and departments of education in the United States examined courses offered to prospective educators and leaders' perspectives of the need for change (Epstein and Sanders, 2006). About 70 percent of the leaders strongly agreed that future teachers, administrators, and counselors needed partnership skills, but only 7.2 percent strongly agreed that the new teachers who graduated from their programs were

prepared to work with all students' families and communities. Slightly higher percentages believed that future principals (19 percent) and counselors (27 percent) were prepared to work effectively with families. About 60 percent of the leaders of the sampled institutions—more than in past surveys—reported offering a full course on partnerships, mainly to graduate students or, as noted historically, to specialists in early childhood and special education. Most (92 percent) noted that courses at their colleges covered the topic of partnerships in at least *one class*. Even today—even with some progress—most colleges and universities are not adequately preparing new professional educators to work with students' families and communities.

The education leaders' reports were confirmed in a national survey of education school alumni in which 62 percent reported they were not well prepared for the realities of the classroom (Levine, 2006). This includes a lack of skills to work with diverse students and parents in ways that support student learning. Some might say this reflects poorly on the teacher candidates, but the statistic really reflects the poor quality of teacher education programs to help future teachers gain the skills they need—immediately and in every classroom—to work with all students and their families on students' attitudes, efforts, achievements, and progress.

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE

There is evidence that change is possible. In 1989, deans of education and other curriculum leaders at California campuses attended a conference on the need to add school, family, and community partnerships to teacher education. Some took action quickly. Within one year, five of the eight campuses represented at the conference reported making a few changes in the content of courses and assignments in required and elective courses for prospective teachers and administrators. The changes included adding readings about parent involvement to existing courses, professional development, or supervised teaching seminars. One campus added the topic of partnerships to an induction program for first-year teachers who had graduated from the university the prior year (Ammon, 1990). These examples showed that small changes, such as adding readings or discussions about school, family, and community partnerships to existing courses, could be made quickly.

Other changes take longer if they require formal university approval, such as creating a new required or elective course on school, family, and community partnerships for all future teachers or designing a certificate program to develop educational leaders on partnerships. One example of this is a certificate program at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University. This five-course, 15-credit certificate at the graduate student level, Leadership for School, Family, and Community Collaboration, developed by Dr. Mavis Sanders and her colleagues, required approval from the department and the school's academic review council (Graduate Division of Education, 2003).

In the past few years, more textbooks for various courses on teaching practice, classroom management, and administrative leadership added topics on family and community involvement (Cox-Peterson, 2011; Cunningham and Cordeiro, 2003; Weinstein, 2006; Weinstein and Mignano, 2006; Santrock, 2008; Woolfolk, 2004).

Positive actions also have been taken by individual professors at various colleges and universities who designed and taught courses on school, family, and community partnerships or added readings to existing courses in education, leadership and cultural foundations, sociology, psychology, and social work (Chavkin, 2005; deAcosta, 1996; Kaplan, 1992; Katz and Bauch, 1999; Kirschenbaum, 2001; Riehl, 2004; Van Wyk, 1998). For example, Bermudez and Padron (1988) designed a graduate-level course that included classwork and fieldwork to help educators learn to communicate better with families who spoke Spanish at home. Evans-Shilling (1996) initiated a responsive field-based course that provided educators with experiences in family-school relations. Allexsaht-Snider and others designed a required course for educators preparing for early childhood education to increase understanding of family-school relations; it included fieldwork with families in school, at home, and in the community (Allexsaht-Snider, Phtiaka, and Gonzalez, 1996). She and her colleagues at the University of Georgia also infused these topics into elementary education, field experiences, and other programs to prepare educators. For several years, Mapp (2009) offered future teachers and policy analysts a full-semester course on family and community involvement at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. And the Harvard Family Research Project's Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) conducts projects and maintains a website (www.finenetwork.org) to engage professors of education on topics of family and community involvement.

Over the past two decades, these and other professors have worked to help future educators understand the important roles that families and communities play in students' education. A few studies examined the impact of coursework about family and community involvement on future teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes about partnerships. Morris and her colleagues at the University of Memphis found positive effects of a four-semester school and community relations course on students' understanding of partnerships, attitudes toward parents, confidence about working with families, and feelings of comfort and competence in planning family involvement activities and programs (Morris and Taylor, 1998; Morris, Taylor, and Knight, 1998).

Studies also show that teachers who feel more competent about their own skills were more likely to implement activities to involve families, raising important questions about the need to improve coursework to increase teachers' efficacy on partnerships (Garcia, 2004). Other professors have reported that coursework increased their undergraduate and/or graduate students' understanding of partnerships as one of the essential components of school and classroom organization and as a major influence on student learning and development (Albert, 2008; deAcosta, 1996; Deslandes, Fournier, and Morin, 2008; Katz and Bauch, 1999; Shartrand et al., 1997; Shumow, 2004; Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, and Chatman-Nelson, 2010).

The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) partnered with MetLife Foundation to fund five innovative projects to increase attention to family and community involvement in their preservice programs for teachers (AACTE, 2002). These included field experiences for future teachers at the University of Texas at El Paso working with Latino parents in one school's community and

trials of Teachers as Faculty and Families as Faculty workshops to give future teachers at the University of South Florida and the University of North Florida, respectively, a chance to hear from local teachers and family members about desired collaborations. Northern Illinois University's project embedded partnership topics throughout the curriculum for preservice teachers, and the University of North Texas designed online components that professors in various courses could use to provide future teachers with new knowledge about family and community involvement. More support of this kind would greatly advance innovative attention to teacher training on aspects of school, family, and community partnerships. More research is needed to learn if and how courses with different designs and requirements affect teachers' and administrators' daily practice.

These examples and the results of the survey of deans suggest that leaders in colleges and universities may be more ready than in the past to add the topic of school, family, and community partnerships to their curricula. Readiness for change also has been influenced by federal policies (e.g., recently by No Child Left Behind [NCLB], with continued influence of Head Start, Even Start, and other programs that require family and community involvement; see Reading 4.3). More college and university professors have read research on school, family, and community partnerships that accumulated in the past two decades, and more professors have graduate students at the master's and doctoral degree levels who are choosing topics on family and community involvement for their dissertations (Epstein and Sanders, 2006).

POLICIES ENCOURAGE PREPARATION ON PARTNERSHIPS

States are beginning to include school, family, and community connections in their qualifications for the certification of teachers, administrators, counselors, and other educators. For example, California's Education Code and Commission on Teaching Credentialing, Ohio's Standards Revisions Teacher Education and Certification, Illinois's General Supervisory Endorsement, Minnesota's Higher Education Coordination Board, Virginia's student teaching requirements, and other legislation refer to the importance of school practices to involve families and communities.

Some states require teachers, administrators, counselors, and other educators to demonstrate knowledge and skills on partnerships to qualify for state certification and reflect the standards for licensure of collaborating organizations. The Education Commission of the States (2005) reported that of the 50 states, 17 directed all districts and schools to implement parental involvement policies while 15 others "urge" these programs. In the past few years, other states reported that, in addition to requiring schools and districts to comply with federal requirements for parental involvement policies and programs, state leaders provided professional development on partnerships, awarded grants for innovative partnership practices, and recommended (rather than required) schools conduct programs that involve all families in their children's education (Moles, 2008). Many states are reluctant to issue detailed mandates and requirements for all districts and all schools to take the same

actions, but most states have issued clear recommendations and other documents that support parental involvement as an essential organizational component for effective schools and successful students.

National organizations for college and university program accreditation—including the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2002), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, 1992), and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)—have standards for teacher and administrator education that explicitly include preparation and competence in working with families and communities (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). For example, NCATE specifies that teacher candidates should understand principles and strategies for school, family, and community partnerships to support students' learning. INTASC and ISLLC stipulate competencies that all teachers and administrators should master, including fostering relationships with families and community groups to support student learning and well-being. National teacher examinations for new teachers and national assessments for highly accomplished teachers include questions and require skills on parent and community involvement (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1994).

Still, all state and credentialing requirements about competencies on partnerships tend to be general and aspirational, rather than specific about course content and required credits. It takes time for state laws and accreditation standards to affect college and university courses for future teachers and administrators.

MORE IS NEEDED

Despite some progress in the past ten years, the picture is still bleak. Most teachers and administrators are not prepared to understand—much less design, implement, and evaluate—new approaches for developing programs of family and community involvement that increase the success of all students in school. Most administrators are not prepared with new strategies to guide and lead their staffs to develop strong school programs and classroom practices that inform and involve all families about their children's learning, development, and educational plans for the future. The problem is serious for all educators and is particularly urgent for educators teaching in public and charter schools that serve diverse families. It is still the case that rising teachers and administrators need a repertory of research-based approaches to work with all families, especially in economically distressed communities.

Even big changes that were made in the past few years have had limited impact. Relatively few new teachers or administrators graduate from any one college or university. The fact is that many more colleges and university programs need to improve their programs to enable all future teachers and administrators to gain basic knowledge and skills on partnership program development. It will be necessary to scale up the number of professors and programs of teacher education, educational administration, and other courses in order to prepare all educators to engage all families in positive ways in their children's education at all grade levels.

It is time to advance undergraduate and graduate education by ensuring that future teachers and administrators have the required courses with the newest content coverage on school, family, and community partnerships. Simultaneously, it is important to encourage state education leaders to improve certification standards for teachers, administrators, and counselors by specifying course requirements and competencies that educators must have to support general statements about the importance of family and community involvement.

THE GOALS

Just as teachers are prepared to teach subject matter and administrators are prepared to direct and manage schools and programs, all educators also must be prepared to draw on all of the resources that will help students succeed in school, including families and communities. This volume aims to:

- add an understanding of school, family, and community partnerships to the education and training of teachers, administrators, counselors, and professionals in related fields;
- include this knowledge in the definition of what it means to be professional;
- promote respect, trust, appreciation, and collaboration between and among all adults who influence children's lives and learning;
- enable educators to apply their knowledge to develop effective programs of partnership in their schools and classrooms;
- support the integration of school, family, and community partnerships in broader programs of school improvement, giving explicit attention to improving practices of involvement; and
- encourage research on the simultaneous influences of home, school, and community contexts on children's learning and development.

The professional preparation of educators must include the information they need to understand, conduct, and maintain school, family, and community partnerships. Without this information, teachers and administrators are restricted in the resources they have to help students do their best. Also, families are then limited in the influence they may have on their children's learning and development for at least 12 years of school life. In turn, many children miss the support, encouragement, and understanding they might have from their families and communities. In the end, if educators lack knowledge and skills in organizing and implementing effective partnerships with all students' families, fewer students succeed in school.

The research base of the first edition of this book has been strengthened by advances in research, policy, and practice over the past ten years. It is now possible to enable prospective and practicing educators to gain the knowledge, tools, and examples they need to mobilize families and communities to assist children's learning and development from preschool through high school.

ACHIEVING THE GOALS

To recognize the need, fill the gap, and achieve the goals stated above, we must change some of the requirements, options, and content of higher education courses. Courses must be revised and expanded to include a solid base of information to prepare teachers and administrators to understand and involve families in their children's education.

Ideally, there should be at least one comprehensive required course on school, family, and community partnerships in every preparatory program. Because every teacher and administrator works with children's families (in person or unseen) every day of their professional lives, this requirement is as important as a course in teaching reading, math, or another subject in the preparation of school teachers, and as important as any major required course in educational administration or other educational specialties.

A less meritorious policy decision that still improves most preparatory programs is to organize and offer elective courses on the topic of partnerships at the undergraduate and graduate levels. There also should be a formal plan for how readings on school, family, and community partnerships will be integrated in other required and elective courses to ensure that all who are preparing for professions in education have had substantial exposure to and experience with the theory, research, and implementation of these partnerships.

The call for required, elective, and/or integrated courses is offered with a mix of urgency and understanding. It is urgent that educators better understand families' roles in children's education and how to implement programs of school, family, and community partnerships. It is understood that change in higher education must be discussed and planned to alter long-standing practices in order to offer students these options. Leaders in higher education must be change agents and take steps to ensure that the educational professionals who are prepared in their courses, programs, departments, colleges, and universities are, in fact, well-qualified to teach children and work with families and communities as partners in education.

In colleges and universities, courses also should be enhanced to prepare researchers in sociology, psychology, education, and related disciplines to understand the questions, methods, and problems of studying multiple contexts—home, school, and community—and the interactions of individuals in these contexts. We must prepare the next generation of education researchers to study the overlapping spheres of influence on children's learning and development, just as we must prepare the next generation of teachers and administrators to work effectively with families and communities.

USING THIS VOLUME

This book is about school, family, and community partnerships: how to think about them, talk about them, study and understand them, act on them, and improve them. It includes selected readings and excerpts of readings on the theory,

research, policy, and practice of school, family, and community partnerships to provide a solid base of information on the development, directions, problems, and possibilities of these connections.

The readings and accompanying comments, discussions, and activities can be used as the basis for a full course or as supplementary materials in courses such as foundations of education, methods of teaching, contemporary issues in education, education policy studies, educational administration, counseling, sociology of education, sociology of family, educational psychology, school social work, and related courses. Following are suggestions for using this volume as a text for a full course or for supplementary readings.

A Comprehensive Required or Elective Course

A comprehensive course on partnerships must cover the major topics that educators need to study to proceed thoughtfully in their work with children, families, and communities. This includes theoretical perspectives; results of research on particular approaches; effective policies and practices that teachers and administrators should understand and be able to use to engage all families, involve the community, and best serve students; and organizational strategies to help educators and families work together to design and implement sustainable programs of partnership. Other texts or readings, activities, and projects may supplement this volume in a full course.

Supplementary Readings in Other Required or Elective Courses in Education and the Social Sciences

Readings on family, school, and community connections are important for fully understanding the sociology of education, sociology of the family, social foundations of education, school administration and management, political science, political action and organizations, social policy, school psychology, human development, social work, community services, group processes, urban policy, and related fields. Individual chapters, articles, and activities in this volume may be selected to bring the topic of partnerships to courses in these specialties.

Presently, many courses focus on families without paying attention to children's schools; focus on schools without attending to their connections with families and communities; or instruct about communities without considering the connections and investments of community groups and organizations with educators, families, and children. The readings in this volume will broaden the background and understanding of undergraduate and graduate students about the important connections among home, school, and community for the purposes of assisting students, strengthening families, and renewing communities.

Selections from this volume also may be woven into thematic courses. For example, a course in education, sociology of education, or related fields may take a

historical perspective, addressing the question: How have research, policy, and practice on school, family, and community connections changed over the past half century? Family and school connections have changed from rather superficial, peripheral activities to theory-driven and research-based frameworks that guide basic and applied research and school program development. Research on "community" has changed from using mainly demographic data that rank locations as high or low on social or economic variables to studying the people, processes, and resources in any community that can assist student learning. More and different themes would emerge in a course covering the organization and effects of connections among children, families, schools, and communities over the past two centuries.

Another elective course might address comparisons of school, family, and community connections across nations with comparative readings that explore common and distinct international themes, policies, and school-based programs of family and community involvement. A third thematic course might focus on social-psychological perspectives of the interconnections and interrelationships of individuals that influence student development. This might include research on social networks of educators, parents, parents-and-educators, and student-peers-and-parents, and the two-way, three-way, and many-way connections between and among schools, families, students, peer groups, and communities.

Linkages to Courses on the Methods of Teaching Specific School Subjects and Practice Teaching

Readings on school, family, and community connections should be included in methods of teaching courses that prepare educators to teach specific subjects. That is, teachers of every subject and grade level need to understand, design, select, conduct, and evaluate appropriate connections with their students' families about the curriculum in specific subjects, homework policies, attendance and behavioral expectations, children's grades, challenges, and progress, and about academic decisions such as course choices and the selection of enrichment programs. Teachers of all subjects and grade levels need to understand, design, select, conduct, and evaluate connections with individuals and groups in communities to maximize learning opportunities in reading, math, writing, science, computer skills, art, music, family life, physical education, and other subjects.

Important theoretical issues to study and discuss include whether and how sharing power with parents increases or decreases teachers' power and professional standing. Also, teachers need to learn specific skills, such as how to design homework that enables children to share skills and ideas at home, how to inform families about what their children should know and do each year in each subject, and how to inform families about children's progress and involve families in the assessment of students' work. Teachers of all subjects also should understand the community near the school; the home communities of their students; and the connections with businesses, groups, and individuals in the surrounding community that may help enrich and extend their teaching and students' learning.

Educators who are being prepared to teach, administer, or work in the schools of the twenty-first century should learn about the scope and expansion of research and practice in the field of school, family, and community partnerships. This information will help them develop their own perspectives, understand the pros and cons and the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches, and thoughtfully select or design strategies to communicate with and involve families and communities in children's education.

Other Information

Even if a required course covered all of the topics in this volume, undergraduate and graduate students still would need other information about families, schools, and communities to be prepared for their professions. For example, students need to read about the family as a social organization, the influence parents have on their children at various age levels, diversity in family backgrounds and cultures, and trends in family life. Similarly, professionals who work with families and children need to know about school and classroom organizations to understand basic school structures, functions, staffing, and alternative curricular and instructional approaches for educating students. Educators need to build their knowledge about community structures, processes, and services. The readings in this volume address these topics only as they affect the design and conduct of school, family, and community partnerships. The fields of parent education and parent leadership are also related to topics of family and community involvement (Bornstein, 2002).

No single course or class in higher education will provide all the information and examples that professionals need to make decisions about which practices to use in every school in which they work. Nevertheless, a basic, comprehensive, required course or substantial coverage in several courses should increase awareness and understanding of the topic, alert educators that collaborating with families is part of their professional responsibility, and provide many ideas and examples to help teachers and administrators "tailor" programs and practices of partnership to their particular school, family, and community settings.

Links to Inservice Education

The vast majority of practicing educators, social workers, school psychologists, and others who work with families and children have had no prior formal education in school, family, and community partnerships. Thus, there is and will continue to be a great need for inservice education for practitioners in preschools; in elementary, middle, and high schools; and at the district and state leadership levels to meet new laws and requirements for effective programs of family and community involvement linked to student achievement and success in school.

Most inservice programs, presently, are limited to a few hours' duration and may introduce teachers and administrators to one or two new practices of partnerships.

A companion volume—*School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (Epstein et al., 2009)—is a comprehensive inservice guidebook that enables educators and parent leaders in schools, districts, and states to organize, improve, and maintain effective programs of partnerships in their own locations.

SETTING A COURSE

This volume brings together a set of basic readings, with comments on new issues; topics for class discussions; questions and activities for classwork, homework, field experiences, and suggested projects; and other material for use in undergraduate and graduate courses in education, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines. The content, based on my work with colleagues, educators, and parents connects child development, socialization, and education with the institutions of school, family, and community and the individuals within them. The collection of readings and activities stresses the importance of developing and maintaining *programs* of partnerships at the school, district, and state levels—not only what one teacher or one principal or one parent might do on their own.

Some chapters should be particularly useful for improving the actions and activities of prospective teachers, administrators, and others who plan to work with schools and families. Other chapters aim to encourage research on new and needed questions to advance the field of school, family, and community partnerships. The readings include literature reviews, original research, policy issues, and activities for practice teaching and subject specialization. The final chapter serves as a bridge to the practical, inservice education and program development that must be customized for and conducted in all schools. The chapters cover the following topics:

Chapter 2: Theory and Overview. Two readings provide a broad perspective on school, family, and community partnerships to introduce a theory of *overlapping spheres of influence* and to provide an understanding of new directions for research, policy, and practice. Theories of authority and decision making and their applications at the school, district, and state levels are explored and may be expanded.

Chapter 3: Research. Several original research studies are presented with data collected from teachers, parents, and students on the nature and extent of involvement, relationships among partners in children's education, and effects of partnership practices. The readings help students examine research methods, interpret results, and consider implications for school practice or for new studies to extend the field. The involvement of parents in one- and two-parent homes is discussed to focus on what schools may do to involve all parents, not just those who usually become involved on their own. This chapter also introduces research on homework to study connections of the classroom curriculum, family involvement, and student attitudes and achievements.

Chapter 4: Policy. Several readings summarize issues and advances in state, district, school, and federal policies of partnership and the connections of policies to leadership actions. These include research on NCLB, guidelines for policy development, and examples of state and district policies on family and community involvement. The readings and activities show how research influences policy, how policy sparks improvements in practice, and, coming full circle, how new policies and practice open opportunities for more and better research. These topics and a discussion of funding partnership programs make this chapter of particular interest in educational administration courses.

Chapter 5: Practical Framework. This chapter connects research and policy with practice. The reading and activities focus on my *framework of six types of involvement*, sample practices of partnerships, the challenges that must be met in excellent programs, and results that can be expected if practices for each type of involvement are well designed and well implemented. By applying knowledge and information to real-world situations, future educators will gain an understanding of the basic components for building goal-linked, school-based partnership programs.

Chapter 6: Practical Applications. Particularly targeted to courses on methods of teaching specific subjects and practice teaching, this chapter summarizes research on a practical method for improving connections with families about students' homework. It discusses and illustrates how to organize and conduct feasible family and community connections connected to the curriculum at home and at school by (1) designing interactive homework for students to discuss with their families at home (Type 4 in the framework of six types of involvement) and (2) organizing volunteers who present interdisciplinary discussions of art and social studies (Type 3 in the framework). Both practical applications demonstrate ways to organize family and community involvement to increase student learning. These topics should be of interest in courses for curricular specialists, students in methods of teaching classes, and student teachers.

Chapter 7: Strategies for Action in Practice, Policy, and Research. This chapter describes an action-team approach for implementing comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships. *Teamwork* is key for organizing and sustaining programs and practices of partnerships. As a team, educators, parents, and community members can work together to plan and implement effective practices that involve all families and promote children's success in school. Essential program elements—leadership, teamwork, written plans, funding, internal and external collegial support, action to implement plans, evaluations, and continuous improvement—must be organized to sustain excellent partnership programs just as these factors are needed for effective reading, math, testing, and other school programs. This chapter also

summarizes the volume's central themes and major conclusions about school, family, and community partnerships.

FEATURED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Each chapter introduces provocative and useful terms that change the way we think about school, family, and community partnerships. For example, readings in Chapter 2 describe *school-like families* and *family-like schools* to contrast collaborative actions with previous narrow views of the different goals and missions of these institutions. This chapter also asks readers to consider how the *multiplication of labor* may describe how educators and families help students learn better than the *division of labor* that was emphasized in prior studies of organizations. Finally, the chapter discusses seven ways to "think new" about partnerships in research, policy, and practice.

Chapter 3 presents original research that provided a base on which studies of school, family, and community partnerships continue to build. The readings illustrate and emphasize the importance of multiple reporters and multiple measures of partnerships in research on partnerships. One reading identifies ten purposes of homework and discusses the need for improving the design of homework to ensure higher quality assignments before simply assigning more homework.

Chapter 4 emphasizes the need for *side-by-side* policies to balance top-down and bottom-up approaches in states, districts, and schools. Readings and discussions in this chapter also show how to translate legislated requirements for family involvement into measures to study how federal (and other) legislation is implemented. Comments in this chapter discuss *food-for-thought stamps* to support and expand extracurricular, after-school, and summer enrichment activities for economically distressed students and families.

Chapter 5 suggests *redefinitions* for each of the six types of involvement that will bring school, family, and community partnerships into alignment with family factors in the twenty-first century. For example, a new definition states that workshops for parents are not only meetings at school but also the content of those meetings disseminated to all who could not come, thereby enabling parents to attend workshops in different ways.

Chapter 6 shows that homework is not always completed by the student alone but can be purposely *interactive* with a parent or family partner. The chapter also demonstrates how volunteers in the middle grades can make real contributions to student learning.

Chapter 7 explains how concepts of trust and mutual respect are central to the success of all partnerships and how seemingly contradictory concepts of equity and diversity in partnerships must coexist. The chapter describes *goal-oriented* and *process-oriented* approaches that educators may use to plan, implement, and evaluate their programs of family and community involvement.

The readings and discussions in several chapters contrast *what is* versus *what might be* in school, family, and community partnerships to encourage fuller inter-

pretations of research results, new directions for research, and the application of research for school improvement.

ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES

Each chapter includes comments and key concepts that extend and update the readings, topics for informal classroom discussions, classroom activities, written assignments, and field activities that encourage students to reflect on the readings, debate ideas, describe related experiences, and conduct short-term and long-term projects. Activities include classroom discussions; written comments; interviews with parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and students; panel presentations; role plays; school visits; and other activities. Questions are provided for students to use in their interviews, and students are asked to compose some of their own questions. Some interviews with educators, parents, or others may be assigned to all students to be completed individually, or interviewees may be invited to the class for group interviews. Field activities and other tasks also may be assigned to individuals, pairs, or groups.

Selection of assignments. There are more questions and activities in each chapter than students in most classes can address in one semester. Professors are encouraged to select and balance assignments so that students engage in a mix of reflective writing, interviews, research, discussions, and other activities. The assignments should reflect course themes and meet the needs of undergraduate or graduate students in teaching, administration, research, and other fields.

Answers to questions. Most of the discussion topics and questions have many correct answers, not one right answer. Some questions first ask students to "identify a school level (preschool, elementary, middle, or high) or grade level that interests you." Thus, students will select different settings on which to base their answers. Students should contribute ideas and written work using information from the readings as well as their own perspectives and experiences. They should be asked to justify their responses based on data or summaries provided in the chapter or refute ideas with specific examples. Professors need to encourage well-argued discussions and debates based on the content of the readings, other research, data collected by students for homework or projects, and students' experiences.

Many students come into education, sociology, psychology, and other courses with stereotypic views of families from backgrounds that differ from their own (Graue and Brown, 2003). The discussion topics and activities in this volume are designed to challenge stereotypes and strengthen future teachers' and administrators' understanding of the *variations* that define students and families in all groups.

Follow-up. Some assignments may be followed up in class by sharing ideas, discussing issues, and pooling data to create larger and more representative samples for additional discussions. For example, if each student interviewed two parents for an assignment, a class of twenty students would produce a combined sample of 40 parents to better understand parents' ideas, goals, or problems. As another example, if each student in a class identifies an exemplary product, the collection of good ideas may be compiled as a computerized resource file for future reference.

Adaptation. Professors are encouraged to adapt or expand the exercises to match the emphases of particular courses and classes. For example, topics and questions about home-school connections at the school level can be adapted and redirected to focus on district, state, or community issues to meet the needs of students in educational administration or community studies. Professors may increase the difficulty or length of assignments by requiring students to complete more readings, conduct and report activities marked "optional," provide more examples, or complete other related activities. Similarly, professors may reduce the difficulty or length of assignments by assigning parts or sections of activities that are provided in each chapter.

Elaboration. The questions in each chapter may spark ideas for term papers, master's or doctoral theses, or other research projects.

SUMMARY

This book offers a clear perspective on the importance of theory-driven and research-based approaches to programs of school, family, and community partnerships. To think about, talk about, and take action to improve home, school, and community connections that support students' education and school improvement, educators must have a foundation on which to build. It is not acceptable to base ideas and future actions only on personal, limited, or selected experiences or outdated stereotypes. It is necessary to understand the basic and complex aspects of a field of study to decide whether, when, why, and how to apply research in practice or to select important questions for new research.

The volume supports six facts and one urgently needed action:

- **Fact:** All students have families. All students and families live in communities. Families and communities are important in children's lives and, along with schools, influence students' learning.
- **Fact:** Teachers and administrators have direct or indirect contact with students' families every day of their professional careers.
- **Fact:** Few teachers or administrators are prepared to work with families and communities as partners in children's education.
- **Fact:** There is widespread agreement and accumulating evidence that well-designed programs and practices of school, family, and community partnerships benefit students, families, and schools.

- **Fact:** Ever more rigorous research and evaluations are needed to continually improve knowledge about family and community involvement and the effectiveness of state, district, and school programs and practices.
- **Fact:** Although there is more to learn, we know enough now to implement research-based, goal-linked programs of school, family, and community partnerships that engage all families and help all students succeed to their full potential.
- **Action Needed:** There must be immediate and dramatic changes in the preservice and advanced education of teachers, administrators, counselors, and others who work with schools, families, and students. Changes are needed in coursework and field experiences to prepare professionals to understand, respect, and collaborate with parents, other family members, and individuals, groups, and organizations in communities that can help students succeed.

This book will help. The readings and references provide a history of the field and a window on how research and programs of school, family, and community partnerships developed over time and must continue to develop. The comments, questions, and activities in each chapter introduce topics that should be discussed, debated, and studied. Whether used to organize a full course or to supplement other courses in education and social science, this volume introduces new directions for improving school, family, and community partnerships and will generate new ideas for research, policy, and practice.

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2

Theory and Overview

THE FIRST READING IN THIS CHAPTER examines theories of family and school connections, discusses how data support or refute different theoretical perspectives, and presents a new theoretical model—*overlapping spheres of influence*—to explain and guide research on school, family, and community partnerships. The article explains the organizational and interpersonal components of the theory of overlapping spheres of influence and how this perspective extends previous theoretical models.

The second reading is a review of the literature that identifies seven principles that ask researchers across disciplines to think in new ways about how to study the structures, processes, and results of family and community involvement in education. The new directions also guide educators at all school levels to develop more powerful and effective partnership programs.

Together, the two readings in this chapter guide future educators and researchers in how to think about, talk about, and study school, family, and community partnerships.

READING 2.1

Toward a Theory of Family-School Connections: Teacher Practices and Parent Involvement[*]

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY-SCHOOL RELATIONS

Three perspectives currently guide researchers and practitioners in their thinking about family and school relations:

1. Separate responsibilities of families and schools
2. Shared responsibilities of families and schools
3. Sequential responsibilities of families and schools.

These perspectives are profoundly different. Assumptions based on the *separate responsibilities* of institutions stress the inherent incompatibility, competition, and conflict between families and schools. This perspective assumes that school bureaucracies and family organizations are directed, respectively, by educators and parents whose different goals, roles, and responsibilities are best fulfilled independently. It asserts that the distinct goals of the two institutions are achieved most efficiently and effectively when teachers maintain their professional, universalistic standards and judgments about the children in their classrooms and when parents maintain their personal attention and particularistic standards and judgments about their children at home (Parsons, 1959; Waller, 1932; Weber, 1947).

The opposing assumptions, based on *shared responsibilities* of institutions, emphasize the coordination, cooperation, and complementarity of schools and families and encourage communication and collaboration between the two institutions. This perspective assumes that schools and families share responsibilities for the socialization and education of the child. Teachers and parents are believed to share common goals for their children, which can be achieved most effectively when teachers and parents work together. These assumptions are based on models of inter-institutional interactions and ecological designs that emphasize the natural, nested, and necessary connections between individuals and their groups and organizations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Leichter, 1974; Litwak and Meyer, 1974).

The third perspective, *sequential responsibilities* of institutions, emphasizes the critical stages of parents' and teachers' contributions to child development. This approach is based on the belief that the early years of a child's life are critical for later success, and that by age five or six, when the child enters formal schooling in kindergarten or first grade, the child's personality and attitudes toward learning are well established. Parents teach their young children needed skills, arrange educational

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* By Joyce L. Epstein. Originally published in K. Hurrelmann, F. Kaufmann, and F. Losel, eds., *Social Intervention: Potential and Constraints* (New York: de Gruyter, 1987), 121–136. Reprinted with permission.

programs and experiences, and are guided or supported by social and educational agencies (e.g., pediatricians, preschool teachers, and the media) to prepare their children for school. At the time of children's formal entry into school, the teacher assumes the major responsibility for educating them (Bloom, 1964; Freud, 1937; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969).

Understanding the Contrasting Theories: Mechanisms Producing Family-School Relations

In addition to the three major theoretical distinctions between separate, shared, and sequential responsibilities, there are other theories that help explain the *mechanisms* for building family and school relations and the resulting variations in the connections between institutions and their members. Among the most useful are symbolic interactionism and reference group theories. *Symbolic interactionism* (Mead, 1934) assumes that self-concept, personality, values, and beliefs are products of our interactions with others. The theory suggests that we learn how others perceive and anticipate our goals and behaviors, and that we fashion our behavior to fulfill the expectations of others and to receive their recognition. In terms of family and school connections, if teachers do not interact with parents, they cannot be informed about or understand the parents' expectations for their children and the teachers. They cannot shape their teaching behavior to be responsive to those expectations. If parents avoid teachers, they cannot be informed about or understand the schools' expectations for their children or the parents. They cannot shape their behavior to provide useful assistance to the students and teachers.

Reference group theory (Merton, 1968) makes other important connections between esteem and interaction. A reference group is a collectivity or an individual who is taken into consideration by another group or individual to influence their attitudes and behaviors. This happens when one group or individual recognizes the importance of the other or admires the positions and actions of the other. For example, if, in planning children's educational programs, a teacher considers the roles parents can play, it may be because the teacher considers parents an important reference group. If, in planning their family activities, parents take the teachers' or schools' goals and actions into account, it may be because they consider teachers an important reference group. Sometimes only the higher-status group influences the behavior of the other in an unreciprocated pattern. Teachers may take parents into account without parents reciprocating the consideration, as in some communities where parents have strong control of educational politics and policies. Or parents may consider teachers an important reference group without the teachers reciprocating, as when parents try to help their children with schoolwork even if the teacher has not given them encouragement or ideas about how to help at home.

The three main theories explain the basic differences in philosophies and approaches of teachers and parents that produce more or fewer, shallow or deep family-school connections. The other theories explain the motivations to remove or reinforce boundaries between schools and families.

Understanding the Contrasting Theories: Changing Patterns in Family-School Relations

There have been important changes in the patterns of partnerships between the home and school over time. In the early 19th century, parents and the community greatly controlled the actions of the schools. The home, church, and school supported the same goals for learning and for the integration of the student into the adult community (Prentice and Houston, 1975). The community, including parents and church representatives, hired and fired the teachers, determined the school calendar, and influenced the curriculum. When the students were not in school, the families and others in the community taught their children important skills and knowledge needed for success in adulthood.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a different pattern of family and school relations emerged. Increasingly, the school began to distance itself from the home by emphasizing the teachers' special knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy. Teachers began to teach subjects that were not familiar to parents, using methods and approaches that were not part of the parents' experiences. The family was asked to teach children good behavior and attitudes to prepare them for school and to take responsibility for teaching children about their ethnicity, religion, and family origins. These family responsibilities were separate from the schools' goal to teach a common curriculum to children from all ethnic, religious, social, and economic groups.

During the 1980s and 1990s, family-school relations changed again in response to increased demands from the public for better, more accountable schools. Both better-educated and less educated parents want a good education for their children and are requesting or requiring schools to keep them informed about and involved in their children's education.

AN INTEGRATED THEORY OF FAMILY-SCHOOL RELATIONS

Changing times require changing theories. School and family relationships have been different at different times in history. It is not surprising, then, to see a restructuring of theories, from inter-institutional separation in the 1930s–1950s to cooperation between schools and families in the 1970s–1980s to accommodate the social changes affecting these organizations. But we do not yet have a model of family-school relations that accounts for the variation and process of change that will continue to influence the interactions of families and schools. The existing theories omit attention to history, student development, and the influence families and schools have on each other.

A life-course perspective (Elder, 1984) enables us to integrate useful strands from the different theories of family and school relations to correct the weaknesses of the separate theories. This perspective requires that we pay attention to three characteristics in family-school relationships: history, developmental patterns, and change.

History

Four recent trends help to explain why changes are needed in our theories of family and school relations:

1. More mothers with a college education and bachelor's degree. Over the past 40 years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of U.S. high school students, especially women, who attend and graduate from college. Whereas fewer than 20 percent of bachelor's degrees were earned by women prior to 1950 (mostly in the field of education), fully half of the earned bachelor's degrees were awarded to women in 1980 in many fields (Bureau of the Census, 1984). The education of mothers affects their interactions with teachers. Whereas most mothers were once less educated than college-trained teachers, most mothers are now attending some college and have near, equal, or higher educational status than their children's teachers. There is still great variation in the education of women, but the proportion of educated mothers has made a difference in how parents view teachers, how teachers view parents, and whether and how mothers become involved in their children's education.

2. Baby and child care. Dr. Spock's (1950) influential and popular book increased the number of parents who became knowledgeable about and involved in the education of their infants and toddlers. The book offers sensible information to all parents about the importance of home environments for children's learning, information that had previously been known to only a few parents. Although Spock's book is not very useful in its discussions of older children and has little to say about school, it increased parents' awareness of and experience with their children as young learners. Spock's book, other child care books, and private and public health care programs continue to prime new generations of parents of infants and toddlers for the next phase of their children's lives: school.

3. Federal regulations and funding for parent involvement. In the 1960s, Head Start and other federally sponsored programs for disadvantaged preschoolers recognized that parents needed the help of educators to prepare their preschool children for regular school to break the cycle of school failure that threatened their children. More important, the preschools recognized that, despite the lack of advanced education of many mothers, the schools and the children needed the mothers' involvement to be successful. Mothers of children in Head Start were required on advisory councils and often were involved in classrooms as volunteers and paid aides, and at home as tutors.

During the same decade, Follow-Through programs required schools to recognize the continued importance of parents as educators beyond the preschool years (Gordon, Olmsted, Rubin, and True, 1979). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94–172) of 1975 brought teachers and parents together to discuss the educational program of each child. The federal programs and their official recognition of the importance of parents put parent involvement on the agendas of the local schools (Hobson, 1979; Keesling and Melaragno, 1983; Valentine and Stark,

1979). Schools could not easily limit parent involvement to the parents of children in federally sponsored programs, and so more parents at all grade levels, regardless of education or economic background, became involved with their children's schools and teachers.

4. Changing family structures. In the past decade, two key changes in family structure have dramatically affected family and school relations. These are the increase in the number of single parents and in the number of mothers working outside the home. Mothers who work outside the home need to manage the care and schooling of their children with more exactitude than do mothers who work at home. They must arrange for their children's care before and after school, on school holidays, and during illnesses. Attention to the needs of the children has increased the concern of working mothers about the quality of day care, school, and after-school programs.

Single mothers are even more likely than other mothers to work outside the home and are especially sensitive about their responsibilities to their children. They have accentuated the need of all parents for information from teachers to help them use their limited time at home more productively in the interest of their children. Although [employed] mothers and single parents do not volunteer to help at the school building as much as other mothers, research shows that they are just as interested as other mothers in their children's education and spend as much or more time helping their children at home (Epstein, 1984 [Reading 3.5]).

Increasingly, schools have had to replace traditional images of family life and patterns of communication with mothers at home with new images and new patterns of communication to accommodate different types of families. Some schools have made these adjustments to help all families, however structured, to interact successfully with the school. Other schools have not changed their expectations for or communications with families, despite the changes in families.

These four trends, over the last 40 to 50 years of the 20th century, changed family-school connections in the United States. These changes, singly and in combination, involved more parents in their children's education beyond preschool, officially and publicly recognized parents as "teachers," and increased the need for better communication between the home and school.

Developmental Patterns

Schools' and families' interactions need to fit the age, grade level, and level of social and cognitive development of the children. Schools are more like families for young students, with closer ties between teachers and parents of preschool and early elementary students. Schools may become increasingly impersonal in the secondary grades, with the aim of preparing students for interactions in adulthood with other formal organizations in government, work, and society. But through high school, schools vary in the extent to which they communicate with, inform, and involve parents in their children's education. We do not know the type, degree, or optimal mix of personal and impersonal relations across the grades that lead to maximum learning and

successful preparation for adulthood. But our model of family-school relations must be based on a developmental framework to account for the continuity of school and family actions and interactions across the school years and the changes in forms and purposes of parent involvement at different student ages and stages of development.

Change

Families and schools are ever-changing. Families change as the members mature, developing new skills, knowledge, contacts, and patterns of social interaction. A family builds a changing, cumulative history of relationships with the school for each child in attendance. Interactions with one school affect the family's knowledge and attitudes in dealing with new schools that their children enter.

Schools change as the members come and go. New students enter the school each year, new combinations of students enter classes, and new teachers and administrators join the staff. The talents, perspectives, and leadership of the school change with the maturity and stability of the staff's abilities to consider complex educational issues, practices, and goals. They may be more open to parents' requests and to parental involvement. Schools can build a changing, cumulative history of relationships with families as the students proceed through the grades.

A MODEL OF OVERLAPPING FAMILY AND SCHOOL SPHERES

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 introduce a model of family and school relations that accounts for history, development, and changing experiences of parents, teachers, and students.

External Structure

The external structure of the model consists of overlapping or nonoverlapping spheres representing the family, school, and community. The degree of overlap is controlled by three forces: time, experience in families, and experience in schools.

Force A represents a developmental time and history line for students, families, and schools. Time refers to individual and historical time: the age and grade level of the child and the social conditions of the period during which the child is in school. For example, in infancy the spheres in our model may be separate. The child first "attends" home, and the family provides the main educating environment. Parents and teachers do not initially interact directly about the child's learning. Even in infancy, however, the spheres may overlap. For example, if an infant is physically, mentally, or emotionally handicapped, parents and special teachers may begin a highly organized cooperative program to benefit the child. For all children, the family and school spheres may overlap to some extent in infancy and early childhood, as parents apply knowledge of child rearing and school readiness from books, their own school experiences, and information from pediatricians, educators, and others.

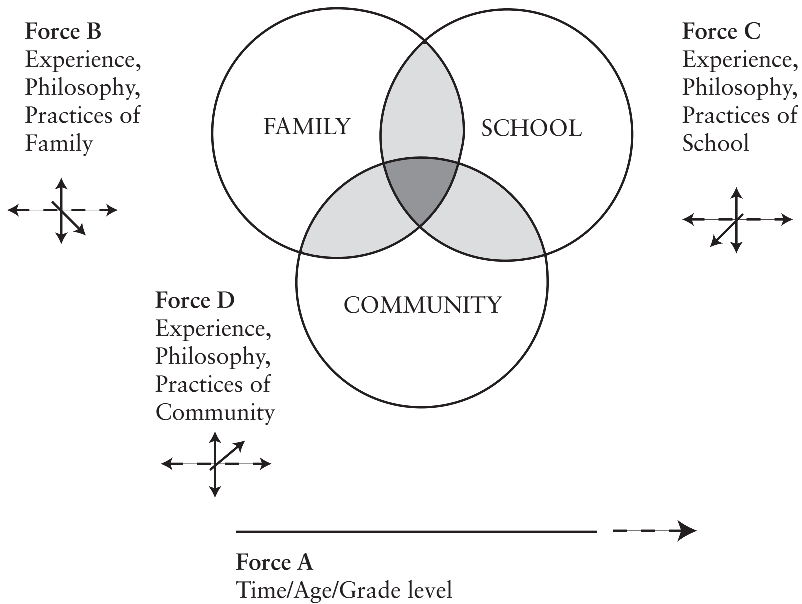
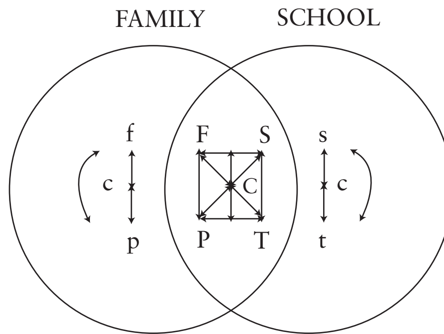


FIGURE 2.1 Overlapping Spheres of Influence of Family, School, and Community on Children's Learning (External Structure of Theoretical Model)



KEY: Intra-institutional interactions (lowercase)
Inter-institutional interactions (uppercase)

f/F = Family	c/C = Child
s/S = School	p/P = Parent
	t/T = Teacher

Note: In the full model the internal structure is extended, using the same KEY to include:
co/CO = Community
a/A = Agent from community/business

FIGURE 2.2 Overlapping Spheres of Influence of Family, School, and Community on Children's Learning (Internal Structure of Theoretical Model)

Later, in a regular pattern, the spheres overlap when the child "attends" home, school, and the community.

There will be a "typical" or expected pattern of separation or overlap at different times based on the age of the child, the level of school, and the historical period when the child is in school. Up to now, the greatest overlap of family and school spheres for most children has occurred during the preschool and early elementary grades. But there has also been great overlap for some children at all grade levels because of the varying philosophies, policies, practices, and pressures of parents, teachers, or both, as represented by Forces B and C.

Force B and Force C represent the experiences of and pressures on family and school organizations and their members that need to be accounted for to study, understand, or change family-school relations. These forces push together or pull apart the spheres to produce more or less overlap of family and school actions, interactions, and influence all along the time line. When parents maintain or increase interest and involvement in their children's schooling (Force B), they create greater overlap of the family and school spheres than would be expected on the average. When teachers make parents part of their regular teaching practice (Force C), they create greater overlap than would typically be expected.

After the child enters school there will be some overlap of the two organizations at every grade level. This is true as long as there are family members (or surrogates) with whom the child and school interact. Even in seemingly separate situations such as private, elite boarding schools or state boarding schools for delinquent youngsters, there are family and school contacts about contracts, payments, rules, visits, evaluations, and so forth that define the "minimum" overlap of the two spheres over the school years. The "maximum" overlap occurs when schools and families operate as true "partners," with frequent cooperative efforts and clear, close communication between parents and teachers in a comprehensive program of many important types of parent involvement (Epstein, 1986 [Reading 3.4]; Gordon, 1979; Seeley, 1981). But there is never "total" overlap because the family maintains some functions and practices that are independent of the schools' or teachers' programs, and the school maintains some functions and practices that are independent of families.

Children are connected to the same families but to different teachers over the course of their school years. Each new teacher (Force C) and each family's continuing or new involvement (Force B) create dynamic patterns of family-school relationships. There is continual adjustment in the overlap or separation of the two spheres.

Time alone (Force A), or the increasing age of the child, does not make parents more knowledgeable about how to help their children with particular school problems. Indeed, our research shows that it currently works the other way. The older the child (after grade 1), the less overlap there is in the two environments, and the less the parent feels able to help the child in school (Epstein, 1986). Thus, in Figure 2.1, if we included only Force A, we would see, for most families and schools, quite separate spheres in infancy, increasing overlap during the preschool years and grade 1, and decreasing overlap from grades 2 or 3 on.

By adding Forces B and C we recognize that the parents' and teachers' practices and the pressures they put on each other alter the typical patterns to create more or less overlap for families and schools at every grade level. For example, some teachers of older students increase their interactions with the parents of their upper elementary and secondary school students to keep the families involved in their children's education. For children in these teachers' classes, there will be greater overlap of family and school goals and interactions than for children whose teachers ignore the role of parents in their teaching practice.

Internal Structure

The internal structure of the model in Figure 2.2 shows the interpersonal relationships and influence patterns of primary importance. Two types of interactions and influence are shown: within organization (lowercase letters) and between organizations (capital letters). Two levels of interaction are also shown: standard, organizational communications (family and school) and specific, individual communications (parent and teacher). Family (f) and parent (p) [interactions] and school (s) and teacher (t) interactions are those that occur separately [within the organization in separate spheres of influence] as parents, offspring, or other relatives conduct their family life and personal relationships, or as teachers, principals, and other school staff create school policies or conduct school or individual activities. By contrast, Family (F) and School (S) [interactions] and Parent (P) and Teacher (T) interactions are those that occur as members of the two organizations interact in standard, organizationally directed communications (F and S), or in unique, individually directed communications (P and T) [in the overlapping spheres of influence].

Family (F) and School (S) connections refer to the interactions between family members and school staff that concern all families and the general school staff or school programs. These include, for example, communications to all parents about school policies; workshops available to all parents on child rearing or child development; programs for all parents to become involved at the school as parent volunteers; or family actions that may affect the schools, such as activities of parent-teacher organizations, parent advisory councils, or citizen advocacy groups in the community. These types of involvement establish common structures for communications and interactions between families and schools as organizations.

Parent (P) and Teacher (T) connections refer to specific interactions between parents and teachers about an individual child. These may include, for example, parent-teacher conferences about the child's progress; parents' notes or phone calls to teachers about the child's academic, social, or personal problems or needs; or the teacher's specific suggestions to parents about how they can help their own child with learning activities at home.

The Child (C) has the central place in all of the patterns of interaction and influence in this model. We assume that the child's welfare and interests are the parents' and teachers' reasons for interacting. For the child, the school and family policies, parent and teacher interactions, and the child's understanding and reactions to these

connections influence academic learning and social development. The multidirectional arrows in the model show that children interact with, influence, and are influenced by their families and especially parents, and by changes in their families and parental behavior that result from the actions of the schools. Children interact with, influence, and are influenced by their schools and especially teachers, and by the changes in schools' and teachers' practices that result from the actions of families.

The external and internal structures of the model are, of course, intimately related. The internal organizational and individual relationships are influenced simultaneously by the age and grade level of the student and the common practices of the time period (Force A) and by the actions, attitudes, experiences, and decisions of teachers and parents (Forces B and C). The degree of overlap of family and school organizations and their goals and practices affects the social and psychological distance between the family and school members, their patterns of communication, and the results or outcomes of more or less interaction. Each of the components of the model can be translated into well-specified measures to study the effects of parent involvement (e.g., teachers' practices of parent involvement, parents' initiatives or responses to teachers' requests) on student achievement, attitudes, and other student, parent, and teacher outcomes.

The model recognizes the interlocking histories of the institutions and the individuals in each, and the continuing, causal connections between organizations and individuals. The model energizes an integrated theory of family and school relations by acknowledging the continuous change that occurs in families and schools; the accumulated knowledge and experiences of parents, teachers, and students; and the influence of these different patterns on student motivations, attitudes, and achievement.

SCHOOL-LIKE FAMILIES AND FAMILY-LIKE SCHOOLS

The proposed model of overlapping spheres assumes that there are mutual interests and influences of families and schools that can be more or less successfully promoted by the policies and programs of the organizations and the actions and attitudes of the individuals in those organizations. Although there are important differences between schools and families (Dreeben, 1968), we need to recognize also the important similarities, overlap in goals, responsibilities, and mutual influence of the two major environments that simultaneously affect children's learning and development.

Earlier theories asserted that schools treat students equally, judging them by universal standards and rewarding students for what they do (achievements) and not for who they are (ascriptions). In contrast, families are said to treat children individually, judging them by personal standards and special relationships, basing rewards and affection on the children's individual growth and improvement or on their membership in the family and not on achievements relative to other children. These "pure" images of different institutional approaches and functions are not very accurate portrayals of how schools or families actually work to motivate students toward success in school. The distinction between universalistic and particularistic

treatments has been blurred in families that are more aware of the importance of schooling and its components and in schools with more personal and individualized environments. These are *school-like families* and *family-like schools*.

School-Like Families

Some parents run “school-like” homes. They know how to help their children in schoolwork and take appropriate opportunities to do so. School-like families often have persistent and consistent academic schedules of learning for their children from infancy on, with books on colors, shapes and sizes, and music and art as part of their early “school-like” curricula. Before the children enter school, these families are directed by “absentee” or remembered teachers or by contemporary educational sources and resources. During the early years the family teaches the young child, but in fact it may be that images of school or teachers in absentia influence the family in how and what to teach the child.

Some families operate very much like schools. They not only create school-like tasks for their children and reward them for success but also match tasks to each child’s level of ability and involve the children in active learning rather than passive listening. These families not only translate the curriculum of the school into home tasks, but also put into practice principles of organizational effectiveness (Rich and Jones, 1977) and use the same structures (i.e., the task, authority, reward, grouping, evaluation, and time or TARGET structures) that guide effective classroom instruction (Epstein, 1988).

Although most parents accept and love their children for their unique qualities and lineal connections, many families reward their children for real and objective accomplishments, as teachers do. Many families judge their children on standard criteria and reward their children as they learn the “basic skills” (from learning to walk to learning to read) and as they acquire social skills and advanced academic skills or other talents. School-like families place more emphasis than other families on their children’s place in a status hierarchy.

Family-Like Schools

Teachers vary in their recognition and use of the overlap between family and school spheres of influence. Some schools make their students feel part of a “school family” that looks out for their interests and provides unique experiences for each child. Schools may relax and de-standardize their rules, vary the students’ roles, and alter the reward system to be more responsive to the student and to be more like a family.

Although schools impose some uniform standards on all students (e.g., attendance regulations, graduation requirements, formal codes for dress or conduct), these may not be as important as student-teacher relationships and personal, individual attention for influencing and improving student motivation and progress. Presently, brighter students often are given various opportunities to interact on

friendly and preferential terms with teachers. Slower students often experience less personal, less family-like treatment, which may further reduce their motivation to come to school to learn.

Schools vary in how much they emphasize uniform or special standards. Some schools recognize and reward only students who are in the top groups or tracks or who get the highest grades. Other schools reward students for individual progress and improvement in achievement, as parents do. They place less emphasis on the students' place in a status hierarchy. Particularistic treatment, associated with family relations, implies a degree of favoritism or special attention to the unique and endearing qualities of individuals. This kind of treatment occurs at some schools, also, with some students receiving family-like treatment, attention, and even affection from teachers.

Time in Family and School Environments

The child is either in or out of school. Some count the hours that students spend in school (e.g., Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston, 1979). Others cite the time that students are not in school and are under the influence of the family, community, media, churches, camps, day care programs, peer groups, or part-time employers (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1984). At least 16 hours per school day plus weekends and vacations are out-of-school time. The seemingly clear dichotomy of time in or out of school is obscured by the degree of overlap in the two environments. For example, when the student is in school, the family's influence may still be at work. A student knows whether a parent knows what is happening in school, what the student is learning, and how he or she is expected to behave. Homework activities may affect the student's attention in class and readiness for new and more difficult work. Similarly, when the student is at home, the school's influence may be still at work. At home, a student may consider how a teacher wants homework to be completed and may use school skills and information to discuss ideas and solve problems.

Time in and out of school, then, is not "pure" school or family time. Time in school may be influenced by the family; time out of school may be influenced by teachers and other school programs and experiences. The degree of overlap in the two environments on matters of schoolwork and on the recognition and support of students' unique, individual talents influences the students' attention, motivation, and learning in and out of school.

EXPLORING THE THEORY: EFFECTS OF FAMILY-SCHOOL OVERLAP ON PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND TEACHING PRACTICE

From research completed over the past several years, we have some evidence of how teachers' practices reflect the three current theories of family and school relations and how the degree of overlap in family and school spheres influences parents' attitudes and behaviors and student attitudes and achievements.

Variation in Overlap in Teaching Practice

As stated previously, the philosophies and practices of teachers reflect the three theories of school and family relations: separate, sequential, and shared spheres of family and school responsibilities and influence. For example, some teachers believe that they can be effective only if they obtain parental cooperation and assistance on learning activities at home. In their classrooms, cooperation is high. These teachers make frequent requests for parental assistance in reinforcing or improving students' skills. They orchestrate actions to increase the overlap in family and school spheres of influence.

Other teachers believe that their professional status is in jeopardy if parents are involved in activities that are typically the teachers' responsibilities. In their classrooms, inter-institutional cooperation is low. These teachers make few overtures to parents and rarely request them to help their children with learning activities at home. They maintain more separate spheres of influence for the school and the family (Becker and Epstein, 1982 [Reading 3.1]; Epstein and Becker, 1982 [Reading 3.2]). Teachers' present practices also illustrate assumptions of sequential patterns in family-school relations. More teachers of young children (grade 1) than of older children (grades 3 and 5) are frequent users of parent involvement techniques. In a clear, linear pattern, most teachers of young children assist parents to become involved in their children's education, but most teachers of older children ignore or discourage parental involvement. Along the time line, then, there is increasingly less overlap of family and school spheres.

Benefits from Greater Overlap

Our surveys of teachers, principals, parents, and students show that:

- Teachers control the flow of information to parents. By limiting or reducing communications and collaborative activities, teachers reinforce the boundaries that separate the two institutions. By increasing communications, teachers acknowledge and build connections between institutions to focus on the common concerns of teachers and parents: a child who is also a student (Becker and Epstein, 1982).
- Parents do not report deep conflict or incompatibility between schools and families. Rather, parents of children at all grade levels respond favorably to teachers' practices that stress the cooperation and overlap of schools and families. Frequent use by teachers of parent involvement leads parents to report that they receive more ideas about how to help their children at home and that they know more about the instructional programs than they did in the previous year (Epstein, 1986).
- Teachers who include the family in the children's education are recognized by parents for their efforts. They are rated higher by parents than are other teachers on interpersonal and teaching skills, and they

are rated higher in overall teaching ability by their principals (Epstein, 1985, 1986).
- Students' test scores suggest that schools are more effective when families and schools work together with the student on basic skills. Students whose teachers use frequent practices of parent involvement gain more than other students in reading skills from fall to spring (Epstein, 1991 [Reading 3.7]). And fifth-grade students recognize and benefit from cooperation between their teachers and parents (Epstein, 1982 [Reading 3.9]).

The results of our research show that although teaching practice reflects all three of the major theoretical positions, parents, students, and teachers benefit most from practices that increase the overlap in school and family spheres of influence all along the developmental time line.

CONCLUSION

Over the last few decades of the 20th century, ideas about family-school relations changed as other social conditions affected schools and families. Theories moved away from the separation of family and school and toward greater teacher-parent cooperation and communication. Our model of family-school relations integrates the discrete, extant theories and reflects the fact that at any time, in any school, and in any family, parent involvement is a variable that can be increased or decreased by the practices of teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Programs and practices can be designed, revised, and evaluated to learn which variations produce greater school and family effectiveness and student success. The members of the school and family organizations can act and interact with others in ways that include or exclude parents from their children's education and that include or exclude teachers as influences on the family. These actions push the spheres of family and school influence together or apart in a continuous, dynamic pattern, and influence student learning and development.

Schools and families vary on the dimensions that are supposed to distinguish family and school treatments and attention to children. There are family-like schools and school-like families, as well as schools and families that are distinct in their approaches to education and socialization. Some have suggested that schools and families have different goals for their children (Lightfoot, 1978), but our research suggests that although parents' educational backgrounds differ, both more- and less-educated parents have similar goals to those of the school for their children's education (Epstein, 1986).

The main differences among parents are their knowledge of how to help their children at home, their belief that teachers want them to assist their children at home, and the degree of information and guidance from their children's teachers in how to help their children at home. These factors create more or less school-like families.

The main differences among teachers are their ability to put principles of child and adolescent development and organizational effectiveness into practice in instruction and classroom management, their ability to communicate with students as individuals, their beliefs about the importance of parents' involvement and parents' receptivity to guidance from the school, and their ability to communicate with parents as partners in the children's education. These factors create more or less family-like schools.

The theoretical model of overlapping spheres of influence, its underlying assumptions, and research on the effects on parents and students of teachers' practices of parent involvement aim to:

- extend studies of families by intensifying attention to the interplay of family and school environments during that part of the parents' and children's lives when the children are in school or are preparing for school, from infancy through the high school grades; and
- extend studies of school organization and effects by intensifying attention to the total educational environment of children including the home, and by examining the implications of this extension for teachers' roles and student learning and development.

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READING 2.2

Moving Forward: Ideas for Research on School, Family, and Community Partnerships[*]

It is a social fact that children learn and grow at home, at school, and in the community. People in these three contexts affect children's learning and development, for better or for worse, from infancy through the school years and beyond. This important reality often is ignored by researchers who study only schools or only families. Educators, too, may focus only on the school curriculum, instruction, or testing, without giving attention to students' families and communities, as if students were not also children, friends, and neighbors.

Increasingly, research and exemplary practice reveal that it is all but impossible to separate the interests and influences of educators, parents, and other educational partners on student achievement, attitudes, and behaviors. Although it is, admittedly, harder to study more than one setting at a time, it is critical for researchers to recognize the simultaneous and cumulative effects of home, school, and community on student development. It is, therefore, imperative that we "think new" about research on school, family, and community partnerships.

The field of school, family, and community partnerships is a young field of study, compared to other educational research topics. Knowledge has grown over the past twenty-five years with sharper theory, expanded research questions, improved methods of analyses, and with the interest and efforts of educators and policy leaders. Advances have been made by researchers across disciplines and across countries using varied methodologies to study the nature and effects of school programs and family involvement at different grade levels and in diverse communities. Many publications have summarized the results of research, documented progress in programs and in policies of parental involvement, and pressed for more and better studies (Booth and Dunn, 1996; Boethel, 2003; Castelli, Mendel, and Ravn, 2003; Chavkin, 1993; Christenson and Conoley, 1992; Davies and Johnson, 1996; Edwards, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Fagnano and Werber, 1994; Fruchter, Galletta, and White, 1992; Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Hiatt-Michaels, 2001; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, and Walberg, 2005; Ryan, Adams, Gullotta, Weissberg, and Hampton, 1995; Sanders and Epstein, 1998a, 1998b; Schneider and Coleman, 1993; Smit, Van der Wolf, and Sleegers, 2001; Swap, 1993; and see extensive, annual bibliographies compiled by the Harvard Family Research Project, 2004, at www.gse.harvard.edu). Collectively, these and many other publications have shaped the field and, literally, speak volumes about topics that need more attention in future research.

In one overview of the field, Epstein and Sanders (2000) discussed several topics that needed more research, including partnerships at times of student transitions; the organization of school-community connections; students' roles in school, family,

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and community partnerships; results of school, family, and community connections; fathers' involvement in children's education; the impact of federal, state, and local policies; the effects of preservice and advanced education on partnerships for future teachers and administrators; and more. These topics, scarcely studied a few years ago, still need attention.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES TO HELP RESEARCHERS THINK IN NEW WAYS

The many thoughtful overviews and summaries of research on partnerships make it unnecessary to re-review the literature. In this chapter, we look in a different direction and identify seven principles that have emerged from prior studies and from exemplary practice that should help researchers across disciplines think in new ways about how to study the structures, processes, and results of family and community involvement in education. These principles require researchers to think in new ways to (1) broaden the familiar term of *parental involvement* to *school, family, and community partnerships* to recognize the shared responsibilities of educators, parents, and others for children's development and learning; (2) understand the multidimensional nature of involvement; (3) view the structure of partnerships as a component of school and classroom organization; (4) recognize multilevel leadership for involvement at the school, district, and state levels; (5) focus involvement on student success; (6) acknowledge the importance of increasing the equity of involvement of parents to promote more successful students; and to (7) advance knowledge and improve practice with more and better studies. We discuss the importance of these defining principles for researchers, educators, families, and others who have a stake in improving schools and in increasing student success.

1. *School, family, and community partnerships* is a better term than *parental involvement* to recognize that parents, educators, and others in the community share responsibility for students' learning and development.

The development of a theory on partnerships opened new ways to think about the involvement of parents in children's education. The theory of *overlapping spheres of influence* posits that students learn more when parents, educators, and others in the community work together to guide and support student learning and development (Epstein, 1987, 2001). In this model, three contexts—home, school, and community—overlap with unique and combined influences on children through the interactions of parents, educators, community partners, and students across contexts. Each context "moves" closer or farther from the others as a result of external forces and internal actions.

The external structure of the model of overlapping spheres of influence shows that, by design, the three contexts can be pulled together or pushed apart by important forces (i.e., the backgrounds, philosophies, and actions of families, schools, and

communities and the developmental characteristics of students). The internal structure of the model identifies the institutional and individual lines of communication and social interactions of parents, teachers, students, and community members with students and each other.

Classic sociological theories suggested that school and family organizations are most efficient and effective when they had separate goals, roles, and responsibilities (Waller, 1932; Weber, 1947). However, data on student learning indicated that students did better in school when the important people in their lives at home, at school, and in the community had common goals and played collaborative, complementary, and supportive roles (Epstein, 2001).

The theory of overlapping spheres of influence integrates and extends ecological, educational, psychological, and sociological theories and perspectives on social organization and relationships (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Comer, 1980; Elder, 1997; Leichter, 1974; Lightfoot, 1978; Litwak and Meyer, 1974; Seeley, 1981). Based on concepts of symbolic interactionism, social exchange, reference group, and ecological theories, the theory of overlapping spheres of influence recognizes the interdisciplinary nature of school, family, and community partnerships. It emphasizes the need for reciprocal interactions of parents, educators, and community partners to understand each others' views, to identify common goals for students, and to appreciate each others' contributions to student development. For example, as the theory translates to practice, we see that teachers who hold parents as a reference group are more likely to design and conduct interactions and activities that account for the roles parents play in their children's education. Similarly, parents who understand teachers' work and school goals for their children communicate with the school and organize home activities that support their children as students (Epstein, 1987).

Concepts of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2000) also are relevant to the theory of overlapping spheres of influence. Through their interactions, parents, educators, and community partners establish social ties and exchange information that accumulates as social capital, and that may be used to improve children's schools and learning experiences.

The theory of overlapping spheres of influence has been tested in two ways. Most often it has been applied to study school and district programs of family and community involvement and to learn whether and how well educators, parents, and community partners interact to help students succeed in school (Sanders, 1999; Sanders and Simon, 2002; Sheldon and Van Voorhis, 2004). The theory also has served as a lens through which to examine how future teachers and administrators are prepared to understand shared leadership in schools, including educators' shared responsibilities with families and communities to maximize student learning (Chavkin, 2005; Epstein, 2001, 2005a; Epstein and Sanders, 2006). For example, teachers who believe that they, alone, are responsible for student learning may teach differently from teachers who believe that they share responsibilities with parents and others for student success (Blackwell, Futrell, and Imig, 2003; Epstein, 2001). Administrators who believe that they and their teachers form a "professional community" may manage their schools differently from administrators who view schools as full "learning communities," including educators, students, parents, and community partners (Epstein,

2001; Epstein and Salinas, 2004; Price, 2005). By focusing family and community involvement broadly on how students learn and grow, we may improve the education of future educators as well as the policies and practices in schools.

Other useful theories and extensive research on parent involvement focus mainly on parents' motivations and actions, largely absent the school context. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) theory of why parents get involved in their children's education, for example, emphasize the role of parental beliefs and feelings of competence as chief determinants of parental behavior. Also, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) created a multidimensional model of parental involvement that stresses the phenomenological experiences of children resulting from parent-child interactions related to schooling. In contrast, the theory of overlapping spheres of influence focuses on school-family-community interactions and the design and development of school programs and practices that affect parental behavior and student success in school. Taken together, the varied theories support research on different aspects of the complex work of parenting, teaching, and learning, and contribute to a fuller understanding of education and the roles of home, school, and community in child development.

The theory of overlapping spheres of influence should help researchers across disciplines "think new" about family and community involvement in children's education. Research may focus on school-level activities that affect all families (such as all teachers' interactions with all families about all children at a school open-house night) and individual-level communications that affect one family at a time (such as one teacher's meetings or phone calls with one parent about one child). With attention to contexts and social relations, the theory of overlapping spheres of influence changes the narrow focus of "parental involvement" from what an individual parent does to a broader, more realistic representation of how students move, continuously, in and out of several contexts and how the influential people in those contexts may work together contribute to students' education and development.

Researchers may conduct studies of the social forces that affect the external structure of the theoretical model, including how federal, state, and local policies influence the implementation of programs and actions to strengthen families, improve schools, and increase student achievement. The theory also grounds studies of the internal structure of the model by recognizing that there are many paths to partnerships in the interactions between and among teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, community partners, students, and others. For example, Sanders (1998) explored how family, school, and church affiliation supported African-American teens' achievement levels and identified positive effects across contexts. Catsambis and Beveridge (2001) studied family, school, and neighborhood factors that affected high school students' math achievement and found that negative neighborhood influences may be offset by positive family involvement. Additional research is needed on whether and how each and all connections are affected by the design and implementation of partnership programs and practices. Questions may be asked, for example, about how much overlap of home, school, and community is necessary for students' optimal achievement at each grade level.