

Family, School, and Community Connections Symposium:
New Directions for Research, Practice, and Evaluation
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KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Supporting Student Achievement: Family and Community Connections with Schools
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I am very pleased to be here today and to see all your smiling faces and I know that I'm going to be speaking to the converted this morning, but I hope that I'm going to be sharing with you some good new information that you can take back to your sites and your organizations and to your school.

I have to tell you that this morning you're going to get a shorter presentation than I normally do for this topic because there is so much good stuff. I actually serve on the steering committee for the Coalition of Community Schools in Washington DC with Marty Wang and some other folks who are actually in this room today. At one point, we worked with the ad-council on an ad for community schools and they had a one minute version of the ad, a 30 second version of the ad and a 10 second version of the ad. I guess we were all stunned at how much they were really able to capture in that 10 second version. So you're going to get the 10 second version today of this presentation but I do hope I am able to share with you some of the really good significant information. I'm going to be around until noon time if people want to try to catch me in the hall way. That will be fine with me.

Many of you know also that I wear two hats right now and merging into a third. The first is I'm president of the Institute for Responsive Education and Carol Strickland is here today. She heads up our research and development portion of the organization. We've been around for 30 years plus. We've done a lot of research in the area of school family community partnership. I'm also the interim deputy superintendent for family and community engagement for the Boston Public Schools. I took on that role last September. I was supposed to have gone back to IRE in August, that's right Carol, but I'm still working as the deputy and I would be there until June, but starting in January, I'll be down to 50% time because I'll be here at Harvard as faculty member at the Harvard School of Education. So, if you see me ripping and running through the subway then in the streets of Boston and Cambridge, then you'll know why.

I had the pleasure of working with Cathy Jordon and also Anne Henderson, my colleague, on a book, the *New Wave of Evidence* and what I'm going to share with you today are a few of the important pieces of the findings from that research. And one of the things that I really like about the work with SEDL is they are trying to do what's called give you information on what's powerful for practice. So things that you can take from the research and really use right away without having to do an awful lot you know thinking and scratching of your heads. That's what they hired us to do, to summarize the research for you so that you can use it. Something you can take away with you when you leave here today.

What I'm going to do, is I'm going to try to touch on three points: To talk about why school, family, and community connections partnership, why are we so concerned about this, and why do we want to do it. It's the part of the presentation that I called sort of the "where's the beef?" There are many of you in this room and I'm sorry I've got to call you on it, you're old enough to remember the commercial, with

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the where's the beef lady, right. The whole point of that is where's the substance? Why are we doing this? Where's the evidence that says that our schools, our principals, our superintendent should really be concerned about school, family and community partnerships. That's the first part of the presentation.

The second part, we talk about family and community engagement, particularly, I'm going to focus on family engagement, and as Arnie said, the definitions of it are wide and varied. So, what we're going to do is we're going to tell you what we found in the research about the types of programs that seem to really make a difference when it comes to student achievement.

And then, last but not least, how. How do we make it so that we go from having, as Mary said, 10 or 20 parents showing up at parent-teacher night or open houses to the majority of our families, either showing up at school or participating in some way, shape, or form in family and community engagement activities. I'm glad to say that we now have research that is looking at effective strategies to engage family and community. In fact, that is my area of passion. That's the kind of work I like to do. Go into studies that have been successful and then ask the question why and try to relay that information to you, so that you can hopefully apply that to your own setting. Again, I think that it's important to know where we got our information from. We looked at about 80 studies and Lacy Wood, who works for SEDL. Lacy was an absolute Godsend for Anne and I because she was the one worked with ERIC and talked to people and called such and such and asked where those studies were listed. We should give her a round of applause. We actually settled in on about 80 studies and literature reviews that focused on the influence of family and community involvement. We were specifically looking at studies that look at the effect or had some connection with student achievement. Where's the beef?

That's what people want to know. If I do this, is it going to have any impact on student outcomes. Principals, and I can tell you this from experience, because I work with about 140 principals want to know what will work. I talk with some of them or they email me. They are totally stressed out right now. That is a fact. Because of all the materials and things they have to do for NCLB and standards; they are really working very, very hard. So, family and community engagement, they want to know how is this going to help me do my job better. And if we can't explain that to them, then it is going very hard to expect them to really do this work and a sustained and powerful way. We wanted to make sure that the studies we used met a couple of standards. Because as you know with NCLB, we've got that scientifically based research terminology really infused in the document. So we wanted to make sure that these studies had really sound methodologies and that the findings matched the data.

We selected 51 studies and we really tried to make sure the studies were diverse because I travel a lot. In fact, I just got back from Kansas City on Tuesday. We wanted to make sure that our studies would relate to folks who were in the middle of the country, not just the coast line, the Stanford and Harvard being on one coast or the other. A lot of the times a lot of the research, in our area, are the ones that are featured the most predominantly. We wanted to make sure we looked at studies from all over the country. We looked at early children through high school. We looked at diverse populations of students and families, community as well as family involvement. We wanted to look at studies that used a variety of research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, and different sources of data. There are a lot of studies that looked at studies were a bit narrow, correlational studies, studies that were based on interviews and survey, etc.

So let's first talk about where's the beef? Why partnerships? Why are connections among families, communities, and schools very important? When Anne and I looked at the research that looked at interventions and at the effects of those interventions, we came up with this. And we wanted to see the book, *New Wave of Evidence*, to be really user friendly, so we thought about presenting the research findings to you in what we call headlines. That's how we tried to think about it. What would be the big headline from the research that we were looking at. So this was the headline around the why partnerships. We found when we looked at this research that there is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and better physical student, including improved academic achievement.

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Now this next statement is very important. This relationship rolls across families of all, all, economic, racial, ethnic, and educational background. And, for students of all ages. So now what does this mean. Well first of all, when I travel around the country and I do training, technical assistance for school districts, I have to say that people are usually very honest with me and they say, "you know Dr. Mapp, we're not sure that we need family involvement for those families that live over there, okay, you know who I'm talking about right? Those families that live over there across the tracks who look different from us, who may not make as much money as we do, may not be as educated as we are, we're not so sure that these programs really make a difference for those students. I don't know if it makes sense for us to spend all this time and money and resources on that particular group because those parents don't have it together." People are very honest with me when they tell me these things. And I appreciate that, because it tells me where I need to work. And so what I tell them is, guess what?

The research does not support that assumption. The research shows that all families regardless of their background, if given the tools, can help support their children's education and reach these results. We also know, this is something Arnie pointed out in his presentation, that relationship holds for children of all ages, so this is not just an elementary school phenomena. We see that when parents of middle schoolers and of high schoolers when parents are involved in education, we see positive effects.

So what are some of those outcomes that we see. Well, we see home-school partnerships really working. We find that students have a tendency to earn test scores. They enroll in higher level programs. These are the students in our AP and honors classes. These are the students who are more likely to be promoted and earn credit, and by the way, be promoted on time. They tend to adapt well to school and attend school regularly. Some of our schools, here in Boston, that do make AYP, and a find this for school all over the country, sometimes it's because they did not make their percentages on attendance. Okay, so the students pass the state test. They've done well on other indicators, but we find that some of those school do not make AYP just because of attendance. When school partner with families, we find that their attendance go up dramatically. These are the students who have better social skills and behavior.

One of the other hats I wore was as a faculty member at Northeastern, and I taught a learning theory class. And these were students in the teacher preparation program. And I often would have some Boston public school teacher or some teachers from the area come in and talk about classroom management. That's what my students wanted to know about. We need to know about classroom management. We're going to be teaching at urban schools, and we really feel we need to have the skills to control our students. And the teachers will come in and they would say, "The only classroom management strategies we need are the following: effective teaching and instruction, culturally relevant teaching, making sure that our students really are connected with our curriculum and partnership with their families. Because when little Jimmy or Susie knows that I know his or her mother or father that's the only classroom management strategy I need. These are the kinds of things that we see when parents, teachers, and community are partnered with one another.

And then finally, these are students who have a tendency to graduate and go on to higher education. Some of you know that I used to work at a college. I used to be the associate director of admissions. And I traveled all over the country and I talked to many, many students. And I would ask the students, what is it in your background, what is it about you that caused to succeed? And every single student, every single student, and I've talked to thousands of students in my career, would say 1) the teachers but 2) I had a parent pushing me. There was a parent there, really saying to me education is important.

By the way, I'll put a little footnote in here. When I say parent, I think when all of us on the panel say parent, we many any adult caretaker. Because as we all know, families have changed, you've got grandma, the grandpa taking care of children, aunts and uncles, older brothers and sisters and those people I like to refer to in the research, next-of-kin. All of these wonderful people who are involved in children's lives, these are the adults. This is what we're seeing. So, here's the beef ladies and gentlemen. And so we each know, that this is where our schools want to go. Why would we have to have community engagement.

Let's talk a little bit about what we're finding with community partnerships. The reason for community partnerships isn't as old as the research on family practices. We've been doing research on family

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partnerships for almost forty years. And I'm talking about research that actually links these partnerships to student achievement. So we're doing some really good work now. And Heather and other people have studying and doing evaluations of after-school programs and also other kinds of community partnerships. We're on our way. But what we've found and we'll go to the next slide is that I finally am seeing in the research, and this is what Anne and I wrote in the book, that we're seeing what I call macro level improvement and impact on school systems when family and community are engaged in these partnerships.

We have them here in Boston, with Boston parents organizing that work. That's actually how we've done it at the Institute for Responsive Education; it is a parent organizing initiative.

Many of you are familiar with the industrial area's foundation work. So when we look at these organizing initiatives and community partnerships. What are we seeing? We're seeing that they have an effect on school facilities, making sure that those bonds pass in the community so that new school can be built. We have a new school here in Boston, the Orchard Garden School, a K-8 school. That school was born of the community, Edna Finhold, a city activist, is one of the people in the pulled together the community to fight for that school and would encourage you if you are going to be here for a while to visit to the Orchard Garden School, a beautiful school, right in the heart of Roxbury. It proves school leadership is savvy, making sure we have highly qualified teachers and principals. Higher quality learning programs for students, again, making sure we have those AP and honors courses in all of our schools, not just schools in the suburban community, but in our schools in places besides Hartford and Bridgeport, Boston and New York City, and all of the country in urban and rural settings as well.

New resources and programs to improve teaching and curriculum, resources for after-school programs and family support, and here's another benefit—where we see these parent organizing and community organizing efforts coming to town, we find parents who may have never thought about being active in this way, get caught up in this and have their own efficacy increased. We see time and time again when we've talked to families who have been involved in these kinds of efforts and even involved with their schools say, "you know, this has made me feel confident about my own abilities. And so I want to go back to school." Many people admitted to me that because of this they are really engaged in a political process, who have never voted before, but now they are engaged in these wonderful programs—by empowering them.

So these are some of things that ladies and gentlemen that we find we get when we've got these kinds of engagement programs.

So let me talk a little bit now, I'm going to shift gears and talk what type of programs seem to work best to achieve positive student outcomes. And Arnie, I have to tell you that this is my crowning glory with my technology, to get this little girl to move her arms up and down. It took me about two days to figure it out. Of course, my students came in said that's an applet; it would have taken us 5 minutes.

What types of programs? When Anne and looked at the research, we were actually surprised by some of the things we found. I think that Joyce Epstein and others have actually focused on this. Here's some of things that we found when we looked at the research on the kinds of programs that really make a difference. First of all we found out from the research that the programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home, **at home**, are linked to higher achievement. We actually saw that family involvement at home, learning at home, that's one of Joyce's six types, appears to have the greatest effect on student achieve. When families are engaged in their children's learning when they are not with us, ladies and gentlemen, that really makes a huge difference. Now, this is not saying that those other areas aren't important, that volunteering and all these things aren't important. But when we look at the greatest effect on student outcomes, what we do to help our families support their children's learning when they are not with us, is critically important, **critically important**. And we can get to the part about putting the findings into action, I'm going to talk to you about some of the things we're doing in Boston to really focus on that.

So what I often say to folks is, really focusing on how we can just show up at meetings really isn't where it's at. I call that head count parent involvement because we're just focused on just counting,

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how many people are in the room. What we're finding now is that the schools that really focus supplying families with all sorts of great information that they can take back with them. Because after all, as Mary pointed out a lot of our families can't come to all the programs at school. And I'm going to talk about that a little bit more later. But family involvement at home is where it's at.

We also know that family involvement has a protective effect. The more families can be involved in their children's education, and their progress, the better the children do in school, the longer they stay in school. So the longer the better, so, in other words again, the research supports the fact that it's not just elementary school family engagement that we should be focusing on. We need to take a look at engagement practices from K-12 and some would suggest even beyond that. The Institute for Responsive Education is engaged in a study that they'll be finishing, hopefully soon, but it's a study of high school family centers. The reason why we did this study was because we wanted more research on how are families engaged at the high school level. So we had a chance to do site visits in Memphis and Houston and San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, and we talked to teachers and principals and students. And guess what the students told us, we asked the students how important is it for how families engage at the high school level. They told us that family involvement is more important, **more important**, at the high school level than at any other time in their lives. Now they also told us, don't tell them; we don't want them to know. We're supposed to deceive our parents when we get to be teenagers, so don't blow the whistle on us. Well, of course we said we won't mention your names, but we're certainly going to tell them because this is very important information. Why do they feel that family involvement was more important at the high school level? Because they told us there are so many other influences on them. And so families have to be engaged. So they challenged us, they said you have to give our families good information about what we're supposed to be doing in high school. So tell them about the curriculum offering. Explain to them all these different measures and tell them about parent involvement and the whole school improvement plan. Explain that to our parents. Because after all, and they told us not to tell this too, we really love our parents, so if you tell them what we're supposed to be doing, we'll rise the level of their expectations. So, it's not about always getting the families into the high school. The kids said no we don't want our parents wandering the hallways, although when that happens, they seem to appreciate that as well. But they said, give as much information as you can about what we should be doing. Some of you may have heard Steve Constantino speak. Steve Constantino was a principal of a high school, Stonewall Jackson High School in Virginia. He used to always start his talks by saying when you ask a high school student, and even elementary I've been told, what did they do at school today? What's the answer? Nothing, okay, everybody knows the answer to that question. So what he did was he partnered with the local businesses at the mall. He put kiosks in that mall. He gave parents a pin number and those parents of those high school students were able to go to the computer and look the student's attendance record, find out what their homework was that week, whether there were tests, so now when Johnny or Suzie came home, the parents would say what did you do at school today, they would say you had a biology test today or this week. How did you do? Tell me what some of the tough questions were. A little different question, and lot tougher to dodge the answer. So that's the point here; family involvement is very important K-12, but we've got to provide our families with the tools to be able ask those good questions to support their children, K-12.

This underscores the point I made little earlier. When we look at the research, we did find that parents, most parents were involved in these, in the ways that I'm about to describe to you. They encourage their children. Again, that's important. Now, my mom and dad are a good example of that. They didn't graduate for college until way after I had graduated from college. And so they weren't all that sure about how to navigate the school system. But what did they do, daily? How did you do in school today? You're going to college. I heard that from the time I was 3. My relatives said it. So, there was always this, what we call academic press, pushing, telling me I was smart and I could do it. Most parents do encourage their children in some way shape or form when it comes to education. They talk about to them about school. They help them plan for higher education and keep them focused on learning at home. Again, all families can and do have positive effects on their children's learning. Now, do find as parent's educational levels increases or socio-economic status increases, the level of the particular activity changes. So again, some families have said to me, I didn't know any better so my encouragement strategy was to yell at my children. You are going to do this right. So through partnership programs, where we can talk about some of the effective strategies, parents can feel their

efficacy around family involvement. We did find that most families are involved in one or more of these ways when it comes to supporting their children.

Now this one, you would think would be a no brainer. We found in the research that family and community involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than the more general form of involvement. So, you know the kids say well dah. But I can tell you I've visited many of your schools out there and I go those meetings and I find that there a lot of conversation about naysaying and a lot of conversation about actually, I went to one school where they were talking about how many lines they were going to draw for parking spaces in the parking lot. And the meeting was over, but there was not talk about family engagement, community engagement, or supporting children's learning. At the O'Hearn Elementary School, here in Boston, which is where I get a lot of my research on family involvement. Very, very successful family engagement program. They try to insert some sort of link to learning in every parent engagement activity that they do. I will give you an example. I went to their school play, *Charlotte's Web*, a number of years ago. How many of you have read *Charlotte's Web*. Okay, probably more times than you care to admit, you've read it. And Templeton the rat who is one of the major players in *Charlotte's Web*. There is a commercial break, during the play, Templeton comes out and says "ladies and gentlemen, I'm here to talk to you about reading to your child. We here at O'Hearn Reading Program Partnership between families and our schools. We ask you parents to read to your child three times a week, 30 minutes at a time. Come on out Charlotte's children and let me show you how. Charlotte's little baby would come out. You all know Charlotte had her baby at the end of the play, right. And the little baby comes out and demonstrates. He held up a news paper. He held up *Sports Illustrated*. He said Templeton the rat doesn't care what you use, just as long as you're reading to your child or having them read to you, three times a week.

Now, he did this commercial or variations of it twice during the program. So you see they figure out whenever we have that captive audience, whatever materials we send home to parents, we're going to give them tips and tools of how they can link these activities to learning. So you see all of our family engagement and community engagement activities should be related to learning. Why are we not surprised when parents aren't all that engaged in these activities when they are not focused on their children. It's a very, very important thing.

Okay, now we get to the good stuff. How? How do we do this? Because when I travel, this is the question I get. More often, I'm sure this is the question on your mind. How do we help our schools, our principals, our teachers, our communities, our families, really have effective partnerships? Why is it that some schools have great involvement, lots of parents engaged in activities, and other schools have barely 5 parents who walk through the door. This is what we found. Again, we were very thrilled to see that there is research in this area of effective partnerships.

Well, first of all I have a little homework assignment for you. When you get home, I know some of you had travel, so we'll give you an opportunity, go to the library, find a dictionary. You find one very easily I'm sure. I want you to look up to "partner." Because I think you're going to see something like this. Partner implies a relationship. Frequently between two people each as equal status and a certain independence but also inclusive of formal obligations to the other or others. Key words: relationship and equal partnership. The key to building partnerships—we found that when we looked at the research on programs that were successful in engaging families and communities, this is what found. This is the theme; this is the headline. When programs and initiatives focus on building trusting and respectful relationships among school staff, families, and communities members, these programs are effective in creating and sustaining equal partnerships. When you buy a home, what do they tell you are the three most important things you need to remember: location, location, location. Everybody knows that. Even when I went to Singapore and asked that question. The same answer there; I think it's even more of a focal point there because real estate is so high there. If you don't remember anything about what I've said today, other than this one thing, I'll be happy. If you're trying to put effective partnerships for families and communities, there are three things that you need to remember: relationship, relationship, relationship. If you do not build relationships with your families, they will not come. It will not happen. And ladies and gentlemen, you can't build relationships with this (paper) or email or telephone. Relationships mean, and if wasn't for the fact I know that could really hear me if pulled away from this mic, I'm going to do it anyway. This is how relationships are built. How ya doing? How are you? Nice to meet you. I'm so glad you're here today. Hi Sherry. How are ya? Nice to

meet you. Hi Sandra. How are you? Good to meet you. Okay. That's what it is ladies and gentlemen. It's not just paper. If you don't reach out and touch your families, they will not come. They don't know you. They don't trust you. They don't even have to have bad experiences when they were in school. We all know how to make relationships. We know how to do that, but seem to forget that when start talking about building a partnership.

So, let's talk a little bit more about what we saw about these programs. These programs knew that partnering, as I said relationship and equal status, they operated on that philosophy. They knew there was a possibility for educating children with collaborative enterprise. It's a shared enterprise among school staff, family, and community members. They share power with families. So like, Elliot, who I absolutely love, we've talked about this. You know Karen it's hard for me, because Elliot is also a bit of he's into control, he'll admit that. A lot of us in education are right? But he said, it's hard to let go and just say, I'm going to turn over some of this responsibility to my family, but he also realizes that when he does that, families feel empowered by that and want to be even more involved in the enterprise. Now, there is a word that is embedded in this word *collaborative*, and I want to highlight it. Because I don't want you to go back and say well that Dr. Mapp she talked about this as if it was easy work. It's not. What's the word that is embedded in collaborative – Labor! Labor. Labor. For all the women in the room who've had children, they know what that means. Rough. Not easy. Takes time. It takes patience, perseverance, takes time. So I don't want you to think that what I'm talking about is easy. I think personally, and when I work with schools around the country, and I don't know if there is any research on this, but I can tell you, as deputy superintendent, I think it takes about 4 years to really get this running at a school or at a district. I'm trying to do it at a district level. I'll talk to you about some of the things we're doing.

We're basing a lot of what we're doing on Boston on the research that I've presented to you today. We also found that programs don't shy away from diversity. They grab it. They face it. They recognize, respect and address cultural and class issues. They don't run away from it. In my class that I told you about at Northeastern, one of the first things I do with my students is I ask them: if you have a class that's diverse, ethnically, socio-economically, what are you going to do? How are you going to treat those children? We're going to treat those kids the same!! We don't see color. We don't see difference. That's what we're going to do. We're not going to treat them any differently. So, then I have them read Gloria Ladson-Billing's *The Dream Keeper*. And for those of you who don't know the book, it's a marvelous book on how 6 teachers work with African-American students, are successful in teaching African-American students. It's called the *The Dream Keepers*. And she talks about a concept called dye-conscious racism, and what she says dye-conscious racism is all about is that very thing when we say I don't see color. But what happens when we do that is wash out all the wonderful diversity that our children and families bring to us. So, we don't want to that. We want to embrace difference. That doesn't mean we always understand it, but we try to recognize it and respect it. This is what we found it those programs. You know what we want to know how to do better with families who are different from us. I'll give you a wonderful, wonderful example. I did a presentation for one of the parent information resource centers in Iowa this past summer. In one of the communities there, there is a highway that runs from Mexico straight to Canada, so they have a lot of Mexican families that are living in Iowa. The superintendent of the school district where a lot of these families were coming to was really perplexed as to what to do. I mean Iowa right. What could they do? They got on a plane and went down to the area of Mexico where their families are coming from so that they could learn about the culture and the families and they made 4 trips. Now, that is embracing, that's recognizing, that's respecting, and that's engaging diversity. And that's one of those things I really want to study because they are doing a wonderful, wonderful job. So they didn't run away from it. They said, at first we did. Why are these families coming and we don't know what we do? Then they figured out a way to really try to learn and share information with these families.

We also found, in the research on these effective programs, that these were programs that really connected with families and communities by inviting involvement. Saying we want this; we want you here. I have a friend who is a teacher in China. She said that on the doors of some of the schools, it says parents stay out. And I said well at least they are honest about it. They put a sign on the door. I've been to a lot of schools that is the sign that should have been on the door because that is what kind of reception I got when I walked in. They were welcoming and they addressed specific parental and community needs. So when I was doing my research on this; my study is one of the ones that is

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featured in this area, and I wanted to just give you a little bit of information about what I found in it and what I've also seen in the studies that look at this whole business about relationships building. What are some of the components of those relationships? What are things that parents report over and over again are the reasons why some of these programs are really effective in engaging. And I came up with a theory called the "joining process." This really comes from family systems work. I saw three things happening and 3 things that were described to me by families about how these programs were really connecting with them. And I call it the "joining process," the coming together. And those components of the "joining process": welcoming, honoring, and connecting. I go through those quickly. First of all welcoming, families are made to be at home, comfortable, and a part of the school community. When I was doing my research at the O'Hearn School, and I was interviewing parents, I started to hear the same thing over and over again. I actually got a little worried about it because there is something that we can do with research that is called telegraphing. Our responses may be doing something or you're saying something so that you are getting the same response. Well, the families I interviewed came saying to me, I feel like I'm a member of the O'Hearn family. I kept hearing that over and over again in some way, shape, or form. I feel like a member of the family, and so a lot of times I asked my schools, do your parents say about you, about your school? We're far from that. Well, this is something that you can strive for as a target. And so, how were they made to feel as members of the family? Well, the place was really welcoming, great signage. When I go into some of these programs where families are welcome, there is beautiful signage, there's ways to get into the building. I can tell you that when I was an associate director of admissions at Trinity and I would go visit high schools, first, trying to get there was a challenge, because many times they would give me the wrong directions. I actually had that happen recently, so that's not something new, I think it is happening more. Don't depend on Mapquest. Mapquest does not always give you the right directions, and it seems like to schools, it is never right. But after I would arrive at the school, I'd have to play let's make a deal: let's pick out which door is going to open. So, I'd go to one door. Hello. Is anybody there? Can I get in? The kids would see: look at that lady. I'd say, open the door! You have to go around to the front. So, I'd get the front door; I'd go in to the school. And it would be hello. Anybody here? No signage. Nothing to say welcome families, welcome visitors, no signs to the front office. If I didn't speak English, I'd really be in trouble. No signs in different languages. And then I would get to the front door. I went to the secretary's office, to the front office. And there is the secretary, oh dear. I'd say hi. My name is Karen Mapp; I'm here to see some students that are interested in... "Have a seat, the principal or the guidance counselor will be out here shortly." Never looked up at me. Never looked up at me. I could have been Chunky. They would have never known. And then I watched the grand central station parade go past me. No one paying any attention and you know what I wish I could say that was the exception, but it wasn't. It wasn't. Customer service, it's something that these schools embed in their work. Mary is an excellent example of that. The principal has to not only talk the talk, but walk the walk of welcoming families. That person says you are welcome. This building is yours. That person goes into the community where the families and the students live and does just exactly what I just did with you. Reaching out and touches them. So that's welcoming.

Honoring. This is where family members are respected, validated for any type of involvement or contribution they make. One of our principals in Boston, my buddy Simon, who is a principal of the Hernandez school tells a story about a dad who never came to the building, but she was going to try to find a way to get all of her families engaged in some way, shape, or form in the school. So, she asked the child to do this: what does your dad like to do? And let me tell if you every want to find out what your families like to do, just ask their kids, cause they'll tell you everything. They'll tell you more than you want to know, sometimes. And this young man said my dad likes to garden. So, she called his parent, she said you know, we can use a little poofing on the outside of our building. By the time dad came to school, but she asked him to be involved in a way that would be honored and validated this skill. She didn't just valid the traditional forms of involvement, the volunteering, the being on school site council. She went out and found ways that her families were talented, things they could offer the school. And she validated those ways. And guess what happened? That father not only started planting in front of the school, but he started coming up inside of the school. And he started to get involved in some of the other programs. So you see we have to go to where our families are at. We have to honor our families where they are, not always coming to us. Let me ask you a quick question, if I had \$10,000 and I said okay gang we're going to take a break from this conference and I'm going to ask you to pick another teammate, and I'm going to send you out to Cambridge and to Boston, and I want you to grab as many parents as you can and bring them back here. The team that brings the most families to this

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place gets \$10,000. Now, I don't have the \$10,000; I'm not Opra. I can't give you the \$10,000, but where would you go. Shout out some things. Where you go?" Laundromat, grocery store, the mall, the beauty salon, the barbershop, the market, the rotary club, the doctors office, the lottery office, their jobs, the churches, Irish bar, the casinos. But now let me ask you something, we shouted quickly out, five, ten things. Do any of us have information about our school programs in those places? Have we held any of our parent engagement programs in those places? This is how we honor and validate our families, by showing up and where they are at, and then my friends, once they see that YOU have made the effort to come to them, they will come to you. So, we have to get up out of our offices, get it our cars, get out of our cars, and go into the neighborhoods. One of the things that I tell our principal's program—our principal fellows get out and walk the neighborhood that our students live in. Can't just drive around. They get out and walk the neighborhood. And they write a paper about it, and I can tell you those papers have been fabulous, about the people they've met, the grocery store owners, and all the folks they've met. I can come talk at the school about my experiences in the United States. Last, but not least, let's go back to connecting. Connecting is basically that whole thing about linking to learning, making sure that our programs have children at the center, and that they are absolutely linked to learning, so the program is designed to improve the educational opportunities for the kids.

I'm going to stop here, and I'm just going to tell you a little bit about how we're putting some of these findings into action in Boston. We talked about links to learning. We have the whole school improvement plan here in Boston. What we've done, we've asked all our school, by January 15th, and we're trying to give them plenty of support to do this through providing them with websites, like Heather's and others and all sorts of activities and programs that are linked to learning. So each school has to, and what they've done, and let me back up a little. The first thing we ask them to do is to form an action team to get parents and teachers and administrators on an action team that will be their committee to throughout the year plan their family involvement activities. If you do have a committee, or group that's working on this, it's not going to happen. And it can't just be one person. It has to engage different constituency groups, particularly parents. So each school, in the beginning of the fall has to come up with a roster for their action team. Now it could be that another group, maybe the school-site council or a sub-committee of this school-site council. Then what we said—you have to do need assessment. Why? Because what we found in the research is that we have to respond to the needs of the families. It's one thing to come up with an initiative that is based on what the teachers think the parents need. I think we've all been there. I went to one school where they had workshops and the parents weren't attending. And I said, well what are the workshops on? And they said, "parenting." And I said, well, did the parents ask for those workshops? And they said no. So, we talked to some of the parents and they said we found that insulting. That isn't what we wanted. So, again, based on research, what we've done is we've asked the parents, we've asked the schools to ask the parents, ask your parents what they need. We've actually provided them with needs assessment surveys. And we have those surveys translated into 7 languages. So we're all set up, and the parents and teachers were able to do the need assessment. Now, based on what they get back, they are going to use that information, couple it with their student performance goals, and come up with an initiative, and some of them have already sent me those initiatives and they are fabulous. What we are hoping to do is create a handbook for our principals. And hopefully, maybe we can even get it published. It will have all these wonderful initiatives that they've come up with and we are then going to give a prize, because I believe in reciprocity. We have a prize: first we give a \$2000 grant out to the first 50 schools that get their initiatives into me between September 15 and January 15. And then at the end of the school year, we going to give out five prizes to the schools who have had the best initiatives and have seen the most progress. So, we want to take this from one school doing a good job to the system doing a good job. And there are other things happening around the country that some of you may know about the New York City program that family that have family coordinators at every school; we're trying to move that here in Boston. I believe in Kansas City, you've heard about the advisory program at the high school. They are also doing that here in Boston. We also have some home visit programs: Sacramento, the district is doing home visiting now. So, I think we're at a tipping point here ladies and gentlemen when it comes to school, family, community partnerships because of the efforts of people like Joyce Epstein, Don Davies, Heather Weiss, and others. I think we're at a point now where people want to do the work; they just need more support as to how to do the work. And that's why we're all here today.