

# The Why, What and How of Effective School, Family and Community Partnerships

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# Purpose of Presentation:

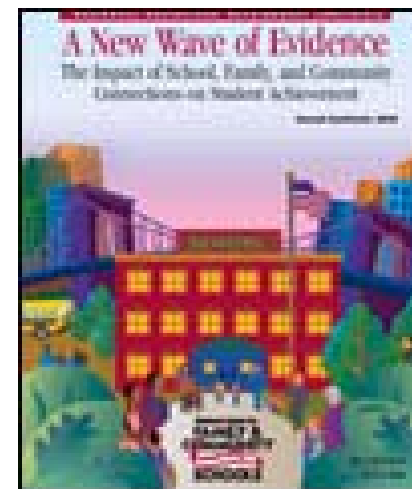
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- Why school, family and community partnerships are key to student learning and development
- What types of partnership programs work best to support learning
- How to achieve effective school, family and community partnerships

# A New Wave Of Evidence:

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The Impact of School, Family and  
Community Connections on  
Student Achievement



# About the Studies

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- Started with a group of 80 studies and literature reviews that focused on the influence of family and community involvement on academic achievement and other outcomes.
- Studies met these standards:
  - Sound methodology
  - Study findings matched the data collected

# 51 studies were selected

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- Early childhood through high school
- All regions of the country
- Diverse populations
- Community as well as family involvement
- A variety of research methods
- Different sources of data

# Why Partnerships?

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Impact of Home –  
School Partnerships

Impact of  
Community  
Partnerships

# Overall Finding:

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- Home-School Partnerships:

There is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students at all ages.

# **Impact of Home-School Partnerships:**

When parents and school staff work together to support learning, students:

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- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Enroll in higher level programs
- Be promoted and earn credits
- Adapt well to school and attend regularly
- Have better social skills and behavior
- Graduate and go on to higher education



# Overall Finding:

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- **Community Partnerships:** There is less research on the effects of community involvement, but it also suggests benefits for schools, families and students, including improved achievement and behavior.

# Impact of Educational Community Partnerships:

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- Upgraded school facilities
- Improved school leadership and staffing
- Higher quality learning programs for students
- New resources and programs to improve teaching and curriculum
- Resources for after-school programs and family supports
- Increased social and political capital of participants

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**What** types of programs  
work best to achieve  
positive student outcomes?





- Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement. Family involvement at home appears to have the greatest affect on student achievement.

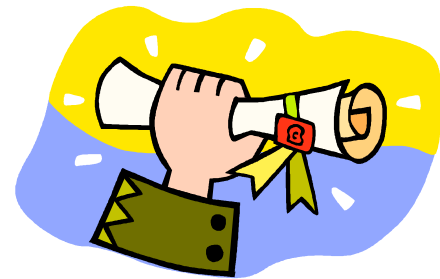


- Family Involvement has a protective effect. The more families can support their children's progress, the better their children do in school and the longer they stay in school.



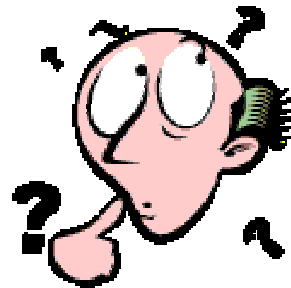
- Families of all cultural backgrounds, education, and income levels encourage their children, talk with them about school, help them plan for higher education, and keep them focused on learning and homework. In other words, all families can, and do, have positive effects on their children's learning.

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- Parent and community involvement that is linked to improving student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement.



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**How** can we achieve effective school, family, and community partnerships?





# Components of Effective Partnerships

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*To partner: Implies a **relationship**, frequently between two people, in which each has **equal status** and a certain independence but also implicit or formal obligations to the other or others.*

# The keys to building partnerships:

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- When programs and initiatives focus on building **trusting and respectful relationships** among school staff, families, and community members, these programs are effective in creating and sustaining meaningful partnerships.



- Effective programs to engage families and community embrace a philosophy of partnership. The responsibility for children's educational development is a shared, collaborative enterprise among parents, school staff, and community members.

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- Parent involvement programs that are effective in engaging diverse families recognize, respect, and address cultural and class differences.



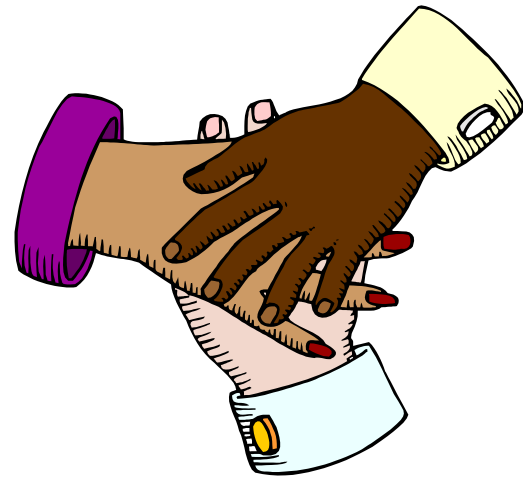
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- Programs that successfully connect with families and community invite involvement, are welcoming, and address specific parental and community needs.



# The Joining Process

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- **Welcoming**
- **Honoring**
- **Connecting**



# Welcoming

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Families are made to feel at home, comfortable, and a part of the school community.



# Honoring

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Family members are respected, validated and affirmed for any type of involvement or contribution they make.





# Connecting

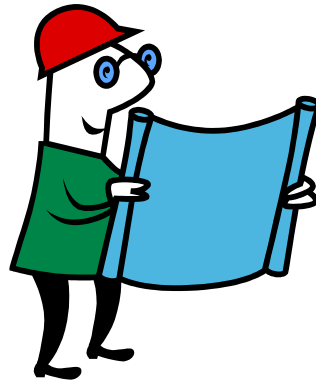
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School staff and families put children at the center and connect on education issues of common interest designed to improve educational opportunities for the children.



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# Putting the Findings into Action



# Work with school staff to broaden the definition of family and community engagement.

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- Adopt the attitude that *all* families are involved in their children's education and want guidance in their efforts to support children's learning.
- Encourage staff to implement both in-school away-from-school initiatives.

Link All Efforts to Engage Families, Whether Based at School or in the Community, to Student Learning.



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Implement initiatives that focus on building relationships with families and community members.



# Recognize and Address Barriers

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- *Past experiences*
- *Time*
- *Transportation*
- *Location*
- *Translation*



# Bridge Class and Cultural Differences

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- Understand your own cultural context
- Share cultural traditions and norms
- Create small, friendly settings
- Invite families and community members to tell their education stories
- Ask families about their expectations for their children

# Embrace Partnership and Share Power

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- Plan how families want to be engaged
- Consult all families about policies
- Involve families in action research





# Embrace Partnership and Share Power, cont.

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- Provide access to principal and staff
- Facilitate connections to community groups
- Invite families to staff training

# Build Social and Political Connections

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- Support families involvement in decision-making
- Promote families' connections with each other, school staff and community groups
- Invite officials to school to respond to families' concerns
- Give families information about how the system works

# See families and communities as having valuable assets versus liabilities

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- Acknowledge the knowledge base of families
- Conduct an asset map, not just a needs assessment, of the community

# Joining activities: short term

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- Provide good signage for visitors outside and inside the school building. (W)
- Greet visitors to the front office in a way that is family friendly. (W)
- Set up a open door policy that meets the needs of families and staff (W, H)
- Ask families what supports they need to help with children's learning – conduct a needs assessment. (H, C)
- Make “good news” phone call home to families at least once a month about a child's progress. (H, C)
- Have events in places other than at school – churches, community centers, etc. (W, H)

# Short term, cont.

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- Provide childcare, translation, and food at meetings. (W, H)
- Provide tips for parents on reading in math in newsletters, report cards, magnets, book bags. (C)
- Have "Ask the Principal" events for parents. (W, H, C)
- Provide a "family suggestion box." Respond to all suggestions. (H)
- Create a list of questions for parents and teachers to follow for effective and meaningful parent/teacher conferences

# Joining activities – long term

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- Make sure all materials are translated into the language spoken at home. (H)
- Increase to at least four times per year the number of times that families get to interact with school staff. (W, H, C)
- Conduct home visits designed to welcome families to the school and begin relationship of partnership between families and staff. (W, H)
- Have workshops for families on topics that they have identified from your needs assessment: computer classes, helping with homework, dealing with the teen years, preparing for college, using the Internet, understanding NCLB. (H, C)
- Engage in “First Day” of school events, summer activities to build relationships with families – “Starting School Differently.” (W, H, C)
- Conduct Parent/Teacher/Student conferences (H, C)

Parents and Community members are more likely to become involved when they:

- Understand that they **SHOULD** be involved
- Feel **CAPABLE** of making a contribution
- Feel **INVITED** by the school and their children

