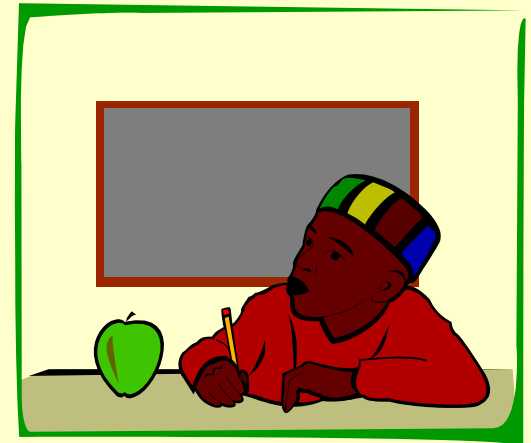
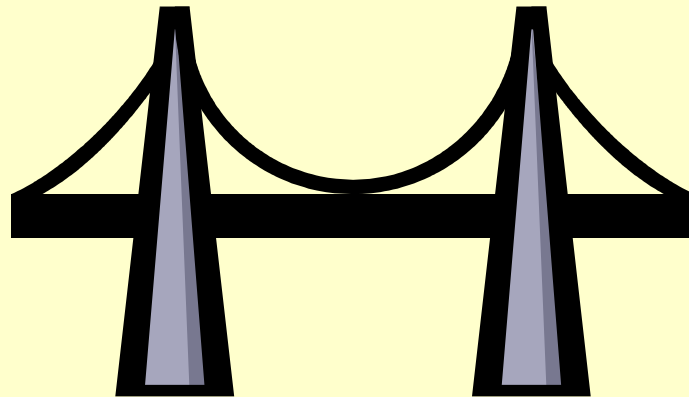


Readiness: The Role of Family-School Connections in Supporting Student Success in Early Childhood

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Presented at the Family, School, and Community Connections Symposium:
New Directions for Research, Practice, and Evaluation
Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA
December 2, 2004



TODAY . . .

- What we know: Brief review of the PI literature
- Our research: Two partnership-based studies
- Family involvement research & practice
 - What do we still need to know?
 - How can we improve?

What we know . . .

- Most of the research on parent involvement has emphasized the relationships between specific parent involvement behaviors and children's achievement (reading and math)
- Some studies have linked parental beliefs and expectations about children's learning to children's beliefs about their own competencies, as well as their achievement
- Fewer studies have linked parent involvement to children's outcomes for vulnerable groups, such as low-income, preschool children

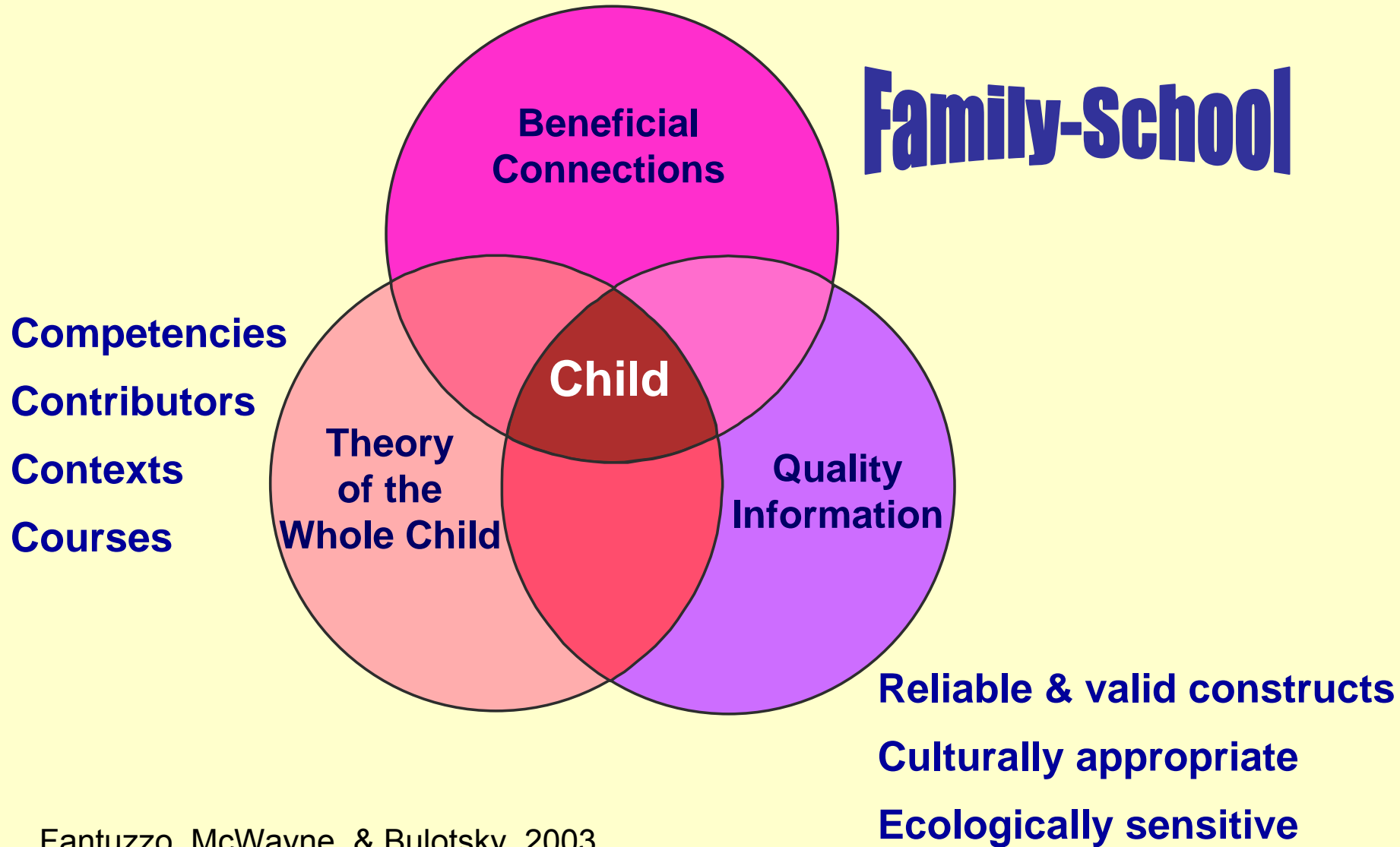
Research supports PI in preschool:

- ↑ # volunteer hours & # workshops or meetings attended →
↑ children's behavioral compliance and social competency
- Parent involvement in children's education at home → children's motivation and self-efficacy
- Inhibited involvement → children's poor social relationships
- Parents' understanding of children's prosocial behavior at home → children's school readiness

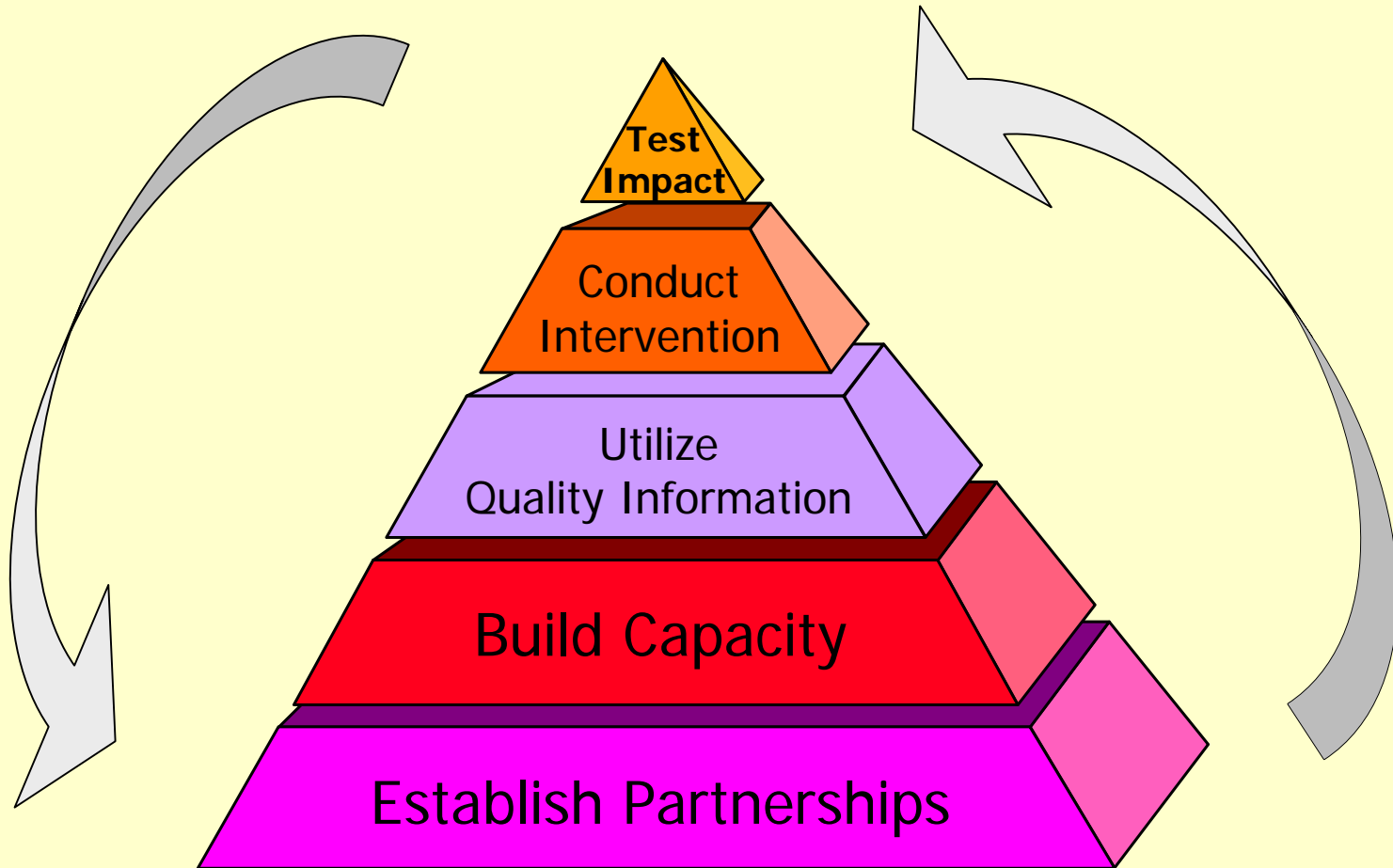
Qualitative Studies Also Tell a Story:

- Family involvement practices may manifest in culturally specific ways.
- These practices are typically invisible to school personnel and, therefore, go unrecognized.
- Traditional conceptualizations of family involvement are inadequate for some groups (recently immigrated or working single parents).
- Barriers exist with respect to types of family involvement expected by mainstream school culture.

CHILD-CENTERED STRENGTH-BASED MODEL



PARTNERSHIP-BASED MODEL



Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Bulotsky, 2003

A Model to Inform FI Practice

Taxonomy of family involvement (Epstein, 1991):

- Meeting children's basic needs
- Establishing a positive learning environment at home
- Conferencing with teacher/school about child
- Participating in classroom/school activities
- Participating in school decision-making processes
- Engaging in political action related to child's education

What's missing?

STUDY #1: Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry (2004)

The Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ):

- a multidimensional instrument
- co-constructed with parents and teachers
- based on Epstein's taxonomy of family involvement
- parent rating ("rarely," "sometimes," "often," "always")
- 42 items reflecting specific behaviors

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Three dimensions of family involvement:

School-Based Involvement ($\alpha=.85$)

Home-Based Involvement ($\alpha=.85$)

Home-School Conferencing ($\alpha=.81$)

**641 HS parent respondents
(96% African-American)**



Examples of Home-Based Contributions

- Spending time at home on reading, numbers, and creative activities.
- Bringing home learning materials (i.e., videos).
- Talking about parents' own experiences in school.
- Taking child to places in the community (i.e., zoo, museum, public library).



Examples of School-Based Contributions

- Volunteering in the classroom.
- Going on class trips.
- Meeting with other parents to plan events.
- Attending workshops for parents.



Examples of Home-School Conferencing

- Talking with child's teacher about learning difficulties and accomplishments.
- Discussing with child's teacher ways to promote learning at home.
- "I feel that teachers and administrators welcome and encourage parents to be involved at school."

RESULTS

Demographic differences in FI:

- *caregiver education level*

school-based involvement: more hs > hs > less hs

home-school conferencing: more hs > hs, less hs

- *marital status*

home-based: married > single

home-school conferencing: married > single

- *# children, employment, child gender*

no significant differences

Family Involvement & Child Competencies

Bivariate Correlations Between FIQ Dimensions and Child Outcomes

End of HS Year Child Outcomes	School-Based	Home-Based	Home-School Conferencing
Competence Motivation	.23**	.35****	.23**
Attention & Persistence	.25**	.36****	ns
Attitude Toward Learning	.25**	.30***	ns
Conduct Problems	-.29***	-.30***	-.18*
Receptive Vocabulary	.32****	.41****	.24**

***N* = 130.**

****p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001. *****p* < .0001.**

How FI relates to child outcomes

2 sets of findings

- *multivariate analyses revealed:*

1. Home- and school-based involvement with children's motivation, attention/persistence, and positive attitude toward learning ($R_c = .40, p < .01$).

2. Home- and school-based involvement with children's low levels of conduct problems ($R_c = .35, p < .05$).

univariate regression analyses revealed:

when controlling for the effects of the other two dimensions, **only home-based involvement related to child competencies and low levels of behavior problems

STUDY #2:

McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino (2004)

The Parent Involvement in Children's Education Scale (PICES):

- a multidimensional instrument
- co-constructed with parents and teachers
- based on Epstein's taxonomy of family involvement
- parent rating ("rarely," "sometimes," "often," "always")
- 40 items reflecting specific behaviors of K parents

Parent Involvement in Children's Education Scale (PICES)

Three dimensions of family involvement:

Supportive Home Learning Environment ($\alpha=.86$)

Direct School Contact ($\alpha=.77$)

Inhibited Involvement ($\alpha=.66$)

**307 K parent respondents
(95% African-American)**



Examples of Inhibited Involvement

(McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004)

- I worry that I don't spend enough time talking with my child about what he/she is learning at school.
- I have a tight schedule and do not have time to talk with other parents.
- Household tasks prevent me from having enough time to read to my child.
- I am concerned that I am not involved enough in school activities.

RESULTS

Family Involvement & Child Competencies

Bivariate Correlations btw PICES Dimensions and Child Outcomes

K Child Outcomes	Supportive HLE	Direct School Contact	Inhibited Involvement
Cooperation (SSRS-P)	.41***	.20*	ns
Assertion (SSRS-P)	.25***	ns	ns
Responsibility (SSRS-P)	.29***	.23***	ns
Self-Control (SSRS-P)	.28***	ns	.20**
Hyperactivity (SSRS-P)	-.16*	-.19*	ns
Play Interaction (home)	.31***	ns	ns
Play Interaction (school)	.22**	ns	ns
Motivation (SSRS-T)	.26***	ns	ns
Parental Encouragement (as rated by teacher)	.22**	.21**	-.24**

N = 307.

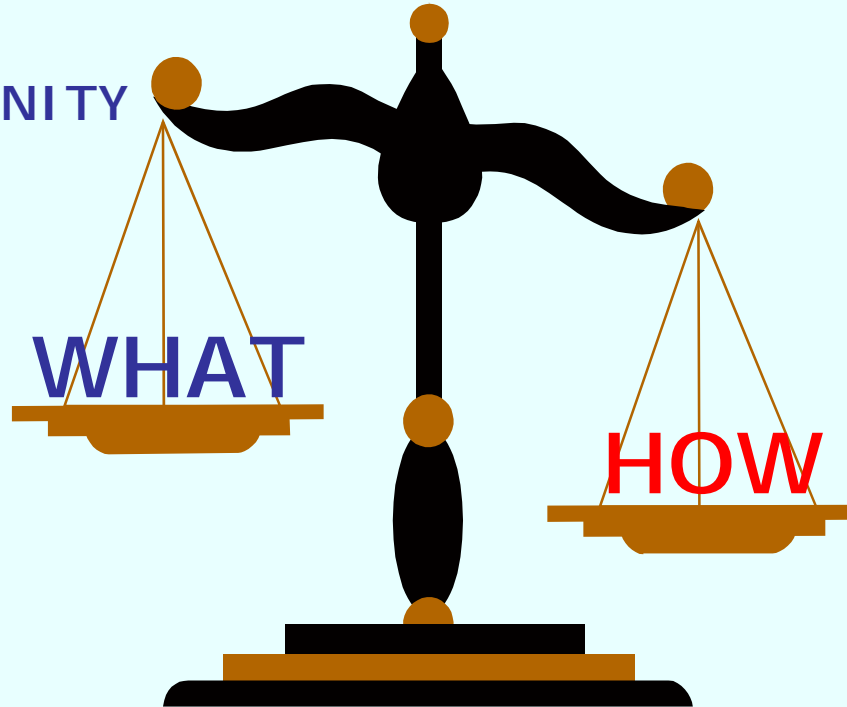
*** $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$. *** $p < .0001$.**

**What do we need to consider
to improve future
practice and research?**

Family-School Connection Tensions

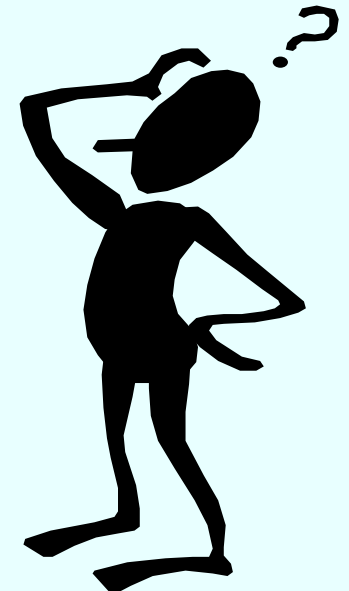
Considerations:

CULTURAL/COMMUNITY
ECOLOGICAL
DEVELOPMENTAL



FI Program:

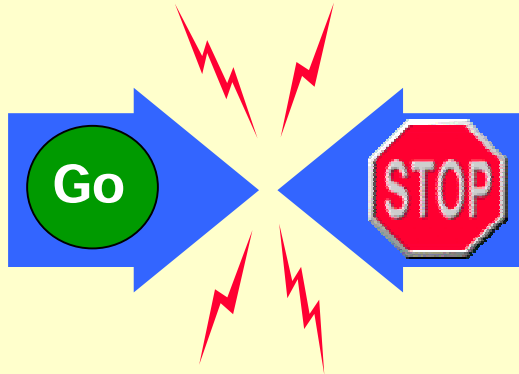
Fits Mandates
Fits Values
Fits Conceptualizations
Fits Resources



Schools

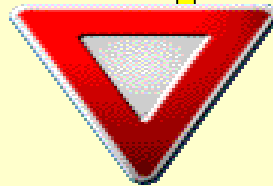
Families

Rights

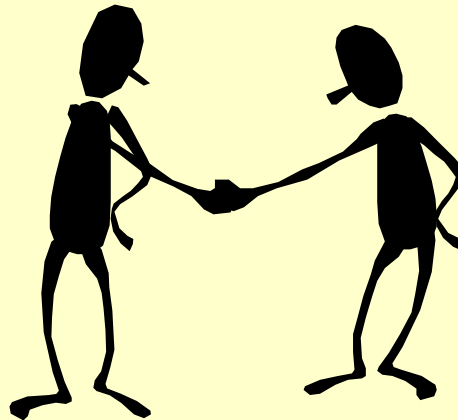


Rights

Shared Responsibility



SHARED RESPONSIBILITY =
reciprocal dialogue +
collaborative decision-making +
co-constructed programs/solutions



IMPLICATIONS

Limitations of existing studies:

Qualitative:

- Small sample sizes limit representation and, therefore, generalizability
- Generally do not examine relations btw family involvement and child outcomes

Quantitative:

- Family involvement measures created with white, middle-income parents
- Individuals are aggregated within large categories (e.g., “Latino”) for cross-group comparison
- Uni-dimensional measures of FI are employed

Implications for future research

- Multidimensional measures
- Culturally relevant constructs and operationalizations
- Co-construction process
- FI across different developmental periods
- Longitudinal designs
- Regression models that incorporate other known correlates of child outcomes
- School variables and the effects on family involvement
- Empirical investigations of programs that work

Implications for Practice & Policy

- Important tensions to address:
 - Cultural discontinuities in current practice
 - Notions of parents' and schools' responsibilities
 - Expert/unilateral dictation versus reciprocal dialogue and collaborative action
- Important areas to develop:
 - Cultural awareness and sensitivity
 - Co-constructed family involvement programs
 - Exchange of quality information on children's development in both home and school contexts

Program considerations:

- Home-based involvement interventions
- Male involvement/outreach
- Workable alternatives for working parents, parents of infants, or parents experiencing high stress
- Bilingual staff and community paraprofessionals
- Building relationships is fundamental to success!!

Establishing **beneficial connections** between families and schools helps to ensure the “readiness” of parents, educators, and children

