Family & Parent Engagement

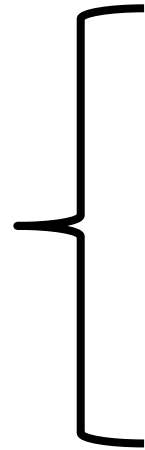## Pratt Institute

Key Terms

- Family-School Partnership
- Parent-Teacher Engagement
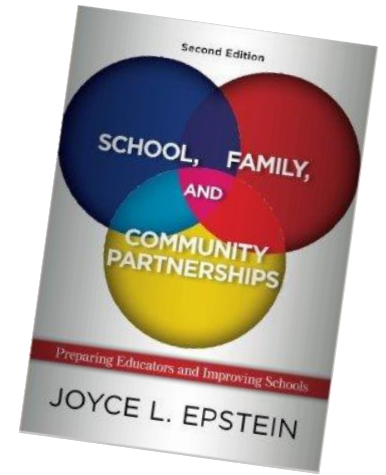- Building Whole-School Capacity

NYC Specific:

- Partnership Support Organizations (Affinity Groups)
- Learning Partners Program

Perspectives on Family-School Relations

Separate
Shared
Sequential

Responsibilities of families and schools

Joyce L. Epstein, 2001

Theory: Symbolic Interactionism

George Herbert Mead

Our self-concept, values and beliefs are influenced by our interaction with others.

Overlapping Spheres of Influence

OUTCOMES

FAMILY
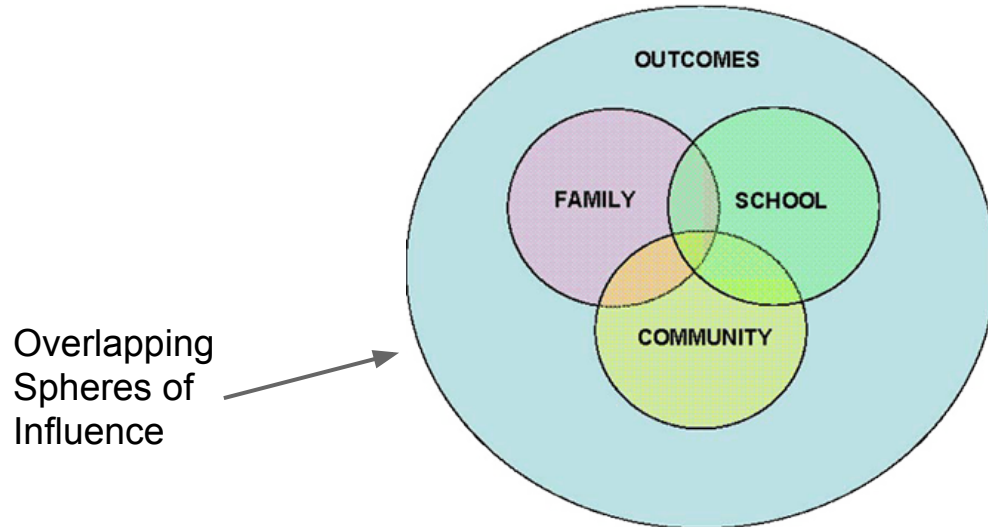
SCHOOL

COMMUNITY

History: From Family to School and Community Control

- 19th Century - families and parents have huge influence on schools; Community leaders hired/paid teachers
- 20th Century - schools becomes separate from home life; socio-cultural changes
- Beginning of 21st Century - reform movements attempt to include parents but are uneven and temporary

Historic Findings - Greater Overlap

- Flow of information/communication with families improves student-teacher relationships
- Collaboration offers more ideas for how to work with students in the home
- Teachers that work with parents are rated higher in their teaching ability
- Student success and test scores improve, especially in reading/writing

How do we cultivate effective family-school partnerships?

Recent Research

Family-School Partnerships

Critical Issues in Forming Family-School Partnerships

- **Authentic partnership**: avoiding one-way communication, reciprocal listening/power sharing
- **Family/Social Context**: Understanding the variety of stressors and barriers to involvement
- **Flexibility**: Taking into account economic and time constraints, diverse linguistic and cultural practices, exclusionary procedures

Summarizes information about parent involvement policies, practices, and programs being implemented at the middle and high school levels in the NE United States

2009 - US DOE

Research Findings: Identified Needs

- Develop written and online guides to help families understand their rights and responsibilities
- Make school facilities available to families and the community
- Provide parent workshops on creating a home environment conducive to learning
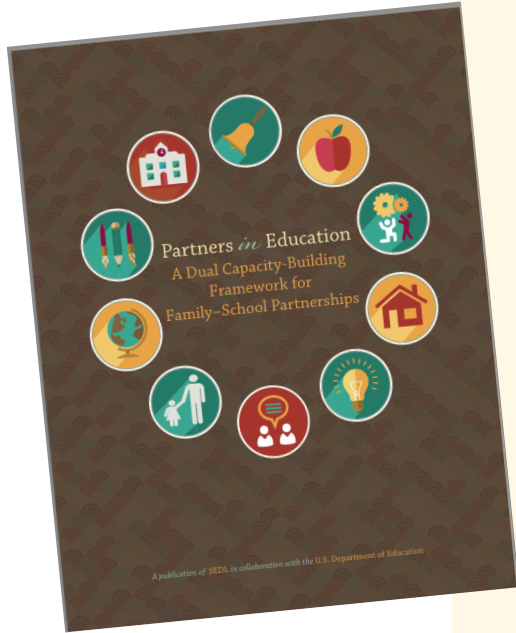
Research Findings: Identified Needs

- Provide professional development to build staff capacity to work with families
- Maintain regularly updated communication channels with information for families
- Support school-based parent organizations
- Hire parent facilitators
- Create a database of parent and community volunteers, noting their talents and interests

Common Practices

- Information exchange
- Special events
- Volunteer opportunities
- Parent education/Professional development for faculty and staff
- Parent centers and/or dedicated staff to reach parents who are not involved
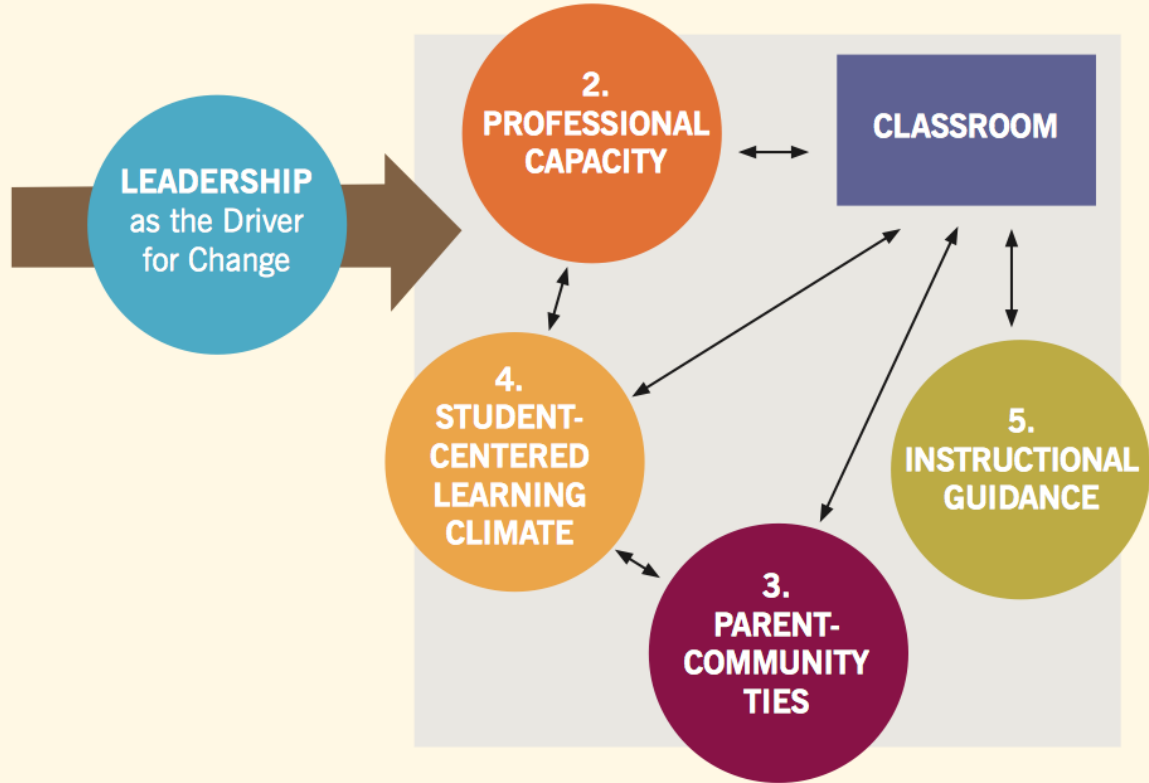
Figure 1: Five Essential Supports
The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research[11]

LEADERSHIP as the Driver for Change

2. PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

CLASSROOM

4. STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING CLIMATE

3. PARENT-COMMUNITY TIES

5. INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDANCE

From *Community Social Capital and School Improvement*, (slide 4) by P. B. Sebring, 2012. Paper presented at the National Community and School Reform Conference at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA. Copyright ©University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR). Reprinted by SEDL with permission from the author, Penny Bender Sebring, CCSR.

[A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family and School Partnerships, US Dept. of ED](#)

DOE Research Findings 2014

Family-School Partnerships are effective if:
- Linked to Learning
- Relational + Build Trust
- Developmental: Build Capacity/Capital over time (sustainable)
- Collaborative Process/Networks
- Interactive and flexible

Example: Academic Parent Teacher Team (APTT)

Parent-Teacher Conference become a series of "team meetings" throughout the year

- More data sharing
- Parents understand goals/objectives of class
- Provided with specific tasks they can do at home to help

Center for Arts Education: Parents As Arts Partners

- Planning sessions with teacher and 5 family arts workshops
- Directly involves students and their families activities
- Connects to the school's arts and education programs
- Provides information about NYC arts organizations
- Empowers parents and school communities to build sustainable school arts programs

Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project

- Teachers are paid to visit the homes of students in their district.
- Pilot program currently focused on middle schools in NYC.

Coalition for Educational Justice

Parent Power School 2015
Organized in March with United Federation of Teachers in Brooklyn. Over 50 parent leaders joined to learn about the New York City system restructure.

Transforming Urban Schools Through Investments in Social Capital

Pedro Noguera

Key Ideas

- Parental involvement is rarely considered holistically in school-reform plans
- Especially in at-risk/low-income communities
- Decline in family involvement reduces the social capital of the neighborhood/school
- Parents add value to schools
- Empowerment not coercion

Forms of Capital - Pierre Bourdieu

Social capital: benefits from one's social group

- based on group membership, relationships, networks of influence and support

Cultural capital: forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has, which give them a higher status in society.

- based on non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means.

Scenario 1: A Frustrated Principal

"...let me tell you, the momma is worse that the daughter. She probably wants to beat them girls up herself. If I see her, she'll just get in my face and start hollering. I really don't need that."

Scenario 2: Code-Switching

To Student: *"Young ladies! Is that the way we carry ourselves in the halls when class in session?...I don't want to hear why you're late. I want to see you walk quietly to the office…"*

To Parent: *"Good morning. I was just telling the girls they have to use their inside voices…."*

Influences of Social/Cultural Capital

Schools that accept low achievement as the norm, or schools that isolate themselves from the neighborhoods they serve undermine the social capital of the community

- families with resources leave
- property values decline
- schools become more isolated

Examining Scenario 1

- Rules are applied rigidly
- Assumptions about behavior as aggressive and hostile without context
- Social distance between principal + parent
- Pattern of treatment is more frequently observed when family is of color/immigrant

Examining Scenario 2

- Power struggle on display
- Presence of middle-class parent changed principal's tone and behavior
- Assumption of lateness without valid excuse

Institutional
Authority

Class, Race,
Gender, Context

POWER ⟷ **SOCIAL
CAPITAL**

Mutual
Accountability &
Ownership

Funds of
Knowledge

Lingering Questions

- What roles do schools play in reproducing inequities?
- How can we engage parents authentically when they aren't viewed as meaningful stakeholders?

Empowerment not Coercion

- Giving parents and students choice/freedom
- Leveraging existing social networks
- Develop structures for mutual accountability between students, parents and teachers
- Use forms of empowerment, and not coercion to motivate sustained involvement

Activity: Family-School Partnerships

Develop an idea for a family-school partnership program, project or activity that involves the art/design classroom.

Must be **Long-Term** or ongoing - including multiple visits or sustained involvement