

HOW SCHOOL PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT INFLUENCE STUDENT SUCCESS

Research Report

By

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DEDICATION

To my loving parents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With special thanks for the support and encouragement from my friends, family, colleagues, and fellow community members of educational leaders, teachers, parents, school board members, volunteers, and advocates; with special thanks for mentorship from Joyce L. Epstein and David Valladolid; and with special thanks for the knowledge and wisdom of my committee members, I extend my sincere appreciation to all who contributed to this quest for knowledge.

PREFACE

Over the past years, my work advising, coaching, and serving schools and organizations helped me develop a particular expertise in the area of school, family and community partnerships. Through this work, my assessment of the importance of partnerships to the daily success of our children in education has only strengthened.

Having served as the director of a parental information and resource center funded by the U.S. Department of Education and having worked with leaders, schools, and organizations throughout the state of California, my understanding of the need for practical, research-based guidance that practitioners can apply in their daily work has crystallized. This important need spurred my investigation to examine this critical area of research.

Although this study took me on a very challenging journey, what I found as a result rewards practitioners, researchers, advocates, and policymakers with fresh insight and new lenses through which to discuss the field. It is an honor to contribute to such a promising field, which stands to deliver notable improvements to our fundamental approach to managing classrooms, schools and beyond, in a way that secures improved results for children.

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INTRODUCTION

Although many studies have statistically shown that parental involvement influences student success, this is the first comprehensive study to measure how schools and families work, as independent and interdependent institutions of equal status, to directly impact student success.

This study clarified, described, and tested the dynamics of the school practitioner in relationship to parental involvement and student success. The *Framework of School-Initiated Practices*, developed for this study, proved useful in measuring practices because it comprehensively defined a set of mutually exclusive components that universally reflect the activities of the school practitioner. These constructs include *outreach, programs and operations, engagement, community building, and support services*.

The universal application of this framework has broad implications. The framework, protocol, and methodology applied in this study enabled improved measurability, accuracy, and clarity. Findings also enabled the closer examination of the existing theory and frameworks, increasing precision and accuracy, and leading to a *Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships*.

Purpose

This study principally examined how school practices to promote parental involvement influence student success.

Research Questions

1. How does parental involvement influence student success?
2. How do school-based practices to promote parental involvement influence parental involvement?
3. How do school-based practices to promote parental involvement influence student success?
4. How do school-based practices and parental involvement practices combine to influence student success?

BACKGROUND

Murphy and Louis (1999), in the *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration*, assert that there is rising sentiment among scholars and educators that over the past century schools have grown increasingly isolated from parents and community, a result stemming from major flaws of past reform efforts. They call for educators to reverse this dynamic by building a viable sense of community within their schools in an effort to improve educational results for children. Federal education policy also recognizes the need to reverse this trend and calls on schools to implement comprehensive parent involvement programs in the interest of promoting student achievement and success.

Key empirical research and reviews include over 350 studies showing a direct correlation between student success and parental involvement. Research also shows that school practices impact involvement. James P. Comer (1980), in *School Power*, suggests that powerful learning results come from management models that consider the well-being of the whole child and stress comprehensive parent/community involvement. Henderson and Berla's (1994) respected work, *A New Generation of Evidence*, shows a convincing link between parent involvement and student success. This document reviews the findings of 66 studies, reports, analyses, and books in the area of family, community and school partnerships. They find the evidence beyond dispute. "When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. School, family, and community partnerships improve student achievement and success." The conclusion is that when schools encourage parental involvement, students, families and schools do better. This review also shows that building a viable sense of community within schools is not a simple charge, as practitioners must bridge barriers, measure effort, and provide members clearer preparation and guidance.

Henderson and Mapp's (2002) review of 51 select studies, *A New Wave of Evidence*, concurs with Henderson's earlier work and concludes that programs and special efforts to engage families make a difference, but recommends further study that is more rigorous and focused. They find that the field needs to better describe how practices affect engagement and student achievement from multiple perspectives. Don Davies, Founder, Institute for Responsive Education, provides the foreword to this synthesis and states that, "Many educators say that they need practical, workable strategies for reaching out to families and sustaining their involvement." Davies observes that a current limitation of this field is the dearth of experimental or quasi-experimental studies.

These sentiments are described further in the *Annual Synthesis* (2001) from the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory by Jordan, Orozco, and Averett, whose review of over 160 select studies finds similar concerns. The synthesis concludes that the field needs clearer frameworks to better test relationships and address issues of unclear and overlapping definitions of concepts, thereby gaining greater understanding of the predictors and impacts of these relationships. The authors assert that clearer frameworks linked to theory that measure school-initiated practices would help the field develop precise definitions, establish concrete evidence about relationships and impacts, and

provide practitioners with reliable guidance and practical approaches to improve student success. Part of the problem in statistically measuring and studying the influences of school-initiated practice rests in the lack of discrete frameworks that delineate independent roles of school, family, and community members as effective partners in supporting student success. This study focuses on these concerns by asking the question: What happens when research reorganizes existing theory through a new lens?

METHODOLOGY

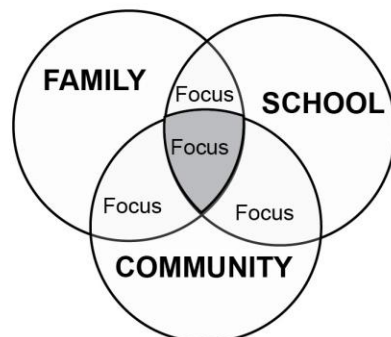
Theoretical Basis

An adaptation of Epstein's (2001) *Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence of School, Family, and Community on Children's Learning (External Structure)* served as the basis of this research (See Figure A). This figure shows the existence of separate school, family, and community spheres that affect the lives of children. Each has the independent ability to move closer or further apart from the other spheres, and each has equal status. The greater the overlap among spheres, the greater the partnership and student success. Epstein's framework focuses on the areas of overlap to describe how the spheres may work together.

This research required a different focus (See Figure B), where the independent roles of each sphere were separately categorized into clear and precise frameworks. This was prerequisite to statistical testing. This study was the first to test the influence of sphere movement on student success, which was accomplished through the development of frameworks that contained discrete, mutually exclusive elements enabling measurement in a reliable and manageable way.

Figure A

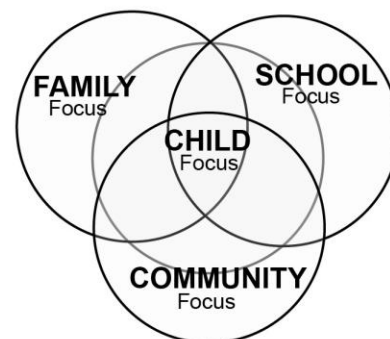
Overlapping Spheres of Influence of School, Family, and Community on Children's Learning



Source: J. L. Epstein (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships*.

Figure B

Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships



Source: J. D. Martin (2009). *How school practices to promote parental involvement influence student success*.

Measurement of the Family Sphere

This study adopted and tested Epstein's *Six Types of Parent Involvement Framework* to describe the family (parent) sphere. This helpful typology of parent involvement categorizes those activities that parents can do, and schools can encourage them to do, which research shows promotes student success. These types are listed below:

- 1) *Parenting* – helping all families understand child and adolescent development, and establish home environments that support children as students;
- 2) *Communicating* – designing and conducting effective forms of communication about school programs and children's progress;
- 3) *Volunteering* – recruiting and organizing help and support for school functions and activities;
- 4) *Learning at home* – providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and curriculum-related activities and decisions;
- 5) *Decision-making* – including parent representatives and all families in school decisions; and
- 6) *Collaborating with the community* – identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen and support schools, students and their families.

Epstein's typology is a leading framework through which to study this field. The typology describes reasonably distinct parent involvement practices in degrees, starting with a basic form of involvement (parenting), and leading to a very advanced form (collaboration). In later sections, this study advances a new research-based *Framework of Seven Parent-initiated Practices to Promote Learning and Development* that focuses solidly on the family sphere.

It is important to observe that Epstein's typology views involvement through a paradigm of parent-based practice, not school-based practice. Because schools are not designed for "parenting" or "learning at home," the promotion of parental involvement by schools through this typology, although seemingly plausible and very likely helpful, becomes quickly convoluted. For example, when a school provides parents with a workshop on curriculum standards, how would someone classify this activity within the typology? Where would the hiring of a parent coordinator be classified?

The attempt to answer these questions shows that the Epstein framework does not provide for easy classification of school-initiated practices in a comprehensive manner, which makes coordination complicated. Furthermore, measurement of the school sphere requires discrete and mutually exclusive categories of clearly defined practices from the practitioners' perspective.

Measurement of the School Sphere

This study uses the *Framework of Five Types of School-initiated Practices to Promote School, Family, and Community Partnerships* to measure the practices of the school sphere. Developed for this study, this framework: establishes mutually exclusive categories; applies to the whole school sphere, not just an action team or coordinator; enables actions to become culturally integrated into the school's operating practices, thereby institutionally self-replicating; and provides for consistent, collaborative and concerted efforts that persist over time and are not based upon any single person. This framework was derived from a review of empirical research as well as descriptive/exploratory research conducted for this study and is composed of the following elements:

- 1) *Outreach* – efforts that focus on enrolling the participation of parents, students and community members in the educational process to promote learning and development;
- 2) *Programs and operations* – efforts that inform, develop, and/or unify the school community as partners in the educational process, preparing able participants to become active contributors;
- 3) *Engagement* – direct person-to-person interactions that facilitate, support and reward the involvement of parents in the education of their children;
- 4) *Community building* – direct efforts that expand the availability of enrichment opportunities for students in support of learning, physical and social development, health, safety, and citizenship; and
- 5) *Support services* – efforts that provide targeted support for students and their families.

Research Design

Using a mixed-methods approach centered on a causal-comparative (*ex post facto*) design, data sources included: parent and teacher surveys, school site visits, parent focus groups, and secondary databases. The sample included 598 randomly selected students whose parents and teachers were administered coded surveys. The school district provided student data. To control for the variance of extraneous variables, a highly homogenous Title I elementary school district (K-6) of ten schools located in Southern California, known for strong leadership, quality teaching, and strong community involvement, served as the sampling frame. Independent samples *t*-tests were applied using the statistical software called SPSS. Highest and lowest performing groups were identified using 25th percentiles as cut points, which enabled the testing of research questions (hypotheses testing).

Survey instruments created by Joyce L. Epstein and Karen Clark Salinas (1993), titled *Surveys of School and Family Partnerships: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in Elementary and Middle Grades*, were adapted and administered to parents and teachers. The Epstein and Clark survey instruments had been implemented in many schools across the United States and tested for reliability.

Additionally, school site visits by the researcher for this study followed an exploratory and descriptive approach that enabled key school sphere constructs of practice to be explored, categorized, and measured. School-initiated practices were documented using a structured instrument titled *Inventory of School-initiated Practices Protocol*, which reflected the researcher's synthesis of empirical research describing the school sphere. This exercise demanded precise categorization and description of construct dynamics related to school practices.

The first part of this examination enabled the categorization of all observed and documented practices gathered from each of the ten schools, which informed the creation of precise definitions that guided the coding of survey variables. The second part of this examination involved the aggregation of all observed practices of the ten schools into a district-wide compilation, which enabled the quantitative measurement of each school.

This compilation allowed the researcher to describe how each school compared with the aggregate in percentage terms and thus with each other. The result was a broad descriptive view of construct dynamics, which was then compared to a blind study of highest and lowest performing schools.

Quantitative and qualitative descriptive data were derived from surveys, focus groups, and site visit interviews, observations, and document reviews. All data was compared using a concurrent triangulation strategy, guided by the study's theoretical research model, definitions, and frameworks.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study establishes a precise and reliable methodological approach to testing school, family, and community partnerships. This study contributes fresh frameworks, parent and teacher survey instruments, an inventory of school-initiated practices protocol, and a newly focused theoretical *Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships*.

This research provides practitioners concrete insight into how to promote partnerships to improve student success, build sustainable comprehensive involvement, and achieve institutionalized system-wide change in schools. It further provides parents/guardians, community members, and students with clearer guidance they may use to promote their success as a partner in education. Data resulting from this approach enabled closer examination and critique of existing frameworks, constructs, definitions, and models.

Researchers, community stakeholders, policymakers, and leaders may apply the research-based findings, instruments, and protocols as well as the supporting model to achieve greater gains for children. The tested research-based vocabulary can be applied broadly to assure clearer communication. The resulting frameworks, parent and teacher survey instruments, and inventory of school-initiated practices protocol may be applied to assist the learning community with improved guidance, coordination, and measurement so that they may achieve increased student success through stronger school, family, and community partnerships.

DEFINITIONS

Parent

For the purposes of this study, the term *parent* is adopted from the California State Board of Education's policy on parental involvement, which defines the term as that person who acts as the primary caretaker and legal guardian of a child, be it a mother, father, grandparent, aunt, foster parent or other. This term includes all people who perform the duties of parenthood. The term *Parental* describes such characteristics.

Community

The term *community* has three general uses. It may refer to a group having common characteristics or interests, or that resides in a common area. It may refer to all stakeholders who comprise the broader *school community*. These members include students, parents/guardians/families, teachers, principals, classified staff, district staff, associations, school board members, service providers, and other contributing members. This term may also refer specifically to the *community sphere* construct depicted in the *Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships*. These members may belong to any autonomous agency, organization, or business, organized formally or informally, who are not represented by the family sphere or school sphere. Examples of such organizations include PTAs, hospitals, fire departments, research facilities, companies and the like.

Parental Involvement

The term *parental involvement* is adopted from the National PTA (2000), *Building Successful Partnerships*, where it is described as “[t]he participation of parents [families] in every facet of children’s education and development from birth to adulthood, recognizing that parents [families] are the primary influence in children’s lives.”

For this study, the term *parental involvement* may also be referred to as a part of *family, school, and community partnerships, family involvement, community involvement, community connections, or engagement*. These terms are reasonably interchangeable as long as the involvement they encourage is focused upon children’s learning and development.

School-Initiated Practice and Practitioners

The term *school-initiated practice* refers to action performed on behalf of the school, by school personnel, school supported volunteers, or school contracted

organizations (*practitioners*). The term *school personnel* refers to employees of the school or district serving the interest and working on behalf of the school. The term *school supported volunteers* refers to non-paid individuals organized formally or informally who perform activities with support of the school, including parent volunteers. The term *school contracted organizations* refers to employees or volunteers of an organization as contracted through the school or district that supports the school through the provision of services on the school's behalf.

Involvement

The term *involvement* refers to the degree to which individuals apply the school, family, and community partnership approach to their raising of or work with children.

Student Success

The term *student success* refers to the extent to which students perform on assessments and measures concerning the learning and development of the whole child (Comer, 1980).

Outreach

The term *outreach* refers to efforts that focus on enrolling the participation of parents, students and community members in the educational process to promote learning and development. Outreach activities enable the school community to expand its base of support and build relationships. Through these efforts, practitioners welcome, value, and inform all members. These activities contribute to a climate of support, mutual respect, and trust based upon the recognition that all members influence student learning and development. To determine the full scope of these activities, consider messages conveyed through school conditions, person-to-person contacts, web sites, newsletters, mailers, bulletin boards, marquees, flyers, newspaper articles, other media, as well as their cultural/linguistic responsiveness.

Programs and Operations

The term *programs and operations* refers to direct efforts that inform, develop, and/or unify the school community as partners in the educational process, preparing able participants to become active contributors. *Program activities* refer to those efforts that take place at a particular point in time, occurring in the form of orientations, conferences, workshops, and trainings. These activities build knowledge, skills and abilities. *Operational activities* refer to those efforts that occur on a regular and ongoing basis to promote collaborative decision-making and implementation. Examples include hosting open policy meetings, working in support of volunteer leadership (i.e., PTA or other such

parent/teacher/community organizations, sometimes referred to as PTO), and initiating/coordinating community involvement and volunteer plans.

Research shows that these activities are most effective when organized in the best interest of all children, are held frequently, are well planned, and are of high quality. Such practices result in open communication channels, trusting cooperative relationships, common understandings, clear expectations, depth of leadership talent, and improved abilities to address and problem-solve concerns. These factors are essential to any well functioning system of education that supports democratic participation and child advocacy.

In the interest of building relationships, discussions between home and school best occur in the parent's native language. Further, it is important that practitioners identify and bridge barriers to attendance and participation by providing for translation/interpretation, childcare, transportation, refreshments, coverage, and other such support as may be necessary. When planning, practitioners have most success when activities are prioritized based upon the needs of students, as well as their expected and expressed measurable impacts. Additionally, the needs and limitations of both teachers and parents must be well understood and considered in program design.

Engagement

The term *engagement* refers to direct person-to-person interactions that facilitate, support and reward the involvement of parents in the education of their children. These efforts further extend to those activities that mobilize the school community to work in support of student learning and development. For example, a teacher and parent demonstrate engagement when they constructively discuss the academic advancement of a child. A community coordinator demonstrates engagement with volunteers when together they measure progress toward goals. Full engagement of the school community requires that members be empowered with the information, skills, and support they need to execute their roles competently.

Community Building

The term *community building* refers to direct efforts that expand the availability of enrichment opportunities for students in support of learning, physical and social development, health, safety, and citizenship. These activities build social capital within the school community because when stakeholders work collaboratively, as advocates, to assure that children live in safe, healthy, and supportive communities that provide many opportunities to explore, play, participate, and experiment, stronger relationships develop. In advanced stages, practitioners recognize the importance of building powerful relationships with community leaders, community-based organizations, and other service agencies, as these relationships may bring additional resources to the school and enable strategic coordination. Combined, these activities empower the school community to embrace the traditions, values and assets of the local community and employ cohesive

relationships in a way that either enriches and expands curriculum and instruction, or extends educational and developmental opportunities for children.

Support Services

The term *support services* refers to efforts that provide targeted support for students and their families. These efforts recognize that when families experience times of isolation, difficulty, stress, and/or crisis, schools must attempt to reinforce resiliency factors supporting children. Practitioners may develop collaborative partnerships with community groups to help address identified needs of children and their families.

LIMITATIONS

Given the complexities of influences contributing to student success and parent involvement, and the resource limitations of this particular study, this research focuses on the relationships between the three primary constructs of school, family, and student success, within a homogenous sample frame of one Title I elementary (K-6) school district consisting of ten schools. It does not examine in depth many other factors related to successful partnership programs such as contextual factors or leadership and management issues (i.e., planning, resource allocation, empowerment, and evaluation).

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Parent involvement in their children's education contributes to their children's success in school and life.
2. When school, families, and communities work together, they work in the interest of their children.
3. As public schools shift toward new paradigms of organization that foster parental involvement, students will do better in school and life.
4. The parent and teacher relationship is the critical unit of educational support for students. The true school-community is built through this relationship. When influencing these two distinct units, the whole of the community is also influenced.
5. Schools work interdependently with the home environment.
6. There exists discrete constructs for organizing school-based practices that extend beyond existing parent-based models of involvement.
7. Extraneous variables have known effects on the sample.
8. Given adequate controls for extraneous variables, sufficient variation in the data will remain, allowing for hypothesis testing.
9. Site observations elicit an equally accurate understanding of conditions at each school.

10. The parent involvement framework proposed by Joyce L. Epstein is comprehensive.
11. The framework of school-initiated practices synthesized for this study applies universally to all practitioners within the educational system.
12. In Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence, all spheres play independent roles and are capable of independent movement.
13. A person may concurrently perform as a representative in multiple spheres at any single point in time.
14. Individuals represented by the spheres of influence work in the best interest of the development of the whole child.
15. This research applies to schools operating within the U.S. Educational System.

KEY FINDINGS SYNTHESIS

Powerful implications for school practitioners emerged from this research.

- Independent samples *t*-tests showed practices to promote involvement have a statistically significant influence on student success. Practices were defined by the *Framework of School-initiated Practices to Promote School, Family, and Community Partnerships*, which included the elements of *outreach, programs and operations, engagement, community building, and support services*.
- Highest performing schools and practitioners invest more time and resources, and are more skilled in building school, family, and community partnerships. They also demonstrate a superior organizational capacity, enabling them to mobilize the community on a regular basis.
- When practitioners work in isolation from their students' families, parent involvement declines to the detriment of student success.
- Highest performing schools and practitioners value partnerships as an asset, encouraging community-wide contributions and thereby resulting in increased involvement, higher student success, and ultimately better schools.
- When practitioners work to include parents as equal partners in education, investing time and resources to develop their involvement strategically in ways that intend clear impacts for learning and development, parents increase involvement in ways that benefit children.
- By facilitating and supporting involvement, highest performing schools and teachers are better at engaging in direct person-to-person interactions with parents.
- Partnership practices commonly and consistently applied in a concerted manner become culturally engrained in the school community, optimizing involvement in the interest of helping students thrive.

HOW DOES PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT INFLUENCE STUDENT SUCCESS?

Students of more highly involved parents/guardians (hereafter referred to as parents) outperformed students of less involved parents. Statistical tests were guided by Epstein's *Six Types of Parent Involvement Framework*, which includes the elements of *parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration*. In the testing of this research question, these six types served as independent variables, while student success measures served as dependent variables (See Appendix: Hypotheses Testing).

All statistically significant tests showed direct relationships between parental involvement and student success. In addition, direct relationships existed between the aggregated construct of parent involvement and each student success variable. A few indirect relationships appeared, but these were not statistically significant findings. Survey results and parent focus group data helped to further describe statistical findings.

Parental Involvement Influences Student Success

Teachers overwhelmingly voiced the importance of parental involvement to student success. In open-ended comments, teachers wrote that when parents and teachers work together, students become more engaged, parents become more supportive of teachers, and teachers become more knowledgeable of families, while community involvement helps enrich curriculum and generate resource support. However, survey data suggested parental support was lower than some teachers might have traditionally expected. Teachers and other school-based practitioners must be cautioned not to assume that visibly low parental involvement reflects low values for education. Such areas of concern are better explained by differences in role expectations.

Differing Expectations Impact the Developmental Progress of Students

When comparing teacher and parent survey responses, differences often appeared in terms of what they understood to constitute sufficient parental support, with teachers tending to rate parental practices at lower levels when compared to similar parent responses. Clearly, parent respondents placed a great value on education and showed a strong willingness to support their children in education. A strong majority of parents attended conferences and school events. Parents reported preparing their children for school, and teaching their children about appropriate school behavior and the value of education. Teacher responses generally suggest low support from home. In this data set, what teachers may have viewed as low support was most likely related to misunderstandings in expectations between teachers and parents in terms of what constitutes effective and appropriate support. As important a factor involvement is to student success, this failure to establish clear expectations regarding the roles and

responsibilities of teachers and parents not only influenced their working relationships, but also affected the developmental process of students.

Parental Advocacy Leads to More Effective Communication with Teachers

When parents understand their roles as advocates for their children and become equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to help their children succeed, they work more closely with teachers as partners and their interactions are more likely to focus on the well-being of their children. In this study, teachers expressed that most parents were involved in traditional parent-teacher conferences. However, teachers reported that most parents were reluctant to share with them the problems their children were facing or ask for specific ideas on how to help their children at home. Additionally, most teachers believed that many parents lacked a sufficient understanding of what their children were expected to learn. Conversely, only a few parents seemed knowledgeable about what their children were expected to learn, and were willing to share their problems or ask for helpful ideas. Thus, only a few teachers and parents appeared to be communicating in ways directly meaningful to student success. In this study, the theme of advocacy emerged as an important practice parents perform that affects student success. Parents are advocates when they understand and embrace their rights and responsibilities in the U.S. Educational System, understand how to navigate the educational system, and understand how to measure their children's progress in school.

Parental Awareness, Knowledge, and Skill Influences Student Success

When parents are aware, knowledgeable, and skillful, they serve as strong advocates for their children in the educational system and their children are more likely to succeed. When parents lack the awareness, knowledge, and skills required to help their children, their children's success is adversely impacted. In this study, teachers clearly expressed that most parents did not know how to help their children with schoolwork and many lacked strong subject-matter skills. Parent focus groups and parent surveys showed that parents needed and desired more information on ways to help their children. Math was of particular interest.

An interesting, statistically significant low-to-moderate negative correlation was found between student success variables and the parent's perception of their child's performance on schoolwork. In other words, parents with higher performing children tended to have lower opinions of their children's actual performance in school and parents with lower performing children tended to have higher opinions of their children's performance in school. The better a parent reported their child's performance on schoolwork, the worse the child's actual performance was on student success variables. There appears to be a knowledge gap potentially contributing to what has been termed as the *achievement gap*. Data from this study supports teachers' concern that many parents do not know how to help their children succeed in school. Clearly, when parents have a

more sophisticated set of skills, they can use more discretion in assessing the progress of their children.

Teachers acknowledged that schools needed to support parents in their roles and help them overcome barriers. Parent survey respondents and parent focus group participants provided similar responses. Parents were greatly concerned that their children be well educated, successful, and well cared for in a safe environment. They expressed great willingness to volunteer, increase the support they give their children, work more closely with their child's teacher, and expand their personal skills if this would help their children and the school. When school practitioners invest in support for parents, schools simultaneously invest in support for students.

HOW DO SCHOOL-INITIATED PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT INFLUENCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT?

When Practitioners Actively Involve Parents, They Have More Highly Involved Parents

Using the *Framework of School-initiated Practice* (which includes the element of *outreach, programs and operations, engagement, community building, and support services*) as independent variables, and Epstein's *Six Types of Parent Involvement Framework* (which includes the elements of *parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making, and collaboration*) as dependent variables, all statistically significant tests showed that higher performing practitioners benefited from more highly involved parents. Correlations confirmed direct relationships (See Appendix: Hypotheses Testing). This is powerful evidence showing that when practitioners invest time in *outreach, programs and operations, engagement, community building, and support services*, parents increase involvement in meaningful ways that positively affect children.

For this particular question, data summarized during school site visits and measured using the *Inventory of School-initiated Practices Protocol* provided particularly interesting insights into the test data. Overall, the highest performing schools invested more time and resources in building school, family and community partnerships, while the lowest performing schools invested more time and resources in providing targeted intervention support for students, a result of their isolation from their community.

Highest Performing Schools Enrolled Support through Personalized Outreach

To summarize outreach practices, inventory data showed that the highest performing schools enrolled support through personalized outreach. These schools

created a more inviting climate by centering actions on a shared vision and forming respectful, trusting and personalized relationships, while the lowest performing schools were less united by a shared commitment to excellence, and were slightly more impersonal. The top schools involved all stakeholders in the learning process, had committed people, high expectations, and shared vision/values as a basis for all they did, in sharp contrast to the lowest performing schools. When schools are dedicated to excellence as expressed through committed people with high expectations and shared vision/values, parents participate in more meaningful ways that affect student success.

Highest Performing Schools Invested in the Development of Involvement through Program and Operational Practices

Upon close examination of the program and operations practices, it is clear that when practitioners help parents build skills and understanding, parents become involved at higher levels and perhaps in ways that are more sophisticated. Inventory data showed that the highest performing schools were better at supporting families through more workshop offerings. Further, the highest performing schools generally took more initiative in organizing and mobilizing their community on a regular basis. To summarize the programs and operations component, the highest performing schools offered more programs in support of parents and families, while demonstrating a superior organizational capacity. This enabled these schools to mobilize their community on a regular and ongoing basis. Contrary to the highest performing schools, which were more likely to establish agreements directly with their families, the lowest performing group was more likely to have formed partnership agreements with other organizations. The highest performing schools invested more time and attention into program and operational practices that extended opportunities for community members to build knowledge, skills and abilities and become partners in the school community. When practitioners work to actively include parents as equal partners in education and invest time and resources to develop their involvement, parents increase involvement in ways more meaningful to student success.

Highest Performing Schools Facilitated and Supported the Engagement of Parents in the Education of their Children

Upon examination of engagement practices, it is clear that when teachers engage parents in the education of their children through direct one-on-one interactions, such as verification, confirmation, and discussion, and support parents through activities such as modeling and encouragement, parent involvement increases in ways meaningful to student success. Inventory data showed the highest performing schools were better at engaging in direct person-to-person interactions that facilitated and supported involvement. The lowest performing schools focused on providing formal reward and recognition programs where benefits were distributed ceremoniously during school-wide events. While the highest performing schools also rewarded engagement, they were more effective in all areas of engagement, as demonstrated through the actions of more

community members, at all levels of the school. The lowest performing schools neglected to facilitate and support engagement in many key sub-categories. The highest performing schools had more highly involved communities, engaged on a personal, frequent, regular, one-on-one level focused around the concerns of student success.

Highest Performing Schools Focused Community-Building Practices on Student Learning and Development

In considering community-building practices, which capture those activities that expand the availability of enrichment opportunities for students in support of their learning and development, important distinctions between the highest and lowest performing schools were noted. Inventory data showed that higher performing schools were better at working collaboratively to support curriculum and instruction using a wider variety of strategies. Additionally, the highest performing schools took a more personalized approach with a focus on student learning and development, while the lowest performing schools focused community involvement efforts at a school-wide level using more formal, and perhaps more impersonal, approaches as seen by the reliance of formally structured activities. Further, the highest performing schools not only had more community members working and volunteering in their schools than the lowest performing schools, they also had more school community members working and volunteering to serve their surrounding communities.

Low Performing Schools Dedicated More Time and Resources to Student Supports

Upon examination of the support services component, inventory data showed that the lowest performing schools invested substantially more resources in academic assistance for students. These assistance programs included activities such as supplemental teacher support, student study team meetings, special discipline programs, other special programs (such as homework clubs), and intervention meetings. These types of support programs required coordination, staffing, and time on behalf of principals, counselors, specialists, and teachers. In contrast, these same schools offered very little in the way of workshops for parents. Although they promoted their local community resource centers and devoted more time reaching out to other agencies than higher performing schools, they spent substantially less time building relationships with parents and engaging them as partners in their children's own learning.

It is not that support services fail to work. Instead, the data shows that the lowest performing schools seemed to see parent involvement activities as extra activities external to the education and development of their students. It seemed as though they viewed their parent community as a liability that needed to be compensated for in their professional programs. Learning was not the center of parental involvement efforts at these schools; instead, their efforts to build relationships centered on school-wide events not always designed as learning and development gains for students. Further, these schools tended to bring parents into intervention meetings concerning performance issues

related to their children; this is a practice not conducive to positive community relations over the long term. A school's community is not a liability, but rather an asset. This data suggests the more effective approach is to invest amply in building partnerships with parents and structuring many opportunities to turn good relationships into learning support for students.

Top Schools Build the Capacity of Stakeholders to Support Learning

When practitioners work in isolation from their students' families, parent involvement declines to the detriment of student success. This interesting dynamic represents a common theme identified throughout the data. Highest performing schools focused on building the capacity of the whole school community in support of learning. These schools were better at building interpersonal relationships, developing a common vision, offering more parenting classes, developing compacts with their families, engaging the community through facilitation and support, and focusing community building activities around curriculum, instruction, and student enrichment. Lowest performing schools lacked the community cohesion critical to an inviting school climate. They offered substantially fewer workshops for families and their practices reflected a lack of engagement of their parent community with one exception: they offered more rewards, material incentives and family fun activities on campus. Higher performing schools developed a team-based culture where everyone plays a part, whereas lower performing schools exhibited an individualistic culture where educators (with the best intent) work alone on the issues that they feel matter most for children. The team approach reflects the culturally engrained posture of the highest performing schools.

HOW DO SCHOOL-BASED PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT INFLUENCE STUDENT SUCCESS?

Practitioners Who Promote Involvement, Promote Student Success

All statistically significant tests found direct relationships between practitioners' activities to promote parent involvement and student success variables. All of the 24 tests revealed direct relationships between these independent and dependent variables, with the exception of one (See Appendix: Hypotheses Testing).

The synthesis provided in the prior question sheds significant perspective into these findings. These test results were supported by the vast amounts of descriptive data that demonstrated the necessity that schools work to promote involvement to impact student success. When practitioners promote parent involvement strategically in ways that intend clear impacts for learning and development, students benefit.

Practitioners Active and Skillful in Promoting Involvement Promoted Student Success

One meta-theme not previously discussed is the differences in approach that teachers and practitioners apply related to parent involvement. There was statistically significant variability between high performing practitioners and low performing practitioners. This suggests that when practitioners are more aware, knowledgeable, and/or skillful in their abilities to promote involvement, they achieve greater results for children. This dynamic opens a very interesting area for future study.

HOW DO SCHOOL-BASED PRACTICES AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES COMBINE TO INFLUENCE STUDENT SUCCESS?

Although tests found no statistically significant differences, these tests, which combine all constructs of school practices and parental involvement into one construct of comprehensive involvement, suggest that the greater the community partnership, the greater the results for children (See Appendix: Hypotheses Testing). An examination of the means between highest performing groups and lowest performing groups shows substantial differences. Although the low number of resulting cases limited the power of this investigation, this would be an interesting examination to continue given a larger sample. It would be difficult to dispute that when practitioners and families work together in meaningful ways that support learning and development, children perform at higher levels.

DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

Partnerships Positively Impact Student Success

This research shows convincingly that students of practitioners who work actively to promote family, school, and community partnerships perform significantly better than students of less active practitioners. There is little question about the practitioners' impact. The methods applied in this study resulted in powerful new evidence and support for existing research that shows direct relationships between school practices and parental involvement. This study organized, described, and explained the dynamics of school practices as related to influences on parents and students, and showed that parental involvement should not be incidental or extra. Parental involvement is an integral part of student success that school practitioners may significantly influence for positive results.

The Blueprint for Building Bridges between Worlds

These findings help guide practitioners as a blueprint that serves to build bridges between spheres or worlds. The tested *Framework of School-initiated Practices* and corresponding *Inventory of School-initiated Practices Protocol*, and *Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* proposed in the last discussion section of this paper may be applied by any and all practitioners of the school community, including principals, teachers, parent leaders, volunteers, classified staff, contracted support, and other community members. Individuals or whole communities may apply these instruments. They serve to organize a wealth of important research through the practitioners' viewpoint with advanced levels of clarity and specificity. They can be applied to guide planning, assessment, and management. This research suggests that when practitioners work to commonly and consistently implement these practices, and practices become culturally engrained in the school community, synergistic, collaborative partnerships may then be fostered and optimized in the interest of helping students thrive. The goal is comprehensive involvement exemplified by increases in sphere overlap.

Practitioners Must Embrace Democratic Schooling and the Equal Status of All Members

This research suggests that practitioners should reject traditionally conforming models of school management, which assume the school staff knows what is best for students, parents, and communities. Instead, practitioners should apply transformational models of school management that embrace democratic schooling and that recognize and value the equal status of members of the school community. These approaches better position the school community to understand and correct conditions and practices that hinder the development of the school community in the interest of advancing student success.

Schools Work Better When They Respect the Inherent Nature of Partnerships

Highest performing schools and practitioners engaged in more practices that demonstrated their value of involvement and encouraged contributions from all members of the school community, resulting in increased involvement, higher student success, and ultimately better schools. The theoretical basis of this research asserts that both the family sphere of influence and the school sphere of influence have an independent and direct influence on student success; thus, an inherent partnership exists. Both are equal in status. This research suggests that school management models, pedagogy, and planning and implementation approaches are best when they recognize as a basic underlying principle the equal status of the home and school in shaping all policies, programs, and roles as these systems strive for excellence in inspiring learning and respect. Schools should work with, not against, this fundamental dynamic.

Practitioners Need Skills in Building School, Family, and Community Partnerships

This research further shows that the highest performing teachers and school practitioners were more skilled at working in partnership with parents. This significant finding was derived in part from the examination of comments by teachers, which suggested that many lacked ways to describe their different types of communications with parents and families. Some appeared to lack awareness of the possibilities and capabilities parents, families, and community may provide. Clearly, there was statistically significant variance in practices between teachers; in fact, this was an assumption underlying this study. Further examination is in order that reviews how well institutions of higher education are preparing our next generation of principals and teachers to build school, family, and community partnerships for student success. With sufficient training and support, practitioners have the power to energize members, embrace democratic schooling, commit to the civic mission of schools, and strengthen belief in the power of people working together.

Democratic Schools Lead Communities into the Age of Voice

As we leave what is known as the *Information Age* and enter into what this researcher terms a new *Age of Voice*, the evolution from conforming models of school management to transformational models of school management is a natural progression. For example, today, people do more than access information and view entertainment; they share and create their own material centered upon their personal views, histories, and characteristics in real time. Through blogs, networks, web sites, digital information, and video streaming, people express, connect, relate, play and entrain with the rest of the world like never before. People today can immediately give voice to their ideas, dreams, creations, views, worlds, and histories without the filters, borders, or gatekeepers of the past. Students of schools that are based upon the democratic schooling model will be better prepared for their futures than students of schools that retain conforming models because the democratic schooling model inherently recognizes and values their voice, their existence, and their contributions, giving them confidence and fortitude to lead in this new and evolving age.

Democratic schooling requires school practitioners to build systems that support democratic participation and representation of all stakeholder groups, build two-way channels of communication, and encourage expression of thought. Practitioners should welcome debate and the presentation of ideas, and provide appropriate public forums and procedures. School leaders should structure appropriate private channels to listen to, understand, and resolve complaints and conflict, which must be fortified and developed as a natural and serious part of our system. As we transform to a new era, the role of school leader transforms from manager to that of a facilitator of the democratic process. Helping community members come together and participate in representative government supports the mission of schools and ensures a well-educated and active public.

DISCUSSION ON METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The theoretical basis, frameworks, instruments, and protocols of this study provided valuable perspective. Epstein's external model of overlapping spheres of influence, Epstein's typology of parenting practices, Epstein and Salina's parent and teacher surveys, the *Framework of School-initiated Practices*, and the *Inventory of School-initiated Practices Protocol* provided exceptional insight in the testing of research questions and in describing key activities as related to involvement and student success. Overall, the instruments were reliable measures of school, family, and community partnership dynamics. The instruments sufficiently measured most of the key constructs. Given the unique approach in this study to measure sphere activities, some changes would be helpful for future examinations of a similar nature.

As this study uniquely described and measured the independent sphere movement, this research suggests the following improvements to future instruments that serve to test these distinct spheres. The survey instruments would be easier to implement if variables were reorganized by constructs and questions focused on the actions, skills, knowledge or capabilities applicable to a given construct. Many parent and teacher survey questions focused on opinions. The questions referring directly to actions, knowledge, awareness, skills, and capability proved most reliable and provided the most valuable insight into the research questions.

It would be helpful to have a greater number of clearly related questions to measure all constructs, in a more balanced fashion. While the parent and teacher surveys had many questions related to *empowerment* and *learning at home* constructs, more focused questions would be helpful in the area of *volunteering*, *decision-making*, *collaboration*, or *support services* for this study. For example, the questionnaires did not illuminate if parents understood that they could volunteer to help the school, if they were aware of what a volunteer does at a school, or if parents were willing or able to volunteer. The parent survey further did not ask if parents had signed up as volunteers, had offered to volunteer, or had been provided with a chance to volunteer. Clearer variables representative of volunteering practices would help improve the measurement of the construct of volunteering. In terms of decision-making and collaboration, these sections require more questions focused on direct actions, skills, abilities and awareness to glean greater insight into research questions related to these constructs. Further, the construct of collaboration seemed to be defined in terms of the work of school practitioners and would be more helpful if the construct was redefined through the parent perspective. Certainly, these are areas for improvement in instrumentation and further study. Vague and general questions should be removed. Building upon the base of these strong survey instruments by making these improvements to question veracity, scaling, and measurement would produce a well-rounded tool for future research.

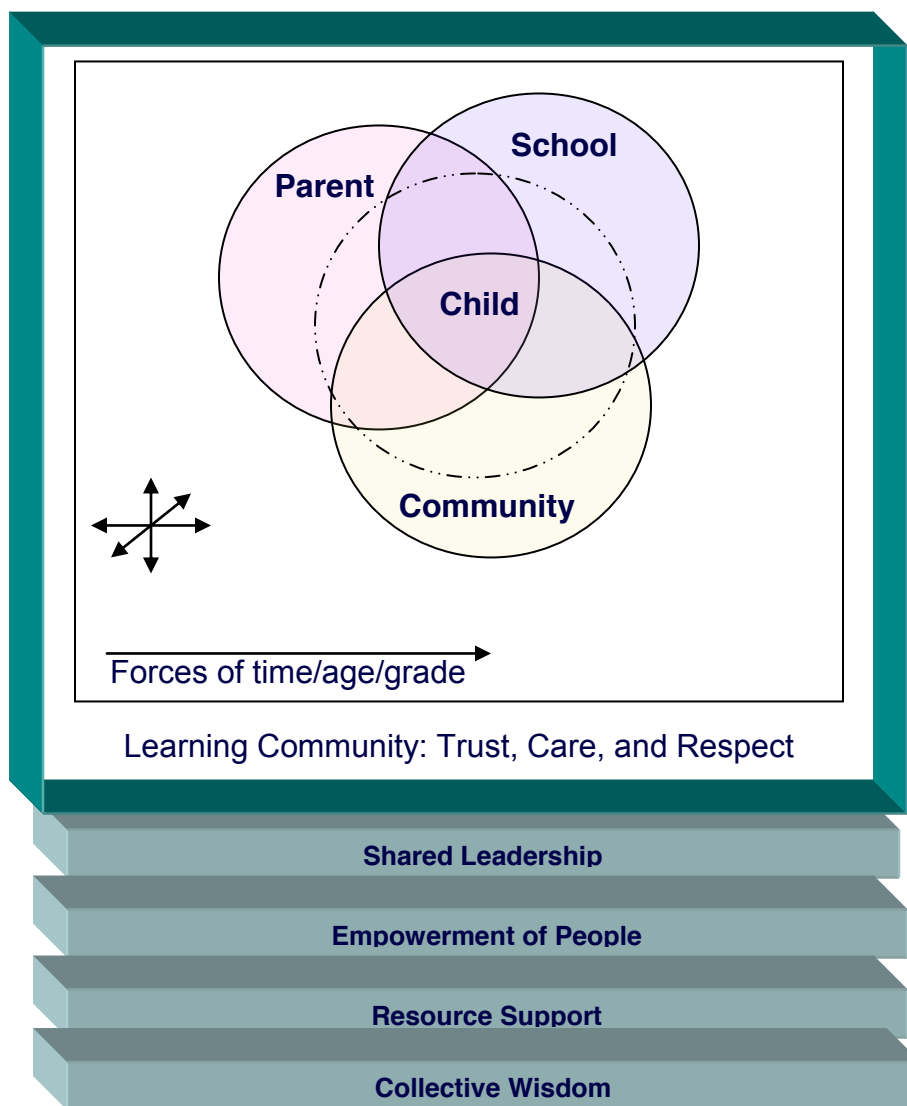
Lastly, the survey instruments were not designed to measure involvement barriers, advocacy skills or civic participation. Research shows the existence of what this researcher terms *relationship barriers*, *circumstantial barriers*, and *defensive barriers* that would be interesting to measure. In terms of advocacy, although the survey did ask parents to mark their interest in receiving certain types of information, the survey did not contain a construct designed to measure the actual advocacy skills of parents. A critical finding in this research and the literature is the importance of the role of parents as

advocates. Parents who were more highly involved in their children's education were better advocates for their children. The starkness of the inverse relationship found in this study, between a parent's opinion of their child's performance and the child's actual performance on student success measures, was striking. Literature shows clearly that many parents lack awareness, knowledge and skills about their role as advocates for their children in the U.S. Educational System, to the detriment of their children. Henderson and Mapp (2001) recognize the importance of the advocacy construct and include it in their framework. Parental advocacy is a basic premise and departure point that parents must internalize to work most effectively with schools. Advocacy is not one of Epstein's six types of involvement. This construct certainly needs to be included in all frameworks intended to describe the parent's role and guide parents accurately. Finally, the construct of collaboration became very vague when applied solely to the parent sphere. Epstein's (2001) description of this construct clearly falls in the realm of school practitioners who seek to obtain support from outside agencies and businesses. It seems that the extension of this concept to the parent realm would be better stated as *civic participation*, an element that the surveys did not measure. Parents often participate in their communities as citizens, voters, advisors, mentors, organizers, activists, and representatives; in this sense they model good citizenship for their children and they contribute to building stronger communities that foster the healthy and safe development of their children. These findings suggest the identification and description of a new framework for parent-initiated practices and suggest the development of a framework that describes community-initiated practices as related to student success. Overall, future research would benefit from models, frameworks, and protocols that clearly define, describe, and measure all sphere activities in a comprehensive way.

DISCUSSION ON ADVANCING THEORY

As the methodology, frameworks and protocols of this study build upon theory, it opens the opportunity for continued research and discussion. It would be interesting to replicate this study using multiple school districts and a larger, more diverse sample size to answer the question about what maximum partnership is and to design a complete model connected to school management models. To start this discussion, this researcher proposes a new *Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* by drawing upon research findings, expanding the contextual environment, and structuring some additional frameworks to assist future research (See Figure C).

Figure C
Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships



The Framework of Five School-initiated Practices to Promote School, Family, and Community Partnerships

- 1) *Outreach* – enlisting the participation of parents, students and community members in the educational process to promote learning and development;
- 2) *Programs and operations* – informing, developing, and/or unifying the school community as partners in the educational process, preparing able participants to become active contributors;
- 3) *Engagement* – direct *person-to-person* interactions that facilitate, support, and reward the involvement of parents and community members in the education of their children;
- 4) *Community building* – directly expanding the availability of enrichment opportunities for students in support of learning, physical and social development, health, safety, and good citizenship; and
- 5) *Support services* – providing targeted support for students and their families.

The Framework of Seven Parent-Initiated Practices to Promote the Learning and Development of Children

- 1) *Parenting* – understanding child and adolescent development and establishing a safe, structured, nurturing, and caring home environment that supports the growth, development, and education of children;
- 2) *Advocating* – understanding rights and responsibilities, implications of curriculum and instruction on learning, the U.S. Educational System, governance, and democratic participation, and engaging the school and community as an equal partner and contributor to the well-being of children;
- 3) *Communicating* – establishing explicit agreements about roles and expectations, engaging the school and community in direct *person-to-person* dialogue and inquiry on matters related to learning and development, being current on policies, calendars and programs, and promptly replying to requests for action;
- 4) *Volunteering* – actively supporting curriculum and instruction at school, helping to build an educational climate conducive to learning, development, and expression, and working to promote safe and supportive communities for children and their families;
- 5) *Learning support* – helping children explore, study, reflect, share, and artistically express their classroom learning, homework, knowledge, and understanding in a manner supportive of the school program and expectations;
- 6) *Decision-making* – serving as well informed partners, participants, and parent representatives in decisions-making activities; and
- 7) *Civic participation* – participating in the community as citizens, voters, advisors, mentors, organizers, activists, and representatives to help promote the well-being of children and their families.

The Framework of Six Community-Initiated Practices to Promote the Well-being of Children, Youth and Families

- 1) *Programming* – establishing effective programs, responsive to community needs and values that advance the well-being and development of children;
- 2) *Collaborating* – forming respectful, trusting, and personalized relationship and agreements with individual community members, schools, and other community organizations designed to address identified priorities within measurable and established time lines;
- 3) *Resource support* – contributing additional physical, financial, and human resources to support the development of capabilities of schools and families to advance excellence in learning and development, and promote safe and supportive communities for children and families;
- 4) *Community organizing* – providing community leadership, establishing networks, organizing volunteers, planning events, serving on boards and committees, addressing community concerns, writing grants, raising funds, and advocating for or against legislation, in ways that promote the well-being, health, development, and safety of children and families;
- 5) *Support services* – providing awareness, prevention, intervention, and support programs; and
- 6) *Building knowledge and sharing expertise* –devoting time and resources to continuous improvement and growth, warehousing knowledge, and sharing expertise with the broader community.

The Framework of Five Student-Initiated Practices to Promote Active Learning

- 1) *Good citizenship* – taking responsibility for one’s growth, development and learning, understanding and respecting guiding rules, and supporting the educational program;
- 2) *Effort* – giving one’s best attempt and being willing to venture beyond the zone of comfort as an active participant;
- 3) *Inquisitiveness* – actively asking questions in the interest of greater understanding;
- 4) *Exploration* – seeking to review information, synthesize knowledge and conduct experiments; and
- 5) *Reflection and expression* – making meaning of information, trials, and learning, understating relationships, connecting experience to other phenomenon or philosophies, identifying metaphors and analogies, sharing personal understandings and experiences with others to engage in further discussion and inquiry.

This model modifies Epstein's *Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence of School, Family, and Community on Children's Learning (External Structure)*. It is similar in that there are three spheres shown by circles that contain forces influenced by practices, experiences, philosophies of the family, the school, and the community. It is similar as it suggests a force of time/age/grade. In addition, as in Epstein's theory, this model asserts that spheres may move independently in any possible direction as indicated by crossing arrows. The larger the degree of overlap of the spheres, the greater the amount of benefits that extend to the child and the greater the working relationships. It also accepts Epstein's assumptions as related to the external structure.

The Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships is different in that it asserts that a child sphere exists, shown by dotted lines, signifying its dependence on the other three spheres, but also recognizing its independent contribution to the learning process. In addition, the spheres are contained in a community context of trust, care, and respect, in which their degree of existence influences, flavors and colors sphere proximity. Additionally, this model asserts that to the degree to which *relationship barriers, circumstantial barriers, or defensive barriers* exist within any sphere of influence, a thicker sphere wall forms, representing how such barriers may hinder proximal movement of the other spheres by serving as a form of resistance.

Finally, to the degree to which primary sphere actions and relationships are supported by secondary, foundational and structural elements, proximity will also be affected. These elements include shared leadership (evaluating, planning and implementation), empowerment of people (supporting, developing, reinforcing, and assessing role performance), resource support (financial, technical, physical, structural, operational, cultural, and political) and collective wisdom (evaluation, assessment, continual improvement, reflection, summarizing, synthesizing, sharing, and adapting). The existence of these elements greatly propels or hinders sphere movement, given their focused attention on building support for child development and learning.

This updated model additionally proposes a *Framework of Five Types of School-Initiated Practices to Promote School, Family, and Community Partnerships*, a *Framework of Seven Parent-Initiated Practices to Promote the Learning and Development of Children*, a *Framework of Six Community-Initiated Practices to Promote the Well-being of Children, Youth and Families*, and a *Framework of Five Student-Initiated Practices to Promote Active Learning*. This model asserts that everyone influences learning and can be involved in the educational process. Further, a person may concurrently perform as representatives in multiple spheres at any single point in time.

This model improves the effectiveness of Epstein's *Action Team for Partnerships* approach by expanding implementation beyond individuals on a team to all practitioners within a school community. When roles are clarified and detailed, better planning and implementation follow. This framework further fits within Comer's School Development Program (SDP), as well as many other models of school management.

The key aim of this model is to increase the degree of overlap among spheres, which signifies greater student success. Spheres move closer when more members proactively execute practices related to the roles they play.

To the extent that schools form these synergistic partnerships focused on learning and development, the greater schools develop the following characteristics of high-performing schools:

Partnerships Lead to High Performing Schools

- A clear and shared vision that applies universally to everyone and garners commitment;
- High standards and clear expectations for all;
- Effective leadership and representative governance;
- High levels of involvement, collaboration, and partnership;
- Open channels of communication and expression;
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment designed to inspire learning and respect;
- Safe, nurturing, and supportive learning environments;
- A community of learners who monitor and evaluate their practices and outcomes in the interest of greater understanding and advancement; and
- Adaptive systems and processes that embrace continuous improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Researchers

- 1) Apply definitions, methodology, frameworks, instruments, protocols, and the theoretical model underpinning this research to inform future studies.
- 2) Explore and test theoretically described relationships outlined in the Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships to expand the body of knowledge.
- 3) Develop and test new, well-balanced instruments of measurement.
- 4) Adapt methodology to conduct a quasi-experimental study of longitudinal design.

Community of Stakeholders

- 1) Increase student success and partnerships by applying the research-based frameworks, model, and findings included in this research.
- 2) Invest in research-based partnership development as a critical component of school management.
- 3) Use the highly reliable instruments and protocols developed from this research to accurately measure and assess partnership practices of the school community.
- 4) Recognize that everyone is a partner.

Policymakers and Leaders

- 1) Align education policy and funding so that it works with the inherent partnership that exists between the school, family, and community.
- 2) Publish guidance for practitioners, parents/guardians, and community members.
- 3) Establish a community awareness campaign targeted toward families to build their awareness of their influences on the success of their children.
- 4) Fund professional development for school practitioners, emphasizing research-based practices shown to influence student success.
- 5) Develop system-wide accountability processes to assist communities in their re-alignment toward cultures of partnerships.
- 6) Support system-wide networks to build organizational capacity.
- 7) Assure teacher and administrative credentialing programs adequately educate and prepare their students with an integrated and focused curriculum inclusive of the field of school, family, and community partnerships to assure the next generation graduates with the full set of tools critical for the advancement of learning and development.
- 8) Fund additional research to more closely explore and describe influences and relationships in a way that will result in improved models, instruments, and findings.

CONCLUSIONS

Not only is the partnership approach critical to student success, it is the foundation upon which a quality education is built, upon which other elements of school management rely. Central to our democracy is valuing and supporting the involvement of community members in the education of our children. If our mission is to enable our children to grow into healthy, happy, literate, responsible, and productive contributors, our educational leaders must be the facilitators who support a cultural climate at school that favors partnerships.

In return for this effort, our children will receive a better education and a more promising future; our teachers will receive higher marks and more support from parents; communities will gain cohorts of dedicated leaders and improved civic participation; schools will increase their capacity to serve their students and will require fewer remediation programs, which will allow the redistribution of funds toward more advanced, engaging, and affordable educational programs. All of these efforts build social capital, creating a virtuous cycle of partnership in education. Let us all work together to make this vision a reality.

APPENDIX: HYPOTHESES TESTING

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Sample Characteristics

The sample of 598 students involved the distribution of 598 parent surveys and 237 teacher surveys (note that many students in the sample shared common teachers). Surveys were completed by 187 parents and 127 teachers, representing response rates of 31.27% and 53.59% respectively. This section reviews comparative data (face validity), validity (statistical validity), effects of extraneous variables, reliability, and test results.

Comparative Data (Face Validity)

The tables below compare sample (N) and sub-sample (n) characteristics related to student performance variables (Table 1), student characteristics (Table 2), and teacher and school characteristics (Table 3). Tables include district data when available. These comparisons show similar student, teacher, and school characteristics across categories. The student population is highly homogenous. For example, 100% of students are Title I eligible. The majority are native Spanish speakers (English learners) of Hispanic/Latino descent. Very few students participate in Special Education or GATE programs. Teachers are generally experienced, well educated, and credentialed. For example, the average teacher has about 13 years of experience, over 40% are ranked Class VII in education (which reflects the highest education class recognized in this particular district), and 95% are fully credentialed. Very low variation appears in a comparative examination of samples. Overall, sample means are very similar to sub-sample means.

<i>Student Performance</i>	<i>Student Sample (N = 598)</i>	<i>Parent Survey Respondents (n = 187)</i>
Avg Fall Math Trimester Score 2006	63.055	64.241
Avg CST Math '06	352.75	362.34
Avg CST ELA '06	330.78	327.88
Avg ADA '06	.9595	.9663

Table 2 Comparative Student Data

Characteristics	District ¹	Student Sample (<i>N</i> = 598)	Parent Survey Respondents (<i>n</i> = 187)
% Title I	100	100	100
% ELL	60.2	64.9	66.3
% GATE	NA	2.2	2.1
% Not Special Ed	NA	92.8	92.5
% Hispanic/Latino	80.7	83.1	79.7
% Asian/Pacific Islander (Filipino)	13.31	11.7	15.5
% Caucasian (non-Hispanic/Latino)	2.8	2.8	3.0
% Black	2.7	2	2.7
% Native American / Alaskan	.5	.2	.5

¹ CDE EdData at www.ed-data.k12.ca.us for 2005/06

Validity

Table 3 Comparative Teacher and School Data

Characteristics	Student Sample (<i>N</i> = 598)	Parent Survey Respondents (<i>n</i> = 187)
% Education (class) level VII	42.6	48.3
% Fully credentialed	96.2	96.3
% BCLAD Certified	27.7	27.4
Avg years of experience	13.1	13.94
% Hispanic/Latino	44.5	45.8
% Asian/Pacific Islander (Filipino)	8.7	8.5
% Caucasian (non-Hispanic/Latino)	43.5	43.5
% Black	3.3	2.3
% Male	17.1	21.7
% Female	82.9	78.3
Avg class size	25.19	25.91

The sample means of dependent variables particular to student performance, which are also referred to as student success variables (Ss), were compared to sub-sample means using one-sample *t*-tests to assess if any statistical differences exist. Low variability between sub-samples is desirable. No significant differences were found ($p < .05$).

Additionally, Pearson bivariate correlations show moderate to high direct correlation between student performance variables, which is desirable as this suggests these scores measure similar effects (Table 4). However, ADA shows a low correlation to student test scores.

<i>Table 4 Correlations</i>	Math Fall '06 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	Math CST '06 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	ELA CST '06 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	ADA '06 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>
Math Fall '06 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	1 546	.681** .000 356	.561** .000 356	.087 .064 460
Math CST '06 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	.681** .000 356	1 369	.712** .000 369	.153** .003 369
ELA CST '06 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	.561** .000 356	.712** .000 369	1 369	.106* .042 369
ADA '06 Pearson Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	.087 .064 460	.153** .003 369	.106* .042 369	1 501

Effects of Extraneous Variables

Linear regression models test if extraneous variables are significant predictors of dependent variables. As most of these variables are categorical (nominal) by nature, they were first made dichotomous and the forward method was then applied. Class size and teacher's experience were measured on ratio scales. The table below shows results (Table 5). Students classified as English learners and/or those students enrolled in Special Education were significant predictors on CST ELA and CST Math tests. The effects of these two groups were controlled for statistically. The other extraneous variables were not significant predictors of student success.

Characteristics	Math Fall Tri	ADA	CST ELA	CST Math
Hispanic/Latino	No	No	No	No
Title I eligible	No	No	No	No
English learner	No	No	Yes	Yes
GATE program	No	No	No	No
Special Education program	No	No	Yes	Yes
Teacher Education Class VII	No	No	No	No
BCLAD Certified	No	No	No	No
Parent completed high school or more	No	No	No	No

Table 5 Predictive Nature of Extraneous Variables

Characteristics	Math Fall Tri	ADA	CST ELA	CST Math
Parent Employed	No	No	No	No
Class Size (Ratio Scale)	No	No	No	No
Teacher's Experience (Ratio Scale)	No	No	No	No

Reliability

Research hypotheses test the relationships between the three constructs of parental involvement (Pi), school practices (Sp) and student success (Ss), where Pi and Sp are independent variables. Sp variables were also tested for their affect on Pi variables. Additionally, Pi and Sp were combined to form one dynamic of comprehensive involvement (Ci). Variables, as measured through parent and teacher survey questions, were coded by construct component. The major components of Pi are *parenting* (Par), *communicating* (Com), *volunteering* (Vol), *learning at home* (Lah), *decision-making* (Dm), and *collaboration* (Col). The major components of Sp are *outreach* (Out), *programs and operations* (Pops), *engagement* (Eng), *community building* (Cb), and *support services* (Sss). The code Sss has been modified from Ss for the purposes of this summary to avoid confusion with the code that was used for student success. Reliability tests informed the selection of variables that best depicted each component. These components were then combined using a weighted average formula to form an overall construct measure. This same process was then used to generate the final Ci variable.

The reader will see that some component codes include numbers. These numbers refer to different component reliability configurations. Some construct labels include the abbreviation *wt*, which refers to weighted average.

The major constructs and key components were tested for internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients. Reliability coefficients of less than .600 generally indicate lower levels of internal reliability. This reliability test was applied because the surveys include many Likert-type items (Mueller, 1986). Final component groupings reflect the combination of variables with the highest reliability possible.

The table below shows results from reliability tests (Table 6). Codes are organized by component, survey type and survey question. For example, using the code LahP1b: Lah refers to the *learning at home* component; P refers to parent survey; and 1b refers to survey question 1b. In terms of reliability, all Pi components are above .600 with the exception of the collaboration construct Col4, which is .564 and the decision-making construct Dm2b, which contains only one variable. The final aggregation of the Pi construct is measured by the PiAll5wt variable. It is important to note that the component of PiCol4 was removed from the final aggregation of the Pi construct in order to increase the number of cases for the aggregate Pi construct. PiCol4 was removed because it had the lowest level of reliability of the components of Pi. Table 6 shows the number of variables that comprise each construct or component, which falls under the heading of key factor. The table also shows the total number of available variables coded to measure each key factor. Further, the table displays the actual question codes that comprise the key factor for easier reference to survey questions.

Table 6 Parent Involvement Construct Reliability

Key Factor	Reliability	No. of variables	No. of available variables	Survey questions
PiAll5wt	.770	5	6	weighted average of 19 variables below except Col4
Par	.670	5	7	ParP1e, ParP3a, ParP3i, ParP3r, ParT4t
Com5	.620	5	8	ComP3b, ComP3j, ComP3k, ComT4o, ComT4p
Vol	.690	2	5	VolP3n, VolP3o
Lah6	.848	6	18	LahP3c, LahP3d, LahP3e, LahP3f, LahP3g, LahP3m
Dm2b	N/A (1 variable)	1	3	DmP1l
Col4	.564	4	6	ColT1m, ColT1q, ColT4s, ColT8f

Table 7 displays similarly as the Pi table above, but focuses on the components comprising the Sp construct. All components are above .600 with the exception of Sss, which is .259.

Table 7 School Practices Construct Reliability

Key Factor	Reliability	No of variables	No. of available variables	Survey questions
SpAll2	.759	5	5	weighted average of 41 variables below
Out	.804	9	12	OutP1c, Out P5f, OutP5g, Out P5i, OutP5k, OutP5m, OutP5n, OutT5c, Out55d
Pops	.660	8	20	PopsP1o, PopsP1p, PopsP5a, PopsT4a, PopsT7j, PopsT7n, PopsT7g, PopsT7f
Eng	.856	15	21	EngP5b, EngP5c, EngP5d, EngP5e, EngP5h, EngP5j, EngP5l, EngT5e, EngT5f, EngT7a, EngT7c, EngT7d, EngT7h, EngT7i, EngT7m
Cb7	.752	7	10	CbT1f, CbT5h, CbT5i, CbT7b, CbT7e, CbT7k, CbT7l
Sss	.259	2	3	SssP5Q, SssT5m

Test Results

Hypotheses testing involved the use of two-tail independent samples *t*-tests. Means of dependent variables were compared between high and low survey respondent groups as categorized by major constructs and key components. Correlative relationships of independent and dependent variables were further tested to consider the direction of the relationship as being either direct or indirect. The 25th percentile cut points were established by frequency data which informed the creation of high and low groups. In the case of Ci, the 50th percentile was used to form groups due to the lower number of resulting cases. The null hypothesis is to be rejected at a significance level of +/- .05. See Appendix B for specific independent samples *t*-tests and other test results.

1. How does parental involvement influence student success?

H1: Using 25th percentiles as cut points, independent samples *t*-tests will find statistically significant differences in student success when comparing the group demonstrating higher levels of parental involvement to the group demonstrating lower levels of parental involvement.

The following tests examined the influence of parental involvement (Pi) practices on student success (Ss). Table 8 summarizes the results of independent samples *t*-tests on dependent variables by expressing direct (dir) or indirect (indir) relationships. Asterisks denote statistically significant relationships.

The table below indicates that Pi components showed generally direct relationship. Five indirect relationships appeared between Pi components and student success measures as related to the two math measures, but these indirect relationships were not statistically significant. Tests further showed only direct relationships on CST ELA and ADA measures, a number of which were statically significant, specifically as related to communication (Com), volunteering (Vol), and learning at home (Lah). PiAll5wt showed direct relationships to all dependent variables. Overall, of the 28 tests, 82.1% showed direct relationships and 17.4% of those direct relationships were statistically significant. Findings reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, H1, suggesting that parent involvement practices have a statistically significant influence on student success and that the relationship is positively correlated.

Table 8 Independent t-Tests Summary– The Influence of Pi on Ss

Dependent Variables	PiAll5wt	Par	Com5	Vol	Lah6	Dm2b	Col4
Math Fall Trimester 2006	Dir	Dir	Dir	Indir	Indir	Dir	Indir
CST Math 2006	Dir	Indir	Dir	Dir	Dir	Dir	Indir
CST ELA 2006	Dir	Dir	Dir	Dir	Dir*	Dir	Dir
Average Daily Attendance	Dir	Dir	Dir*	Dir*	Dir*	Dir	Dir

*Sig (2-tailed) > .05

2. How do school-based practices to promote parental involvement influence parental involvement?

H2: Using 25th percentiles as cut points, independent samples *t*-tests will find statistically significant differences in parental involvement when comparing the group demonstrating higher levels of school practices to the group demonstrating lower levels of school practices.

Table 9 summarizes the results of independent samples *t*-tests on dependent variables by expressing direct (dir) or indirect (indir) relationships. Asterisks denote statistically significant relationships. The table below shows direct relationships for all 38 tests, of which 44.7% were statistically significant. All components showed statistically significant results to one or more measures of student success. Due to a low number of cases for the dependent variable of decision-making (Dm2b), tests could not be applied broadly. Findings reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, H2, suggesting that school practices influence parent involvement practices and that these activities share a direct relationship.

Table 9 Independent t-Tests Summary – The influence of Sp on Pi

Dependent Variables	SpAll2Grps	OutGrps	PopsGrps	EngGrps	Cb7Grps	SssGrps
PiAll	Dir	Dir*	Dir	Dir	Dir	Dir
Par	Dir*	Dir*	Dir*	Dir*	Dir	Dir*
Com5	Dir*	Dir	Dir*	Dir*	Dir*	Dir
Vol	Dir	Dir*	Dir	Dir*	Dir	Dir
Lah6	Dir	Dir*	Dir	Dir*	Dir	Dir
Dm2b	^a	^a	Dir	^a	Dir	^a
Col4	Dir*	Dir	Dir	Dir*	Dir*	Dir

* Statistically significant >.05

^a t cannot be computed because the standard deviation of both groups are 0

3. How do school-based practices to promote parental involvement influence student success?

H3: Using 25th percentiles as cut points, independent samples *t*-tests will find statistically significant differences in student success when comparing the group demonstrating higher levels of school practices to the group demonstrating lower levels of school practices.

These tests examined the influence of school practices on student success. Table 10 summarizes the results of independent samples *t*-tests on dependent variables by expressing direct (dir) or indirect (indir) relationships. Asterisks denote statistically significant relationships. Of the 24 tests, all but two revealed direct relationships between independent and dependent variables. All statistically significant findings were direct. Findings reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, H3, suggesting that school practices to promote parent involvement, influence student success and that the influence is positively related.

Table 10 Independent t-Tests Summary – The Influence of Sp on Ss

Dependent Variables	SpAll	Out	Pops	Eng	Cb7	Sss
Math Fall Trimester 2006	Dir	Dir*	Dir	Dir	Dir	Dir
CST Math 2006	Dir*	Dir*	Dir	Dir	Indir	Dir
CST ELA 2006	Dir*	Dir*	Dir*	Dir	Dir	Dir
Average Daily Attendance	Dir	Dir	Indir	Dir	Dir	Dir

*Sig (2-tailed) > .05

4. How do school-based practices and parental involvement practices combine to influence student success?

H4: Using 50th percentiles as cut points, independent samples *t*-tests will find statistically significant differences in student success when comparing the group demonstrating higher levels of parental involvement and school practices to the group demonstrating lower levels of parental involvement and school practices.

These tests examined the influence of school practices and parental involvement practices on student success. Table 11 summarizes the results of independent samples *t*-tests on dependent variables by expressing direct (dir) or indirect (indir) relationships. Asterisks denote statistically significant relationships. Of the four tests, all were direct; however they were not statistically significant. Although results were not statistically significant, the direct relationship patterns found in other tests again appear in this data set. Findings do not reject the null hypothesis.

Dependent Variables	Ci50wtGrps
Math Fall Trimester 2006	Dir
CST Math 2006	Dir
CST ELA 2006	Dir
Average Daily Attendance	Dir

*Sig (2-tailed) > .05