Family and Community Engagement Annotated Bibliography


Overview: “At a time when education is receiving so much national attention, the Coalition for Community Schools is pleased to share the findings of *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools*. *Making the Difference* demonstrates that community schools are an important solution to the task at hand — improving student learning. *Making the Difference* renews the historic vision of our schools as centers of our communities — places where everyone in a community works in partnership to educate children. People across the country who are working hard to create community schools understand that bringing school and community assets together will help young people succeed in school and life, and will make their families and communities stronger. This report reflects the work of thousands of community schools nationwide” (p. 5).


Abstract: Inequality of access to educational resources by different social classes has been widely documented, and schools have instituted parent programs to ameliorate this situation. However, lacking are theoretically based studies that explain how and why a program may be effective in bringing about change. The authors studied a 12-week parent leadership program for Hispanics that provided opportunities for interaction, knowledge exchange, leadership development, trust building, and collective action—important components of social and intellectual capital. Their research shows that when parents participate in leadership development, they are empowered to effect changes that benefit their children through individual and collective actions. Some parent graduates founded organizations that continue to affect the educational system. The authors argue that the concepts of social and intellectual capital can inform parent involvement research and practice because they explain a community’s capability to engage in new forms of action.


Abstract: This is the second of two reports on a major effort to understand the social effects of nonprofit community development corporations (CDCs) on urban neighborhoods. The first report, *More Than Housing: How CDCs Go About Changing Lives and Neighbordhoods* (Sullivan 1993) examined the practices through which twelve leading CDCs were attempting to revitalize the physical and social fabric of their target areas. *More Than Housing* emphasized that CDC–run affordable housing sometimes provides the starting point for broader resident–focused efforts at improving quality of life, but that report did not formally assess the effects of such efforts. This volume takes a closer look at three of those twelve organizations: New
Community Corporation (Newark, New Jersey), Urban Edge Housing Corporation (Boston, Massachusetts), and Whittier Alliance (Minneapolis, Minnesota). It is perhaps the first–ever attempt to analyze rigorously collected data on a wide range of effects of CDC practices on the lives and attitudes of neighborhood residents, instead of the bricks-and-mortar measures (housing unites generated, development dollars leveraged, etc.), which are commonly used as indicators of success.” (p. 1).


Purpose and Perspective: The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls. At the inner–most level is the immediate setting containing the developing person. This can be the home, the classroom, or as often happens for research purposes—the laboratory or the testing room. So far we appear to be on familiar ground (although there is more to see than has thus far met the investigator’s eye). The next step, however, already leads us off the beaten track for it requires looking beyond single settings to the relations between them.” (p. 3).


Abstract: “The meaningful involvement of parents in children’s schooling can enhance the educational process. Parents can contribute insights and knowledge that complement the professional skills of schools’ staffs in ways that strengthen academic and social programs. However, for parent involvement initiatives to be successful, they should be part of a contextually focused school improvement process designed to create positive relationships that support children’s total development. Parent involvement programs that are instituted in traditional bureaucratic and inflexible school environments are less likely to yield positive results than those that are part of a more collaborative organizational structure. In our work, we involve parents at all levels of school life, through general support of schools’ educational programs, active participation in daily activities, and in school planning and management. Parents work together with schools’ staffs to establish academic and social goals and to develop and implement comprehensive school plans. However, parents do not supersede or challenge the authority of principals and their staffs. They provide perspectives on matters that serve the best interest of children.” (p.1).


Foreword: “In this report you will find an impressive increase in the quantity and quality of research in this area over the past two decades, which is encouraging. It will only be significant in contributing to school reform, however, if you pay serious attention to the evidence of the positive contributions that partnership programs can make to student achievement and other beneficial outcomes, and then act on what has been learned. This report is important because it helps deliver and interpret the evidence. Many policymakers, administrators, and funders ask
for evidence that parent involvement helps student achievement, including test scores. Many who ask the question are frustrated with the vague and sometimes confusing answers they get. This report provides some useful answers.” (p. 4).


Preface and Acknowledgments: One of our goals in writing this book is to recognize the wonderful work of our friends and colleagues across the country. Not only have we tried to capture their spirit in the many examples, tips, research briefs, and quotes sprinkled throughout the book, we have also asked for their suggestions as we went through several drafts. These parent leaders, researchers, school administrators, state and federal officials, teachers, and organization and foundation leaders readily responded with examples of excellent practice, advice for our readers, and ideas about how to present this information.” (p. 1).


Abstract: Probes the interaction of families and schools from social, historical, educational, and psychological perspectives, and offers strategies for facilitating the often traumatic transition children must make from home to classroom.


With the insights she has gleaned from her close and subtle observation of parent-teacher conferences, renowned Harvard University professor Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot has written a wise, useful book about the ways in which parents and teachers can make the most of their essential conversation—the dialogue between the most vital people in a child’s life.


Abstract: “The purpose of this study was to identify factors that lead to successful educational partnerships between school staff and families. The method for this investigation focused on asking parents how and why they were involved in their children’s education and what factors influenced their participation. The study was conducted at the Patrick O’Hearn Elementary School, in Boston, MA, where, according to yearly survey data collected by the school, at least 90% of the parents participated in one or more of the home- or school-based family engagement activities, despite the school’s urban, low socioeconomic setting. By gathering parents’ own descriptions of their participation in their children’s education, this research study sought to develop a deeper understanding of the parents’ perceptions of involvement and explored whether their descriptions would match existing typologies or fall outside existing definitions. Another goal of the research was to investigate factors that influenced parents’ involvement in their children’s education.” (p. 35)

Abstract: Family–school partnerships are increasingly touted as a means of improving both student and school improvement. This recognition has led to an increase in policies and initiatives that offer the following benefits: improved communication between parents and educators; home and school goals that are mutually supportive and shared; better understanding of the complexities impinging on children’s development; and pooling of family and school resources to find and implement solutions to shared goals. This is the first comprehensive review of what is known about the effects of home–school partnerships on student and school achievement. It provides a brief history of home–school partnerships, presents evidence–based practices for working with families across developmental stages, and provides an agenda for future research and policy. Key features include: provides comprehensive, cross–disciplinary coverage of theoretical issues and research concerning family–school partnerships.


Introduction: Given the poor state of most inner–city public schools, social capital—which can be viewed as the by–product of and the collective benefits derived through participation in social organizations and networks (Putnam 1995; Sampson 1998)– is most likely to become manifest in efforts to improve student achievement and through various forms of parental empowerment. Efforts to raise academic performance, though not the subject of this analysis, are likely to serve as a focal point for the development of social capital because research shows that high levels of achievement among poor children are generally made possible through organized cooperation between teachers and parents (Ladson–Billings 1994; Fischer et al. 1996). Similarly, efforts to organize the parents of disadvantaged children and to empower them as decision–makers and advocates for their children have been shown to contribute to the improvement of schools and the betterment of the communities they serve (Hess 1995; Bryk et al. 1998).” (p. 189)


*A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform* takes an in–depth look at this growing movement. Based on six case studies from across the country, this collaborative effort produced new understandings of the processes through which organizing groups build relationships and power among parents, students, educators, and other community members to create change in schools and communities.

Introduction: “This paper set the stage for the forum by presenting a research-based framing of family engagement. It examines the policy levers for change in promoting systemic FSCE, and focuses on data systems as a powerful tool to engage familiar for twenty-first century student learning. Because education reform will succeed only when all students are prepared for the demands of the twenty-first century, the forum also aimed to examine the role of families in transforming low-performing schools. This paper aims to start the conversation and to help shape what role federal policy will play in supporting FSCE efforts in schools across the country.” (p. 1).