Moving Forward: Building the Capacity for Effective Family Engagement

Karen L. Mapp, Ed.D.
Harvard Graduate School of Education

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Karen L. Mapp
What is the definition of Family Engagement?

*Family Engagement is any way that a child’s adult caretaker (biological parents, foster parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.) effectively supports learning and healthy development.*
What’s happening in the field of Family Engagement?

• Proposed increase in Title One set-aside for family engagement from 1% to 2%
• Senior level positions are being created in districts around the country to coordinate family and community engagement initiatives
• More family engagement language priority language is being included in federal notices (I3, 21st Century, Promise Neighborhoods)

…and

• “Tiger Mom” phenomenon
• “Parent Trigger” – “Won’t Back Down” movie
• Parent Organizing
When families are effectively engaged in their children’s education and in the improvement of schools, what are the various roles they can play?
Families are engaged as:

- **Supporters** of their children’s learning
- **Encouragers** of an achievement identity, a positive self image, and a “can do” spirit
- **Monitors** of their children’s time, behavior, boundaries and resources
- **Models** of lifelong learning and enthusiasm for education
- **Advocates** for improved learning opportunities for their children and at their schools
- **Decision-makers/choosers** of educational options for their child, the school, and community
- **Collaborators** with school staff and members of the community
Impact of Family Engagement:

- Faster literacy acquisition
- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Enroll in higher level programs
- Are promoted more and earn more credits
- Adapt better to school and attend more regularly
- Have better social skills and behavior
- Graduate and go on to higher education
Organizing Schools for Improvement
(2010)
FIVE ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS

The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research

1. LEADERSHIP as the Driver for Change

2. PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

3. PARENT-COMMUNITY TIES

4. STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING CLIMATE

5. INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDANCE

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What does an Effective Family-School Partnership Look Like?
Beyond the Bake Sale

The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships

Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson and Don Davies

The New Press, 2007
Fortress School (Below Basic)

- “Parents don’t care about their children’s education, and they are the main reason the kid’s are failing”
- “Parents don’t come to conferences, no matter what we do”
- Principal picks a small group of “cooperative parents” to help out
- “We’re teachers, not social workers”
- “Curriculum and standards are too advanced for these parents”
Come-if-we-call School (Basic)

- Parents are told what students will be learning at the fall open house
- Workshops are planned by staff
- Families can visit school on report card pickup day
- Parents call the office to get teacher-recorded messages about homework
Open-Door School (Proficient)

• Parent-teacher conferences are held at least twice a year

• There is an “Action Team” for family engagement

• School holds parent events three or four times a year

• Parents can raise issues at PTA meetings or see the principal

• Diversity of families is recognized through multicultural nights are held once a year
Partnership School (Advanced)

- Families are seen as partners in improving educational outcomes
- All family activities are connected to student learning
- There is a clear, open process for resolving problems
- Parent networks are valued and cultivated
- Families are actively involved in decisions on school improvement
- Staff conduct relationship-building home visits to families