

The School-Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture

A Review of Current Literature

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June 16, 2008



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Educators as well as noneducators often question the value of family involvement. Does it really make a difference? According to the research, the answer is yes. Sometimes, results come in more traditional measures—student achievement, attendance, or behavior.¹ These measures tend to be based in schools and controlled by school staff. At other times, there are less traditional benefits, such as improved student or family self-efficacy about education, higher expectations for students or others involved in efforts, more effective ways to support family engagement, greater understanding of the viewpoints of others, or student planning for the future.² These measures may be driven by the school, the home, the community, families, or students.

The key is not that the source of additional student support comes from a specific entity, but that students benefit significantly when there is an individual encouraging and expecting the child to be academically successful. In fact, there is evidence that it is not “the parent” that makes the difference, but instead it is adults who take the time to talk to students, express an interest in their education, and hold them accountable for learning.³ Students of all ages benefit academically, emotionally, and physically when an adult is actively involved in the day-to-day events of their lives, including school activities.⁴

While the less traditional measures seem less important at first glance based on this finding, there is a direct link between the two types of measures. Both contribute to the academic success of children. When family members commonly engage with teachers or other school staff, students adjust more easily to classroom activities and their teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels, resulting in

¹ Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Center for Mental Health in Schools (2005a); Corcoran & Christman (2002); Darling-Hammond, Hightower, Husbands, Lafors, Young, & Christopher (2003); Datnow, Lasky, Stringfield, & Teddlie, (2005); Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss (2007); Duchesne & Larose (2007); Glick & Hohmann (2007); Herbert, Murphy, Ramos, Vaden-Kiernan, & Buttram (2006); Hui, Buttram, Deviney, Murphy, & Ramos (2004); Kim & Crasco (2006); National Center for Education Accountability (2002); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007); Quijochó & Daoud (2006); Shannon & Bylsma (2004); Sheldon (2007); Togneri & Anderson (2003)

² Auerbach (2007); Burrueco, López, & Miles (2007); Duchesne & Larose (2007); Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007); Glick & Hohmann (2007); Junntila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007); Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007); Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke & Pinto (2007)

³ Beier, Rosenfeld, Spitalny, Zansky, & Botempo (2000); Duchesne & Larose (2007); Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007); Frisco, Muller, & Frank (2007); Hall (2007); Junntila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007)

⁴ Beier, Rosenfeld, Spitalny, Zansky, & Botempo (2000)

improved student performance.⁵ In fact, even when family involvement is described as minimal or poorly structured, it still makes a difference in students' daily lives and their planning for the future.⁶ In the words of Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davis, "Partnerships among schools, families, and community groups are not a luxury—they are a necessity" (p. 1).⁷

Unfortunately, efforts to increase meaningful family engagement in school are often set aside no matter what the research says, waiting for a more convenient or appropriate time to address them. Moreover, the time and energy to start and support continued involvement can be daunting when considering the other demands made on school staff.⁸ School staff direct resources to address the problems of the moment rather than building a strongly defined educational system that ensures that every child has a quality education.⁹ In contrast, those districts and schools that target activities and processes to give families the tools and the information they need to engage effectively in school improvement create a stronger system of education and provide additional resources for both students and school systems.¹⁰

This set of studies provides greater clarity about creating partnerships among schools, families, and community groups. Most importantly, these studies provide insight into the *how* and *why* of programs adopting contextually driven approaches rather than limiting efforts to those activities that are convenience to school staff, time, and facilities. When efforts are designed to meet the needs of the community setting, there is increased support for student learning and involvement from outside the school.¹¹ For example, there are valid reasons for family members not to attend an event or engage in an activity at a particular time. In many schools, the family members who cannot attend would automatically

⁵ Duchesne & Larose (2007); Junttila, Vaurus & Laakkonen (2007)

⁶ Auerbach (2007); Glick & Haohmnn-Marrott (2007)

⁷ Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies (2007)

⁸ Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman (2007)

⁹ Cowan (2007)

¹⁰ Blank, Berg, & Melville (2006); Caspe & Lopez (2006); Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins & Weiss (2007); Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, & Henrich (2000); Dorfman & Fisher (2002); Glick, Hohman-Marrott (2007); Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanchcha (2001); Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, (2007); Resto & Alston (2006); Westat and Policy Studies Associates (2001); Wynn, Meyer, Richards-Shuster (2000)

¹¹ Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007); Blank, Berg, & Melville (2006); Caspe & Lopez (2006); Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007); Quiocho & Daoud (2006); Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)

be labeled as uncaring or uninvolved when in reality that is not the case.¹² Family and community networks can help to fill change this perspective and bridge the gap families and schools.¹³

Getting Out of the Box

These studies explore a wide range of family involvement programs, challenges, needs, strategies, and contexts—ways to *get out of the box* and increase school-family connections. There are effective family involvement programs in communities that use only the more typical forms of involvement, such as volunteering and homework help. In other communities, these same strategies are not as effective, because there are contextual issues that limit families' participation. These less typical situations are the focus for many of the studies in this review. When family members feel invited and believe they have the knowledge and skills to support their children's education, they will more readily engage in educational activities with their children. On the other hand, when families feel overwhelmed by requests from schools, they will resist unless there is a structure to support their efforts such as a network of family, friends, or other sources.¹⁴

This document is intended to review the current literature on school-family connections and provide both educators and noneducators with the information they need to increase meaningful family involvement and develop structures and strategies to support this work. This review includes the following:

1. An overview of new literature
2. A matrix of the trends across the studies (Appendix A)
3. An explanation of the types of research studies included in the review (Appendix B);
4. Detailed descriptions of more than 30 documents that study family involvement published between 2005 and 2008 (Appendix C)

¹² Anderson & Minke (2007); Auerbach (2007); Caspe & Lopez (2006); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007); Quioco & Daoud (2006); Resto & Alston (2006); Weiss, Mayer, Krider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke & Pinto (2007)

¹³ Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007); Weiss, Mayer, Krieder, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007); Resto & Alston (2006)

¹⁴ Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007); Weiss, Mayer, Krieder, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)

5. Brief descriptions of I I documents that study systemic school improvement that help to explain the role of family involvement in the larger scope of improvement practices (Appendix D)

Although in many ways these studies reinforce previous research findings, they also provide deeper investigations of factors that bridge home to school and family member efficacy. Readers also may find the source for the I I studies on systemic school improvement—*Working Systemically—An Approach to Maximize District, School, Classroom, and Student Performance: A Review of Research*—valuable as well. While this second review focuses on current research related to working systemically with districts and schools, involving families is an integral component of a systemic approach to increasing student achievement.

Description of Study Selection

This review includes studies that represent a wide range of geographic settings, such as school-based and non-school-based programs; cultural and ethnic populations; institutional levels; and school grades: preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and postsecondary efforts. These family involvement resources focus on both regular and out-of-school time as well as issues related to diversity; factors that effect student academic, health, and behavioral needs; and factors that stifle or foster meaningful family involvement. While the breadth of context factors explored in these reports prevented us from using a telescopic focus of family-school practices, it did allow us to stand back and take a long-range view of the field.

Initially documents were identified through searches for key terms and phrases commonly associated with school-family connections—*parent/family involvement, diversity family involvement, increasing family/parent involvement, student achievement parent/family involvement, effect parent/family involvement*—in reports, documents, electronic indexes, web-based databases, Internet search engines, electronic scanning services, and staff recommendations. We also narrowed our search to studies published between 2005 and 2008. Fifty-eight studies were identified at the stage of resource collection, then they were scanned using questions to narrow the scope

of content and the quality of the research reporting. We asked two questions at this stage: 1) did the researchers/reporters use quality research methodology? and 2) did the study content align to the questions about the topics we wanted to explore?

Did the researchers/reporters use quality research methodology? As those who do family involvement will tell you, it is a complex process. There are an array of factors that influence the effectiveness in every program—economy, geography, previous educational experiences, adult education, language, culture, and many more. In an attempt to capture relevant information, researchers often use a combination of methods, “mixed methods,” that include quantitative reporting measures, such as comparison and analysis of student achievement data, as well as qualitative measures such as interviews or observations. Moreover, some researchers design their studies to deliberately capture contextual issues, while others are investigating a specific intervention strategy. Family involvement also is very unlikely to be a stand-alone intervention strategy being used in a school. Therefore, it is difficult to isolate outcomes that can be correlated to family involvement efforts. There is still much we can learn from these studies as long as we keep these limitations in mind.

Those studies that capture contextual issues help us to understand the *why's* and *what's* of school-family interactions, while the intervention studies help us to understand what strategies are most effective in sites like our own. We chose to include reports that explore both interventions and the contextual issues related to family involvement. Intervention studies provide valuable information on effectiveness, and the descriptive studies help users to understand the wide array of site-based issues and factors to consider as programs and strategies are implemented.

To ensure that the selected studies represented quality research, we used the guidelines provided by the National Research Council¹⁵ in reviewing the methodologies and content for these documents. According to the Council's *Scientific Research in Education*, well-designed research methodologies do the following:

¹⁵ Shavelson & Towne (2002)

- Pose significant questions that can be investigated empirically
- Link research to relevant theory
- Use methods that permit direct investigation of the question
- Provide a coherent and explicit chain of reasoning
- Replicate and generalize across studies
- Disclose research to encourage professional scrutiny and critique¹⁶

All of the documents chosen for the review provide descriptions of the focus of the study, the methodology, the participants, the intervention, the findings, and the recommendations. To determine replicability and generalizability for the included studies, we included details on the methodologies in Appendix B and on the participants, context, and intervention in Appendix C.

Did the study content align to the questions about the topics we wanted to explore? Before beginning the process, we determined that our review of the literature would focus on a few central issues and actions: practices that bring good results, school and non-school-based efforts, and a variety of contextual issues. We used the following questions to narrow the number of studies:

1. What strategies and practices provide support to school, family, and community connections?
2. What is the effect of family and community involvement projects that provide out-of-school student support as well as school-based programs?
3. Are there differences in effective strategies and practices among family involvement programs, including out-of-school time and other family involvement efforts?
4. Are there differences in effective strategies and practices among programs supported by schools and those not supported by schools?
5. Are there contextual situations, beliefs, or actions taken within the home, community, or school that provide insight into why families choose to partner with school staff to support their children's learning?

¹⁶ Shavelson & Towne (2002)

Other Issues for the Reader to Consider about Methodology

Although each of the selected studies meets the criteria we created for inclusion, users need to keep in mind the qualities of rigor of research, particularly when reporting on intervention results. We encourage the reader to also consider the following aspects of research design as they use the information in this review: Do any of these studies incorporate the strongest evidence of effect for an intervention? Do the study findings transfer to a wide range of settings and contexts?

Do any of these studies incorporate the strongest evidence of effect for an intervention? According to the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) document *Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide*,¹⁷ only the Sheldon (2007) study meets the guidelines for “possible” evidence¹⁸. The researchers purposefully matched 69 schools participating in the National Network for Partnership Schools (NNPS) with 69 schools that were not.

The Fauth, Leventhal, and Brooks-Gunn (2007) study also met most of the criteria for “possible” evidence with the exception of the sample size (number of participants). They examined data from 145 of 148 families involved in the relocation project. Since IES guidance recommends 300 participants as optimal, readers should consider both the sample size and the unique characteristics of the project when applying information from this study.

One other study, Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Baughn, Dearing, Hencke and Pinto (2007), incorporates data from a longitudinal follow-up to an experimental evaluation that meets the criteria for “strong” evidence.¹⁹ It is an example of taking strong evidence and using that evidence to probe more deeply into an intervention strategy.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Education (2003)

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Education (2003)

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Education (2003), p. v

Do the study findings transfer to a wide range of settings and contexts? These studies take place in many contexts. In fact, a few of the studies take place in extremely unique settings. These studies cover a wide range of initiatives, from homegrown efforts to nationwide efforts. Study participants represent a wide array of demographics and a variety of grade and school combinations, including studies conducted in other countries. The studies explore rural, urban, suburban, and metropolitan areas in a variety of geographic locations. Readers will need to consider the descriptions of study contexts in Appendix C in order to determine how they can use information from those sources.

A Brief Synthesis of Current Family Involvement Literature

Although the studies investigate a wide array of issues, there are central themes across the 31 studies. Most of these themes are not entirely new to the field, but these studies often provide a deeper or different perspective from earlier reports. This section includes a broad review of the studies; however, there are detailed descriptions of each study in Appendix C.

Sense of Welcome

Creating a welcoming environment that fosters family-school relationships and transcends context, culture, and language

Although previous studies have recognized the importance of creating a welcoming environment that fosters school-family relationships, this collection of newer studies focuses more intently on factors that transcend context, culture, and language. Whether a lack of welcome is created by biased communication through overt prejudice or a systemwide, deep-seated institutional racism characterized by an unconscious belief that select student groups cannot be academically successful, the sense of welcome families feel has a direct effect on their involvement in their children's education.²⁰ Fortunately,

²⁰ Auerbach (2007); Barajas & Ronkvist (2007); Caspe & Lopez (2006); McGrath (2007); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007); Quioco & Daoud (2006); Resto & Alston (2006); Stewart (2008)

even though families, particularly those representing diverse populations, commonly encounter negative constructs, some families are able to push through this lack of welcome and provide meaningful support to their children.²¹ Typically, the level or value of this involvement is determined by the following factors:

- The adults' personal educational experience and knowledge
- Previous levels of involvement
- Beliefs about their children's ability and knowledge
- Invitations, not just from the school, but from the child as well²²

When schools create structures that foster a culture of complementary or reciprocal learning²³—public interaction about educator and family perceptions

about family involvement,²⁴ and multiple outreach structures or procedures²⁵— families feel more welcome. To create this sense of welcome, educational staff should develop processes to specifically address feelings of unwelcome by communicating the following:

1. differences in language,
2. family perception of the child's academic ability,
3. educational support common to the home culture, and
4. ability to navigate educational systems are not barriers to engagement.²⁶

Table 1
Studies Exploring a Sense of Welcome
- Auerbach (2007)
- Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007)
- Caspe & Lopez (2006)
- Duchesne & Larose (2007)
- Glick & Hohmann-Marrott (2007)
- Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins & Closson (2005)
- Junttila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007)
- McGrath (2007)
- Phillipson & Phillipson (2007)
- Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007)
- Quiocho & Daoud (2006)
- Resto & Alston (2006)
- Robinson & Fenwick (2007)
- Stewart (2008)
- Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)

²¹ Auerbach (2007); Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007); Duchesne & Larose (2007); Glick & Hohmann-Marrott (2007); Junttila, Vauras & Laakkonen (2007); McGrath (2007); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007); Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007); Quiocho & Daoud (2006); Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)

²² Auerbach (2007); Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins & Closson (2005); Robinson & Fenwick (2007); Stewart (2008)

²³ Caspe & Lopez (2006)

²⁴ Quiocho & Daoud (2006)

²⁵ Resto & Alston (2006)

²⁶ Auerbach (2007); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007); McGrath (2007); Wong & Hughes (2006)

Misconceptions Among Stakeholders

Identifying misconceptions that teachers and families each hold about the motivation, practices, or beliefs of each other that lead to mistrust

Misconceptions about when, how, what, and if families are meaningfully engaged in their children’s education continues to be a predominant issue in fostering school-family connections.²⁷ Whether it is racial bias,²⁸ lack of staff preparation to address misconceptions,²⁹ or other factors, this single issue continues to play a significant role in the effectiveness of family involvement efforts because **misconception links to mistrust**.³⁰ Across these current studies, the authors explore strategies for identifying misconceptions that teachers and families hold about each other’s motivation, practices, and beliefs. When there is an atmosphere of mistrust, it is difficult for educators and family members to create effective school-family partnerships to support student learning. It is only through direct interaction to explore differences and find mutual understandings that this barrier can be absolved.³¹

Table 2 Studies Exploring Misconceptions Among Stakeholders	
-	Auerbach (2007)
-	Anderson & Minke (2007)
-	Baker, Denessen, & Brus-Laven (2007)
-	Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007)
-	Caspe & Lopez (2006)
-	Davis (2006)
-	Frame, Miller-Cribbs, & Van Horn (2007)
-	McGrath (2007)
-	Phillipson & Phillipson (2007)
-	Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007)
-	Quiocho & Daoud (2006)
-	Resto & Alston (2006)
-	Valencia, Pérez & Echeveste and Thomás River Policy Institute (2006, April)
-	Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Phinto (2007)
-	Wong & Hughes (2006)

There are tools or strategies recommended in previous research that continue to be listed as best practice in these current studies, specifically, projects that engage trusted community members to bridge³² or address family members’ doubts about their abilities to provide adequate support to their

²⁷ Anderson & Minke (2007); Baker, Denessen, & Brus-Laven (2007); Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007); Caspe & Lopez, (2006); Davis (2006); Frame, Miller-Cribbs, & Van Horn (2007); McGrath (2007); Quiocho & Daoud (2006); Wong & Hughes (2006)

²⁸ Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007); Frame, Miller-Cribbs, & Van Horn (2007)

²⁹ Baker, Denessen, & Brus-Laven (2007); Caspe & Lopez (2006); Frame, Miller-Cribbs, & Van Horn (2007)

³⁰ Baker, Denessen, & Brus-Laven (2007); McGrath (2007)

³¹ Quiocho & Daoud (2006)

³² Resto & Alston (2006)

children's learning because of lack of knowledge or experience.³³ However, while the barriers created by misconceptions often seem straightforward, they are not. For example, family members often state that teachers or schools do not want their involvement or input, yet an overwhelming majority of families trust teachers to give them needed information.³⁴ How is it that families feel this lack of respect, yet expect and trust teachers to provide needed information? There is much to be learned from those families who are able to negotiate the system even when they know that teachers fail to see value in their support or mistrust them.³⁵

As schools and families begin to confront their misconceptions and reach shared understandings about culture and varying perspectives, they also need to remember that accepted "truths" can become today's misconceptions. For example, the U.S. population has begun to shift its work-family-gender ideologies.³⁶ Since the 1950s, women have become a constant and larger part of the U.S. workforce, yet it is only in recent years, that longitudinal data has begun to show a difference in educational expectations and beliefs for females expressed in the home or by families. Women are now expected to enter the workforce and often encouraged to get an appropriate education to do so. While there are still issues related to culture and women's education that cannot be ignored, there are signs of altered belief structures related to the education of females in the mainstream U.S. population.³⁷

This was not the case even 10 years ago. Verbal support for women entering the workforce was commonly expressed in community settings but not in the home. There are also signs that families are beginning to see great value in their involvement with their children's education and are adapting their work and lifestyles to address some of the common barriers to involvement that have been listed in earlier research (i.e., transportation, language, and such).³⁸ These types of findings reinforce the importance of continual reassessment and investigation of perceptions about effective strategies to increase family engagement.

³³ Auerbach (2006)

³⁴ Valencia, Pérez, & Echeveste and Thomás Rivera Policy Institute (2006, April)

³⁵ Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007); Valencia, Pérez, & Echeveste and Thomás Rivera Policy Institute (2006, April)

³⁶ Davis (2007)

³⁷ Davis (2007)

³⁸ Anderson & Minke (2007); Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)

Use of and Issues Related to Resources

Directing resources and programmatic efforts to help families adopt effective strategies to support student learning

There are two types of resources addressed in the more recent research: those provided by the schools and those provided by families and/or community organizations. From both perspectives, when resources are directed to support specifically targeted areas of need, there is greater support for student learning.³⁹

No matter the structure of the efforts, there are integral components that guide schools and community groups that are maximizing resources to support student learning. These components include the following:

- Development of leaders, educators, and noneducators who help focus the work and coalesce resources
- Infrastructure that frames and supports family involvement efforts
- Continuous cycle of recruiting and retention
- Procedures to gather family reactions and perspectives
- Reiterative processes that incorporate a variety of outreach strategies⁴⁰

These efforts to develop joint resources are designed to create a tipping point,⁴¹ momentum for change or support developed through a strategic set of activities.

Table 3	
Studies Exploring the Use of and Issues Related to Resources	
-	Anderson & Minke (2007)
-	Blank, Berg, & Meleville (2006)
-	Caspe & Lopez (2006)
-	Cooper (2005)
-	Sheldon (2007)
-	Weiss, Mayer, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)
-	Zarate (2007)

³⁹ Cooper (2005); Sheldon, 2007; Zarate (2007)

⁴⁰ Blank, Berg, & Meleville (2006); Caspe & Lopez (2006); Cooper (2005); Sheldon, 2007; Zarate (2007)

⁴¹ Gladwell, 2000

Home Context and Student Performance

Understanding the effect of home context on student performance—home culture, parenting practices, home crises, or significant events

In one study, families defined meaningful involvement in the home as “someone who works with the teacher and continues learning activities at home” (p. 488).⁴²

This simple statement helps to define efforts that are directed to increase support for learning in the home. Longitudinal studies reveal that **a**ll children at 9 months demonstrate the same academic potential no matter the background. Yet at kindergarten age, White children are far more prepared for school than children

representing diverse populations.⁴³ The families of non-White children are not neglectful or failing to support the intellectual growth of their children, but they do interact differently with their children than the White families do.⁴⁴

There is no doubt that contextual factors in the home can either facilitate or stifle home-based support for student learning. There are families who are more comfortable in reaching out to school staff; others are reluctant to do so. When school staff have a better understanding of their students' home cultures, families' parenting practices, home contexts, home crises, or significant family and community events, they can develop processes and strategies to bridge school-based and home-based activities and increase support for student learning.⁴⁵

Although this collection of studies continues to recognize a common list of activities that nurture learning at home—provide study time and space and help with homework—fostering home-based

⁴² Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman (2007)

⁴³ Barrueco, López, & Miles (2007); Dearing, Krieder, Simpkins, & Weiss (2007)

⁴⁴ Barrueco, López, & Miles (2007); Dearing, Krieder, Simpkins, & Weiss (2007)

⁴⁵ Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson (2005); Wong & Hughes (2006)

Table 4

Studies Exploring the Home Context and Student Performance

- Barrueco, López, & Miles (2007)
- Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006)
- Dearing, Krieder, Simpkins, & Weiss (2007)
- Duchesne & Larose (2007)
- Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007)
- Frisco, Muller, & Frank (2007)
- Glick & Hohmann –Marrott (2007)
- Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson (2005)
- Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman (2007)
- Junttila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007)
- Phillipson & Phillipson (2007)
- Resto & Alston (2006)

learning support is too complex of a process to be “fixed” by actions on a list. Families need assistance in the following areas:

- Learning to model academic behaviors
- Providing targeted tutoring
- Directing attention toward developing readiness in young children
- Using varied strategies based on student need and content⁴⁶

All schools need to focus on developing processes to support families as they prepare their children to transition to an academic environment. Deliberate adult actions and assistance in the home are integral to the effectiveness of home-based academic support.⁴⁷ Even though there is evidence that a two-parent home provides the greatest stability to students, it is not simply a two-parent home that makes the difference.⁴⁸ The benefit actually comes from having an adult who takes the time to talk to the child, expresses an interest in the child life and school day, and holds the child to high expectations that makes the difference.⁴⁹ Students need a strong adult figure in their lives that will support learning at home and provide encouragement during the preschool years and continuing through postsecondary education.⁵⁰

As outreach efforts are designed, planners should include strategies that include the following:

- Raise awareness of and address the self-efficacy of family members to provide support to their children⁵¹
- Include a process to discover whether a family represents an “Americanized” cultural group or one that has recently immigrated⁵²

⁴⁶ Barrueco, López, & Miles (2007); Blank, Berg, & Melville (2006); Dearing, Krieder, Simpkins, & Weiss (2007); Resto & Alston (2006)

⁴⁷ Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson (2005)

⁴⁸ Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007); Frisco, Muller, & Frank (2007); Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman (2007)

⁴⁹ Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007); Frisco, Muller, & Frank (2007); Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman (2007)

⁵⁰ Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007); Frisco, Muller, & Frank (2007); Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman (2007)

⁵¹ Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson (2005); Junttila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007)

⁵² Glick & Hohmann-Marriott (2007)

- Create a process to address issues related to language, including not only translation, but also whether family members feel capable of providing support to a child studying in a language different from the home language⁵³
- Provide follow-up strategies for training or mentoring events⁵⁴

⁵³ Phillipson & Phillipson (2007)

⁵⁴ Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007)

Program Structures

Creating structures—policy, leadership, procedures, processes, and aligned resources—that encourage family involvement

When family involvement in schools occurs sporadically or through happenstance, efforts often result in minimal benefits. On the other hand, effective programs that use a systemic approach to intentionally maximize resources from inside and outside of the school building are more likely to foster great benefits for students, their families, the school, and the community. Taking a systemic approach to developing a structure for family involvement ensures that efforts strategically target time, energy, and funds to provide support for the needs of all students.⁵⁵ Although each of the studies describes specific family involvement strategies, when taken as a whole, the articles advocate a structure that supports the following components:

1. A culture of continuous learning in the home and at school by fostering a variety of roles and leadership skills across all stakeholder groups—educators and noneducators⁵⁶
2. Outreach and interaction with a wide range organizations through diverse methods or strategies⁵⁷

Table 5
Studies Exploring Program Structure
- Anderson & Minke (2007)
- Auerbach (2007)
- Anderson & Minke (2007)
- Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007)
- Barrueco, Lopez, & Miles (2007)
- Blank, Berg & Melaville (2006)
- Caspe & Lopez (2006)
- Davis (2007)
- Dearing, Krieder, Simpkins, & Weiss (2007)
- Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007)
- Frisco, Muller, & Frank (2007)
- Glick & Hohmann-Marrott (2007)
- Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman (2007)
- Juntitila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007)
- McGrath (2007)
- Philipson & Phillipson (2007)
- Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007)
- Quiocho & Daoud (2006)
- Resto & Alston (2006)
- Sheldon (2007)
- Valencia, Pérez, & Echeveste, and Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (2006, April)
- Weiss, Mayer, Krieder, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)
- Zarate (2007)

⁵⁵ Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Resto & Alston (2007)

⁵⁶ Anderson & Minke (2007); Auerbach (2007); Baraja & Ronnkvist (2007); Barrueco, López, & Miles (2007); Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Center for Mental Health in Schools (2005a); Hui, Buttram, Deviney, Murphy, & Ramos (2004); Juntitila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007); Quiocho & Daoud (2006); Resto & Alston (2006)

⁵⁷ Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Caspe & Lopez (2006); Fuath, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007); Reston & Alston (2007); Weiss, Kreider, Vaughn, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)

3. Policy to support leadership, procedures, and processes to address the needs of all involved⁵⁸
4. School-, home-, and community-based resources⁵⁹

The first step in building an effective structure for family involvement is to ensure that all those involved are ready to do the work. However, simply attending a workshop or meeting does not necessarily result in an educator or family member changing their beliefs or their actions. Educators need to explore four concepts about family involvement:

1. Positive effect of family involvement on student performance
2. Home and cultural context of the students they teach
3. Family beliefs about appropriate ways to support children's learning
4. Specific strategies to support children's learning⁶⁰

Additionally, family members need to explore two aspects of their role in their children's education: 1) their personal expectations for their children and the school in educating their children and 2) their self-efficacy in helping both children and the school in accomplishing these expectations.⁶¹ Through these interactions educators and families gain greater understanding of the experiences and knowledge of all involved and negotiate a structure that meets the needs of all those involved.

As programs create structures to prepare educators and families for meaningful family engagement, there are complex and often difficult issues that will need to be addressed:

- Confronting both conscious and subconscious bias⁶²

⁵⁸ Anderson & Minke (2007); Auerbach (2007); Baraja & Ronnkvist (2007); Barrueco, López, & Miles (2007); Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Center for Mental Health in Schools (2005a); Hui, Buttram, Deviney, Murphy, & Ramos (2004); Junttila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007); Quiocho & Daoud (2006); Resto & Alston (2006); Zarate (2007)

⁵⁹ Anderson & Minke (2007); Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Center for Mental Health in Schools (2005a); Hui, Buttram, Deviney, Murphy & Ramos (2004); Junttila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007); Quiocho & Daoud (2006); Resto & Alston (2007); Weiss, Mayer, Krieder, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)

⁶⁰ Auerbach (2007); Barrueco, López, & Miles (2007); Caspe & Lopez (2006); Dearing, Krieder, Simpkins, & Weiss (2007); Fuath, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007); Glick, Hohmann-Marriott (2007); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007); Valencia, Pérez, & Echeveste, and Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (2006, April); Zarate (2007)

⁶¹ Auerbach (2007); Junttila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007); Pomerantz, Mooman, & Litwack (2007); Reston & Alston (2007); Zarate (2007)

⁶² Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007); Caspe & Lopez (2006); Quiocho & Daoud (2006); Zarate (2007)

- Instilling processes that encourage and prepare families to model effective strategies and to foster family/child bonding and high performance expectations⁶³
- Encouraging educators and families to address the needs of the whole child, not just the academic needs⁶⁴
- Incorporating procedures to collect useful data to determine effectiveness and evaluate family satisfaction with the structures and procedures⁶⁵

⁶³ Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Caspe & Lopez (2006); Duchesne & Larose (2007); Frisco, Muller, & Frank, (2007); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007); Valencia, Pérez, & Echeveste, and Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (2006, April); Reston & Alston (2007)

⁶⁴ Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007)

⁶⁵ Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006); Caspe, and Lopez (2006)

Roles of Those Involved in School-Family Connections

Understanding the effect of beliefs, self-efficacy, knowledge, perceived abilities, and previous experience have on the roles that families create and act on through words and activities to support their children's education

The roles families play in supporting their children's education continues to be both a focus of the research and an area of concern. Often the most voiced concerns in defining family roles stems from the differing perspectives of educators and noneducators. Family members' perceptions of self-efficacy related to language and socioeconomic status are often significant factors in how families determine their roles in their children's education, just as they are in the teachers' preconceptions about the role of the family.⁶⁶ These authors provide insight in how to address these differences: inviting families to be involved,⁶⁷ providing them with the tools to discover their role,⁶⁸ and confronting differences as a first step in reaching mutual understanding.⁶⁹

Table 6
Studies Exploring Roles of Those Involved in School-Family Connections

- Anderson & Minke (2007)
- Auerbach (2007)
- Baker, Denessen, Brus-Laven (2007)
- Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007)
- Barrueco, Feinauer, & Miles (2007)
- Caspe & Lopez (2006)
- Cooper (2005)
- Davis (2007)
- Duchesne & Larose (2007)
- Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007)
- Frame, Miller-Cribbs, & Van Horn (2007)
- Frisco, Muller, & Frank (2007)
- Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson (2005)
- Gonida, Kiosseoglou, & Voulala (2007)
- Junttila, Vauras, & Laakonen (2007)
- McGrath (2007)
- Phillipson & Phillipson (2007)
- Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007)
- Quiocho & Daoud (2006)
- Resto & Alston (2006)
- Robinson & Fenwick (2007)
- Sheldon (2007)
- Valencia, Pérez, Echeveste, & Thomás Rivera Policy Institute (2006, April)
- Zarate (2007)

⁶⁶ Baker, Denessen, Brus-Laven (2007); Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson (2005); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007); Robinson & Fenwick (2007); Zarate (2007)

⁶⁷ Auerbach (2007); Baker, Denessen, Brus-Laven (2007); Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson (2005); Junttila, Vauras, Laakonen (2007); Phillipson & Phillipson (2007); Pomerantz, Mooreman, & Litwack (2007); Quiocho & Daoud (2006)

⁶⁸ Anderson & Minke (2007); Auerbach (2007); Baker, Denessen, Brus-Laven (2007); Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson (2005); Gonida, Kiosseoglou, & Voulala (2007); Quiocho & Daoud (2006)

⁶⁹ Cooper (2005); Frame, Miller-Cribbs, & Van Horn (2007); Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson (2005); Quiocho & Daoud (2006)

Although a strong swell of evidence is only beginning to emerge, families do appear to be “catching on” to the importance of involvement and the necessity of establishing a personal role in supporting their children’s education. Whether this happens when families redefine their roles or assume new roles to support their children,⁷⁰ even when they are discouraged from participating,⁷¹ this shift to more active participation may foreshadow greater levels of family involvement in the future.

⁷⁰ Auerbach, 2007, Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007; Junttila, Vauras, Laakonen, 2007; Phillipson & Phillipson, 2007; Quioco & Daoud, 2006

⁷¹ McGrath, 2007; Barrueco, Feinauer, & Miles, 2007

Putting the Studies Into Perspective

In 2005, as part of an effort to foster greater understanding of the processes that foster meaningful family engagement, SEDL presented a framework for effective family involvement programs drawn from over 1,000 documents. This framework (Graphic 1) identifies the following common characteristics and actions found in effective programs.

Characteristics

Relationships among family, community members, and school staff that foster trust and collaboration

Recognition of families' needs, class, and cultural differences that encourage greater understanding and respect among all involved

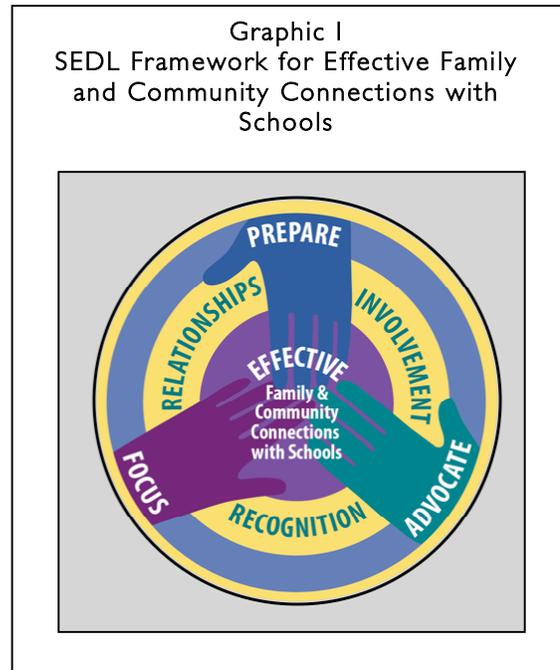
Involvement of all stakeholders in shared partnerships and mutual responsibility that supports student learning

Actions

Prepare all those involved, school staff and families, to support learning and participate in family-school partnerships that encourage meaningful engagement

Focus on meaningful outcomes and purposes that relate directly to learning expectations for students

Advocate an inclusive educational culture that involves all stakeholders in supporting students in their academic pursuits



Taking a long-range view of the studies, we found that the new studies do fit well within the framework while also providing deeper insights into the characteristics and actions that support effective school-family connections as described below.

Sense of Welcome

When school-family partnerships are characterized by a sense of welcome, they incorporate processes that foster relationships between educators and noneducators, allowing all involved to discover that each family member, no matter the background or ability, can engage in supporting a child's education in meaningful ways.

Misconceptions Among Stakeholders

Effective efforts to engage families use strategies that reveal and confront misconceptions that blind both school staff and families to the roles families can play in ensuring that all children reach their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, and socially.

Use of and Issues Related to Resources

As those involved target their resources and identify additional resources to support student learning, they will increase involvement and create opportunities for effective engagement for family members.

Home Context and Student Performance

Effective school-family connections prepare educators and noneducators to engage in two-way partnerships that uncover contextual barriers to purposeful family involvement while simultaneously creating opportunities to encourage and maintain family support for student learning.

Program Structures

Structures that effectively support school-family connections avoid isolated family involvement events by adopting a systemic approach to preparing both educators and noneducators to take on roles that ensure that the academic, emotional, physical, and social needs of all students are met.

Roles of Those Involved in School-Family Connections

By building the self-efficacy of those involved in these efforts for the roles they need to take on, effective school-family programs create a ground swell of support to meet student needs as well as create the foundation for long-term, systemic improvements.

Table 7 demonstrates the correlation of the framework to the six trends explored in this review.

	Characteristics			Actions		
	Relationships	Recognition	Involvement	Prepare	Focus	Advocate
Trends Across Studies						
Sense of Welcome <i>Creating a welcoming environment that fosters family-school relationships and transcends context, culture, and language</i>						
Misconceptions Among Stakeholders <i>Identifying misconceptions that teachers and families hold about the motivation, practices, or beliefs of each other that lead to mistrust</i>						
Use of and Issues Related to Resources <i>Directing resources and programmatic efforts to help families adopt effective strategies to support student learning</i>						
Home Context and Student Performance <i>Understanding the effect of home context on student performance—home culture, parenting practices, home crises, or significant events</i>						
Program Structures <i>Creating structures—policy, leadership, procedures, processes, and aligned resources—that encourage family involvement</i>						
Roles of Those Involved in School-Family Connections <i>Understanding the effect of beliefs, self-efficacy, knowledge, perceived abilities, and previous experience on the roles that families construct and actualize through words and activities to support their children’s education</i>						

Conclusion

The current family involvement research is both heartening and informative. School-family partnerships are a viable and important strategy for addressing students' academic, emotional, physical, and social needs. The new research reinforces and helps to define previous findings and recommendations by providing deeper insight into the complex nature of school-family connections. Moreover, the findings from the working systemically literature demonstrates that a key ingredient to quality public schools is meaningful family involvement. If the system of education is to be successful, every aspect of the system must function in tandem with all the other parts. When any one of the system's parts is missing or out of sync, the entire system falters. When educational systems are able to coalesce all the elements that effect student outcomes—including families, they will provide greater support to **all** students.

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Appendix A

Matrix of Trends Across the Studies, Correlated to the Common Characteristics and Actions of Effective Family Involvement Efforts

	Characteristics			Actions		
	Relationships	Recognition	Involvement	Prepare	Focus	Advocate
Trend Across Studies						
Sense of Welcome <i>Creating a welcoming environment that fosters family-school relationships and transcends context, culture, and language</i>						
Misconceptions Among Stakeholders <i>Identifying misconceptions that teachers and families hold about the motivation, practices, or beliefs of the other that lead to mistrust</i>						
Use of and Issues Related to Resources <i>Directing resources and programmatic efforts to help families adopt effective strategies to support student learning</i>						
Home Context and Student Performance <i>Understanding the effect of home context on student performance—home culture, parenting practices, home crises, or significant events</i>						
Program Structures <i>Creating structures—policy, leadership, procedures, processes, and aligned resources—that encourage family involvement</i>						
Roles of Those Involved in School-Family Connections <i>Understanding the effect of beliefs, self-efficacy, knowledge, perceived abilities, and previous experience on the roles that families construct and actualize through words and activities to support their children’s education</i>						

Appendix B

Research Studies Listed by Methodology

The studies used for this review include varied methodologies, qualitative and quantitative. By using this wide range of methodologies, the author was able to glean not only causality factors from rigorous comparison and experimental designs but also insight into harder to measure factors such as relationships and beliefs. This approach allowed her to develop a broader perspective of the 2005–2008 research findings and recommendations.

Methodology	Studies
Intervention studies demonstrating the impact of a program on participants relative to others not involved in the program (experimental or quasi-experimental)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn (2007) • Sheldon (2007)
Intervention study exploring program outcomes in relation to a group of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman (2007)
Meta-analyses of studies with mixed methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caspe & Lopez (2006) • Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins & Closson (2005) • Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007)
Meta-analyses of evaluation report/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blank, Berg, & Melaville (2006) • Weiss, Mayer, Kreider, Vaughan, Dearing, Hencke, & Pinto (2007)
Evaluation report with mixed methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooper (2005) • Valencia, Pérez, & Echeveste, and Thomás Rivera Policy Institute (2006)
Descriptive case studies with mixed methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auerbach (2007) • Barajas & Ronnkvist (2007) • Baker, Denessen, & Brus-Laven (2007) • McGrath (2007) • Quiocho & Daoud (2006) • Resto & Alston (2006) • Robinson & Fenwick (2007)
Descriptive comparison study with mixed methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phillipson & Phillipson (2007)
Descriptive report with mixed methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anderson & Minke (2007) • Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss (2007) • Duchesne & Larose (2007) • Gonida, Kiosseoglou, & Voulala (2007) • Junttila, Vauras, & Laakkonen (2007)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wong & Hughes (2006) Zarate (2007) • Zarate (2007)
<p>Descriptive correlational study using longitudinal data from large scale national databases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrueco, López, & Miles (2007) • Davis (2007) • Frame, Miller-Cribbs, & Van Horn (2007) • Frisco, Muller, & Frank (2007) • Glick & Hohmann-Marrott (2007) • Stewart (2008)

Appendix C

Detailed Information on Current Family Involvement Research[^]

Anderson, K. J. & Minke, K. M. (2007). Parent involvement in education: Toward an understanding of parents' decision making. *Journal of Educational Research, 100*(5), 311-323.

In this study, the authors explore the multidimensional and dynamic nature of why families choose to be involved in their children's education using the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) model for family decision-making. To determine how the families react to strategies to foster family involvement through role construction, sense of efficacy, resources, and perceptions of teachers' invitations, the authors administered surveys in English and Spanish to 3 elementary schools in large district in the southwest. Across the 3 schools, students are 49% African American, 29% Latino, 8% Caucasian, 4% Asian, 1% Native American, and 77 % low SES. The schools asked the researchers to distribute the surveys the same way the schools typically communicate with families—paper documents sent home with students. School 1 surveyed grades 4 and 5; School 2 and 3 surveyed all grades. Three hundred and fifty-one surveys were collected, but this report focuses solely on the English results.

Similar to previous studies, the authors found that families rate their involvement higher than teachers rate family involvement. The authors explained this rating difference as typical because teachers typically underestimated home-based activities and were often unaware of non-school related involvement. They also noted that the misconception was even stronger for home-based activities in minority families than in nonminority families from the study schools.

The authors also found similar results in regard to role construction and family involvement. Role construction did effect a family member's choice to get involved but was insignificant in relation to grade level. They also stated that special invitations of involvement had a direct effect on involvement as a factor in why families chose to become involved as well as a supporting factor in strengthening overall involvement. In contrast to previous research, the researchers reported that resources do not have a significant effect on family involvement. Instead when families see their efforts as essential to their children's academic success, they make individual accommodations or work with friends or families members to ensure that children have the needed support.

The authors strengthen and question existing findings about why families chose to involve themselves in their children's education. However, they also caution readers about broadly interpreting their results as the study data has a limited focus, and they may have eliminated data on variables that might have further explained the relationships across key issues. The authors also express a concern about the response rate for the surveys caused by the schools' method of delivery—School 1 had a 28.6% return; School 2, 23.8%; School 3, 35.9%.

[^] These abstracts do not provide an exhaustive review of the cited materials.

Auerbach, S. (2007). From moral supporters to struggling advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color. *Urban Education*, 42(3), 250-283.

This 3-year case study of African American and Latino families explores the role marginalized families construct for themselves in promoting their children's access to postsecondary educational opportunities. The community from which the participants are drawn is 46% Anglo, 34% Latino, 12% African American, and 8% Asian American. Each parent in the study had a child in a college-access program at a diverse high school in Los Angeles. The participants were 16 working-class families from 11 families, including 11 Mexican and Central American immigrants, 2 U.S.-born Chicanos, and 3 African Americans.

The author used two types of data 1) in-depth, semi-structured parent interviews in the students' junior and senior years, the critical period for college preparation, search, and choice; and 2) open-ended questions and problem descriptions to elicit stories and reflections on families' goals, beliefs, practices, and knowledge about their role in guiding their children's efforts to enter college.

Based on her analysis of the data, the author describes a continuum of supports families provide. On one end of the continuum is *Less Proactive*; on the other end of the continuum, *More Proactive*. She uses three descriptors to denote the levels of family support on her continuum: *Moral Supporters*, *Ambivalent Companions*, and *Struggling Advocates*. *Moral Supporters* are placed close to *Less Proactive*. *Struggling Advocates* are close to the *More Proactive*. In the middle of the continuum, she places *Ambivalent Companions*. According to this arrangement, families whose actions align to the *Struggling Advocates* descriptor play a stronger role in supporting their children's postsecondary efforts.

Among the families, those who fall into the *Moral Supporting* role have the least educational experience, limited English fluency, and least K–16 knowledge. The author notes that this group generally shares common cultural traits. She describes their style of support as hands off, but encouraging. These families are seldom involved in school activities. They express a high trust in their children, the school system, and the belief that their children will be successful and go on to college.

On the other hand, the *Struggling Advocates* engage in activities that more directly support specific learning or planning-for-the-future activities. These types of actions result in tangible supports for students: monitoring at home or advocacy at school. These families are more mixed in race and culture than the *Moral Supporting* families and have varied levels of education and more knowledge about the U.S. K–16 educational system. They commonly ask questions of school staff and their children and participate in "college preparation" events. They express less trust that the system or their children are taking appropriate actions to ensure their children's future success than the *Moral Supporting* families. They express and act on their belief that families have to give their students guidance and support if they are to succeed. They also express their frustrations at being rebuffed by school staff when they attempt to engage in their children's education. They further describe this reaction from school staff as both disrespectful and common.

The midrange category, *Ambivalent Companions*, also represents a diverse set of families. Some have more educational experience; others have limited experience. They all have more familiarity with the American educational system than the *Moral Supporters*. These families support their children through strong emotional reactions and comments, close communication, and an occasional action. Their efforts seldom take place at the school. They commonly give their children mixed messages: They want them to succeed, but they aren't really supportive of or believe in the importance of postsecondary education.

Across all the categories, the authors note patterns of behavior. First, all these families base their support on their own educational experiences and knowledge. Additionally, the families' level of involvement also rests on their children's invitation or their perceptions of their child's performance. However, the school's reaction to the families cannot be ignored as the authors also found that the *Struggling Advocates* are willing to persevere even when rebuffed, but the other role groups are not. It is also noteworthy that all the students, except one, did enter postsecondary education.

The authors also do not state that the typologies they identify are exhaustive. Instead, they recommend that schools or other support organizations take actions that help them to better understand their students' families and how they can support the families in helping students prepare for the future. They also state that a key strategy for addressing this need is providing families with timely information that clearly targets their needs.

The authors provide a compelling framework for exploring family involvement in supporting their children's postsecondary education. This study was strengthened by the author's ability to conduct an in-depth study over a 3-year span. However, the author also noted that she herself was a limitation to the study—she is an outsider and a White middle-class researcher in a minority and highly contextualized setting.

Baker, J., Denessen, E., & Brus-Laven, M. (2007). Socio-economic background, parental involvement and teacher perceptions of these in relation to pupil achievement. *Educational Studies*, 33(2), 177-192.

This study explores teacher perceptions of family involvement, levels of family involvement, and student performance. Participants in the study include 218 parents and 60 Grade 1–6 teachers (80% female, 20% male). Four students from each teacher’s classroom were randomly selected, and researchers invited their parents to participate in the study. Researchers use two types of questionnaires, one to assess the level of parental involvement and one to assess teacher perceptions of the level of parental involvement. Each questionnaire consisted of 20 statements with a 5-point Likert scale for rating. Researchers use correlational analyses and paired-sample analyses to determine relationships.

In their investigation of the teachers’ perspectives, the authors state that teachers value family involvement when family actions fit their ideal definition—primarily family member cooperates with teachers. Moreover, teachers recognize family support for learning only when those contributions are visible to the teacher or seen as having immediate outcome. For example, teachers might determine the level of involvement by attendance at conferences or meetings or other school-based activities. Teachers also determine the quality of a family’s involvement by socioeconomic or educational status, i.e., poor families aren’t as involved, and families with more education are more involved. For example, teachers believe that students who have high reading comprehension scores have families who support learning at home.

The family questionnaires describe conflicting perceptions. Family responses indicate that they provide support that is often not visible. Moreover, socioeconomic or educational status was not an indicator of level of involvement. In reality, for those students whose families were contacted more often by teachers, there was actually a lower achievement level. The reason for this lower performance had little to do with meaningful interaction between school and home. Instead, these contacts were actually negative communications about discipline or performance. There were very few positive interactions between teachers and families.

The study authors intended this study to provide insight into the role teacher perceptions play—teacher’s perception of pupils based on socioeconomic status and the effect and level of family involvement related to student achievement. However, that may not be its greatest value. It clearly describes the context in which the major players—school staff and families—base their knowledge and experience about family involvement on misconceptions instead of realities.

Barajas, H. L. & Ronnkvist, A. (2007). Racialized space: Framing Latino and Latina experience in public schools. *Teachers College Record*, 109(6), 1517-1538.

In this 2-year case study, the authors explored the role race plays on school culture and environment as well as the related power structures as applied to policy enacted at the school level. Study participants include 1) the mentors for the program: 45 college students: 31 females, 14 males, 18-25 years of age and 2) the mentees for the program: 27 high school Latino students: 11 females, 16 males, various Latino origins, majority third or fourth generation, and high representation of low-income families. Data sources included interviews, questionnaires, observations, and school document review. The authors also noted that they did not bias the data collection process by including references to race. Instead, they allowed issues regarding bias and ethnicity to surface through general questions about environment and experience.

In their report, they used the words of the study participants to demonstrate the outcome of racial bias that was embedded within the system of education. They found that schools were “racialized as a white space as supported by the relational power between the white group power and non-White groups” (p. 1522). For minority students, this institutional racism was much more powerful and oppressive than individual acts of discrimination. Their status placed them at odds with the system of education, rather than single individuals or group of individuals.

“Racialized” space creates a systemwide acceptance of norms and distribution of power that is well aligned to White middle-class beliefs and needs and is poorly aligned to the beliefs and needs of minority students. In this “racialized” space, the institutions, staff, and other students do not actively or consciously seek to stifle the education of minority students. In simple terms, there were no observable overt acts of bias.

However, the authors found that this unintentional bias had a significant effect on minority students. Those students who understood the racialized structure were able to negotiate entry into the system advance their education. On the other hand, those students who were not able to either comprehend the structure and/or negotiate entry often did not experience educational success.

The authors provide a strong rationale for the effect of institutional bias on the performance of students representing diverse populations. Although this study was not designed to establish causality and relies on a small number of participants, the findings from this work provide important insights into why some minority students flourish while others flounder. However, the authors invite other researchers to study this issue further in order to determine causality and further identify key aspects of this type of institutional bias.

Barrueco, S., López, M. L., & Miles, J. C. (2007). Parenting behaviors in the first year of Life: A national comparison of Latinos and other cultural communities. *Journal of Latinos & Education*, 6(3), 253-265.

Drawn from data used for López, M. L., Barrueco, S., & Miles, J. (2006). *Latino infants and their families: A national perspective of protective and risk developmental factors*. Report submitted to National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics and the Foundation for Child Development.

This longitudinal correlation study examined the characteristics and early predictors of Latino infant development and parenting. Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey–Birth Cohort (N=10,688; ECLS–B), direct child assessments, resident and nonresident father questionnaires, and videotaped parent-child interaction tasks, researchers were able to identify not only trends related to family involvement but also make recommendations for practice.

In a series of findings the researchers illustrated the importance of early family intervention and support for families efforts to support their children’s development of skill and knowledge regarding language and literacy. At 9 months of age, there were no cognitive or motor skill differences in the children from any context. However, when the children reached kindergarten, 70% of White students were able to recognize letters in comparison to 50% of Latino children. In addition, the authors state that family characteristics typically associated with children’s developmental outcomes—such as maternal education and employment—have less effect than family-reported engagement in language and literacy activities and observed family responsiveness during child-parent interactions. Based on these findings the authors recommended efforts to target the needs of child readiness and literacy included the development and delivery of culturally responsive interventions as early as possible.

In other findings, the researchers revealed that although there were very few differences in parenting behaviors across the subgroups, the Latino families were much less likely to read to their children. Since book reading and storytelling were both measures of language and literacy engagement as well as a common strategy to advance literacy, this difference may have a significant effect on student performance.

The authors made the following recommendations based on this study:

1. Support Latino families’ knowledge about bilingual language development and broaden their perspectives related to parenting roles and expectations
2. Support the use of language and literacy activities in the home, regardless of whether family members speak in English or Spanish
3. Provide families books to use in the home and model their use

The use of a nationally representative sample and multiple types of data sources as well as the large number of participants allowed the researchers to develop strong conclusions and recommendations about the relationships among an array of context factors. Moreover, the longitudinal data collection

process adds great weight to the authors' findings on the importance of Latino family educational support for very young children.

Blank, M. J., Berg, A. C., & Melaville, A. (2006). *Growing community schools: The role of cross-boundary leadership*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools.

This report includes 11 community profiles that demonstrate the effectiveness of cross-boundary leadership for large-scale, community-wide education reform strategies used in a wide range of community contexts. The smallest district had 2,100 students; the largest had 400,000. This report was drawn from program evaluations for the selected sites. Evaluation data sources included school achievement data and comparison achievement data from schools not participating in this effort, surveys, and interviews.

The profile descriptions describe partnerships between schools and community groups that target and direct resources to foster student learning. Cross-boundary leaders who promote this process came from schools, local government, health and social services, community organizations, corporate or business groups, family support groups, youth development organizations, institutions of higher education, and civic and faith-based groups. They described efforts as follows:

Cross-boundary leaders understand that educating young people to high standards means connecting children and families to sources of opportunity and support in their community. It means welcoming the rich diversity in language, culture, and outlook that changing student populations bring to schools and refusing to evade the challenges posed by race, equity, and poverty issues. Making the best use of all their community assets, these leaders are scaling up their efforts to create a substantial number of community schools as quickly as possible, following a powerful vision with a clear focus on results (p. v).

The authors state that these projects are “Using public schools as the hub, community schools knit together inventive, enduring relationships among many partners who contribute expertise and resource for effective learning environments” (p. 2).

Their goal is to create the “Tipping Point” that Malcolm Gladwell describes in *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (2000) in order to cause change to happen. Project leaders used four strategies for promoting and scaling up community-wide efforts:

1. Develop diverse financing—financing a vision, not a program
2. Change policy and practice through technical assistance and professional development—creating the conditions that allow change to occur by preparing all stakeholders for their roles as well as establishing an ongoing process for future needs
3. Collect evidence of student and family success—collecting and using data that demonstrates the results of efforts to foster student academic achievement
4. Build broad-based public support—actively sharing information about the vision for the work and accomplishments

Across the 11 profiles, the authors identified seven lessons for leaders:

1. Step out and scale up—provide bold, immediate leadership to meet community challenges
2. Open doors—nurture and expand networks of community responsibility
3. Build multilevel leadership—connect community-wide visionaries to practical leaders in the community and at school sites
4. Build an infrastructure to support change within and across systems—think systemically and embed the vision
5. Fund for the long haul—it’s a marathon, not a sprint
6. Focus on results—use data and stories
7. Engage the community—share, listen, and respond (p. ix)

In the profiles, the authors noted improvements each community made as shown below.

Site	Academic Indicators and Related Factors	Educational Culture
Chicago, IL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools have an average academic performance percentage of 81 in comparison to 74% for other schools. - Schools have a dropout rate decrease of 23.7% in Year 1 to 12.8% in Year 4. 	
Evansville, IN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elementary school students, attending 30 days or more of program activities, have significantly higher math and language arts scores. - Schools have an increased attendance rate from 94.5% in 1999–2000 to 96.2% in 2002–2003. 	
Kansas City, KS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seventy-five percent of teachers believe the program made a difference in the schools. - Sixty-five point five percent of site staff feels student behavior had improved.
Lincoln, NE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seventy-five percent of students, participating in program activities, improve their participation in class. - Seventy-five percent of 	

Site	Academic Indicators and Related Factors	Educational Culture
	<p>students, participating in program activities, have classroom academic performances ratings of satisfactory and above.</p>	
<p>Long Beach, CA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools in the program have steady increases in academic performance. - Eighty-three percent of families say their children's grades had improved. - Eighty-eight percent families say their children were completing homework more often. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ninety percent of families indicate that children's behavior had improved. - School staff documents increase levels of family involvement.
<p>Portland/ Multnomah County, OR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools experience a large percentage of students demonstrating increased statewide benchmark scores. - Schools report stronger student attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools note higher family involvement in supporting student achievement. - Schools report fewer behavioral problems.
<p>St. Paul, MN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Between 2002–2005, the number of students testing above proficiency in math and reading rises an average of 43% in one school and 36% in another—this is over three times the gains made by MN students as a whole. 	
<p>San Francisco, CA</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ninety percent of participants in program activities say they feel supported by both peers and adults. - Eighty percent of participants in the program report a strong sense of belonging. - Staff report a decrease in gang-related activities.
<p>Tukwila, WA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students participating in the programs have higher GPAs. - Schools report reduced student absenteeism. - District-wide mobility rate in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools report increased participation in family events and activities.

Site	Academic Indicators and Related Factors	Educational Culture
	2004 is 5.23% for program schools in comparison to 22.9% district wide.	

The authors share powerful facts and contextual information by providing rich descriptions of effective large-scale family involvement efforts and insight into the strategies that are most productive in effective efforts.

Caspe, M., & Lopez, E. (2006). Lessons from family-strengthening interventions: Learning from evidence-based practice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

This correlational study examines model programs strategies, including evaluation processes, which contain a family-strengthening component to promote children's and youth's academic achievement and improve the socioemotional quality of life of children and youth. There are 13 models included in the review. Data on each model was taken from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Substance Abuse & Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) database.

The authors found that across these models, the most effective support strategies for strengthening families included the following strategies:

1. Provide information on effective practices to increase parent-child bonding (i.e., solving puzzles or playing board games, telling stories about family experiences, or going on family outings to community locations like museums or parks)
2. Target recruiting and retention practices that are tied to specific cultural needs (i.e., face-to-face visits; shared experiences of previously involved family members; or ongoing, reiterative recruiting procedures)
3. Prepare staff to implement the program with families (i.e., confronting assumptions, reviewing research, providing time to process new information)

For strong evaluation procedures, the authors identified the following strategies as effective:

1. Use multiple measures to record family participation and attendance in the program
2. Begin by gathering baseline information on families
3. Ask families to respond regularly to satisfaction and needs surveys

In the conclusion of this report, the researchers note the importance of creating a culture of complementary learning, a culture in which each group and each person learns from others. The authors for this study use their framework for a culture of complementary learning to explore effective strategies that support children. They provide valuable insights into structures that support learning and help to foster effective family involvement programs and demonstrates relationships among key factors.

Cooper, C. M. (2005). Evaluating parent empowerment: A look at the potential of social justice evaluation in education. *Teachers College Record*, 107(10), 2248-2274.

This evaluation explores the outcomes of a California program developed jointly by district, school, and university staff and created to meet requirements related to meaningful family involvement and student performance. This program evaluation includes 6 of the district's 12 traditional K–12 schools that have implemented at least one set of institutes since the programs inception in the 1998–1999 school year. Selected schools include 4 elementary, 1 middle school, and the district's only high school. Most of the family participants are Latino mothers who comprise 92% of those involved. The remaining participants are Latino fathers and African American mothers. Most of the mothers are stay-at-home mothers, Spanish speakers, and have limited education. Nearly all the participants attended the institute because a friend, neighbor, or relative was a graduate and recruited them.

The authors used a qualitative approach with multiple methodologies to create case studies for each school site, including interviews, discussion groups, and observations of classes. They conducted 21 semi-structured interviews in English and Spanish with 7 parent staff members/program graduates; 7 parent participants; 4 district officials, 3 university staff members, and 3 school principals.

The program studied is a curriculum-based parent education program located in an urban setting that focuses on informing family members about the school's curriculum, instruction, subject matter frameworks, academic standards, and assessments—a program designed to empower families to support their children's education. Family members attend a 13-week institute that includes classes 2 days a week. Institute instructors include both school teachers and graduates of the program. Institutes are site-based and, throughout the 13 weeks, each institute produces an action plan to help address barriers to involvement. Graduates are also encouraged to become school and district volunteers.

The authors state the following:

- Family members found the information on school's curriculum to be valuable because it helped them to provide the right kind of assistance to their children.
- In some sites, the family members also expanded the curriculum of study to areas of need in their community. This was an area of concern for school staff and other parents. They understood the need to empower the parents, but they also felt there was a need to use the time on the predetermined topics.
- Both family members and school staff noted the importance of creating a safe environment for those involved to engage in honest dialogue on educational issues.
- The superintendent, school administrators, and families did see different roles for families: the superintendent wanted to meaningfully engage families in numerous decision-making and review committees; the school administrators wanted families to fill more traditional roles such as helping with homework, attending events, or serving as translators; and the families expressed a desire to participate in decision-making and use their power to influence school reform.

The authors also discuss four specific outcomes from the program for families:

1. Provides new sources of information to help families support their children's education, including their parental rights
2. Raises family members' confidence about the support they provide to their children
3. Gives family members a safe place to talk about important educational issues
4. Creates a strong cadre of volunteers for the school

Although many of those involved talked about empowerment of family members, this concept was not well defined or comfortable for those involved. Part of this duality was caused by differing perspectives of what it means to take empowered action and the design of the program not lending itself to fostering these types of roles. Also, there was a fear expressed by the administrators of what empowered families might do. Even though the authors heard constantly from both educators and noneducators that the program had great value, they also noted that the district and school staff still expressed their doubts about long-term implementation.

This evaluation is tightly focused in a specific geographic area and population, but the issues raised provide insight to all family involvement efforts.

Davis, S. N. (2007). Adolescents' work-family gender ideologies and educational expectations. *Sociological Perspectives*, 50(2), 249-271.

This longitudinal correlational report examines the relationship of gender ideologies and beliefs and student postsecondary educational expectations using Department of Labor data from Children of NLS79. The 1,419 participants for this study were ninth and tenth graders in the years 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2002 who had mothers born between 1957 and 1964.

Although the authors discuss a number of conclusions within their report, they state that their most significant discovery was that adolescents with more egalitarian attitudes about the balance of ideologies within work and family roles had the highest educational expectations. Moreover, this finding was even stronger for girls than boys.

Contrary to earlier studies that found that girls were significantly more strongly influenced by their beliefs about the work-family balance of roles than boys, the author found that work-family gender ideologies were influential with boys as well. In instances, in which student experience reflected a high belief in egalitarian* attitudes in addition to a mother with a higher level of education, there was a reciprocal level of expectation for postsecondary education. There was also a correlation between two-parent homes and higher expectations.

The researchers cautioned readers to remember that adolescents coming of age in the 1990s had been raised in a society in which the majority of mothers work when reviewing the results of this study. For both genders, this meant they had observed firsthand their mothers' actions and decisions in regard to work-family gender issues. Previous generations were not commonly exposed to mothers working outside of the home as a "normal" occurrence. In concluding, the authors proposed that any efforts to encourage girls to actively pursue more education should include processes that address their beliefs on the balance of work-family roles for both genders.

The authors demonstrate the value of using evaluation data to explore long-term correlation issues. This study provides insight into significant factors that frame a student's decision to enter postsecondary education as well as providing important information to those who are designing efforts to increase participation in postsecondary education.

* free or equal social, political, and economic rights and opportunities

Dearing, E, Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss, H. (2007). Family involvement in school and low-income children's literacy performance. *Research Digest* [Retrieved on August 15, 2007, from <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp>]

Summarized from Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss, H. B. (2006). Family involvement in school and low-income children's literacy performance: Longitudinal associations between and within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(4), 653–664.

This longitudinal correlational study examines school-based literacy activities for 300 low-income K–5 students and their families. Activities include open house events, family-teacher conferences, other school meetings, and visiting and volunteering in the classroom.

The authors note two findings that not only reflect on important issues related to the development of children's literacy but the policy that supports school literacy programs:

1. Increasing family involvement at the early grades predicts literacy achievement and, most importantly, is a stronger indicator for literacy development than family income, maternal level of education, and ethnicity.
2. Providing processes and structures to increase family involvement at the early grades matters most for children who are the most at risk, i.e., low-income families, mothers with low educational level, and other at-risk factors.

The authors recommend that all schools provide a means to engage families in both events and learning support activities in the early grades. Furthermore, to address the needs of children who are most at risk, schools need to actively develop long-term strategies to reach out to low-income families and other groups who commonly do not engage in their children's education.

The long-term collection of data for this study strengthens its correlational findings and its identification of relational factors. The authors provide important information and insight into family involvement and its outcomes on child readiness and academic achievement, particularly in regard to children who are most at risk.

Duchesne, S., & Larose, S. (2007). Adolescent parental attachment and academic motivation and performance in early adolescence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 37*(7), 1501-1521.

In this report on a mixed-method study, the authors investigated the link between adolescents' attachment to families in relation to academic motivation, performance, and problem behaviors as well as perceptions of teacher effort to serve as mediators to address student needs. Participants included 121 early adolescents: 71 girls and 50 boys with a mean age of 12.97. All were native French speaking Caucasians in the 7th grade.

Researchers used multiple surveys with student participants: Each adolescent completed 1) the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) to assess the quality of attachment to their mothers and fathers; 2) the Individualized Classroom Environment Questionnaire (ICEQ), a five item, five-point scale survey that evaluates the perceived availability and accessibility of particular teachers; 3) two scales of the Learning Environment Inventory to determine the perceived learning classroom learning environment, of the four-point scale survey; and 4) the Academic Motivation Scale, a 20 item, five-point scale self-report measure.

Researchers also included achievement data—end-of-year marks in English and mathematics from students' report cards. In addition to the student participants, researchers also used teacher evaluations of the students' externalized problems (aggressiveness, disruptive behaviors) and internalized problems (sadness, social withdrawal). The teachers were 7th grade French and math public school teachers: 5 women and 1 man.

Parent attachment was higher with mothers than fathers, although the authors pointed out that the relationships between adolescents and mothers and adolescents and fathers was often actualized very differently at this age. Girls showed higher attachment scores than boys, and this appeared to effect both genders' behaviors. Teacher data revealed that when there were higher levels of attachment, there were fewer problem behaviors exhibited. Positive behaviors common in students who expressed high attachment included confidence in school and other learning related contexts.

Across all student groups, the authors noted that attachment to families was associated with motivation to achieve but not with achievement itself. They also linked positive attachment to a student's confidence in school to a student's likelihood to embrace new experiences. They found these two factors to be intrinsic to motivation as well. There was higher achievement associated with higher motivation and student confidence; however, the authors state this achievement is not correlated to positive attachment.

In their conclusion, the authors propose that adolescents will be more motivated and academically successful if families are able 1) to recognize events during the transition from elementary school to high school that are likely to cause adolescent distress that can result in negative behaviors or decreased academic performance and 2) to intervene with an appropriate strategy to ameliorate the effect of the distress.

Although their study illustrates the power of adolescent attachment to families and the possible positive effect of this relationship on student actions, the authors caution readers about making the assumption that their report provides causal findings. Their methodology was not designed to capture the causal relationships between variables. Additionally, they state that they were unable to collect data on all possible variables that could have effected student outcomes. For example, their data reflects that teacher attachment can often have a positive effect on student academic motivation and performance; however, their design does not measure the effect of this factor.

Fauth, R. C., Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2007). Welcome to the neighborhood? Long-term impacts of moving to low-poverty neighborhoods on poor children's and adolescents' outcome. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 17(2), 249-284.

This quasi-experimental study examines the effect of a court-ordered neighborhood desegregation program on adolescent school performance in a low-income, Black and Latino neighborhood in New York City. The researchers compared 90 participants who moved to higher income neighborhoods (movers) and 71 nonmoving participants (nonmovers) using 2- and 7-year family-member surveys. Students in these families were 7 to 18 years of age at the time of the move.

The authors' findings in this study conflict with other studies of court-ordered neighborhood desegregation programs. These families do not benefit from the new neighborhoods. The authors propose that the significant difference between this program and others is the limited follow-up with mover families. In other similar projects, families were given much more extensive follow-up assistance where as families in this project had a few brief information sharing events early in the moving process and then no support for their transition to the new neighborhoods.

The researchers found that the adolescents in this study had the following characteristics:

1. They made no academic gains and when compared to the non-mover students even made lower scores
2. They exhibited more behavioral problems including substance abuse
3. They had less family supervision than the nonmover students.

Based on these findings, the authors stated that unless families are given adequate support to assist them in transitioning to new neighborhoods, court-ordered desegregation efforts are more likely to do more harm than good.

By using comparison groups within the study and by also comparing results to similar studies, the authors provide a strong rationale for their insights into the academic effect of moving these families to new neighborhoods and the causes for their poor performance. However, as the authors note, further study is needed to strengthen their findings.

Frame, M. S., Miller-Cribbs, J. E., & Van Horn, L. (2007). Poverty, race, and the contexts of achievement: Examining educational experiences of children in the U.S. South. *Social Work*, 52(4), 309-319.

This article explores issues related to educational inequality in the U.S. South. The data from this study comes from the first 2 years of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K). The ECLS-K tracks the educational development of a nationally representative cohort of children. Data are collected from students and families and at the classroom and school levels. For this study, the researchers used a subset of participants, limited to White, Black, and Hispanic students attending public school in the South who neither changed classrooms during kindergarten nor changed schools between kindergarten and first grade. The participants included 3,501 students from 1,208 classrooms in 246 schools. There was an average of 15.6 students per school and 4.4 students per classroom.

The authors used the ECLS-K reading tests derived from the Reading Framework in the fall and spring of the kindergarten year and in the spring of the first-grade year. This assessment measured basic skills, vocabulary, and four types of reading comprehension skills. Assessments were scored using an Item Response Theory (IRT) scale. The authors also collected data on child and family variables, school variables, and classroom variables. Teachers were also given a survey.

Of the children in the study, 38% attended high-ethnic minority schools and came from predominantly single-parent homes. Forty percent of sample children attended a school that had more than 50% ethnic minority students, and almost the same number qualified for free-lunch eligibility. The mothers of these children typically have less than a high school education and a significant number are teenage mothers, creating conditions where there is less knowledge and experience in the home to provide academic support.

In the students' schools, the teachers had higher percentages of less experienced and noncredentialed statuses. Across the classrooms, students had low levels of academic performance.

Based on these circumstances, the authors state, “. . . the issue is not so much whether a gap exists, but where, in the multiple layers of a child's environment, this gap is created and sustained” (p. 316). Through the use of a hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analysis, the authors demonstrated the most important variable in the children's first-grade learning can be attributed to family-level factors, created by “clustering of child and family differences within schools” (p. 316). Based on their analysis, the authors state that the highest priority in addressing this issue is educating teachers and school administrators about the effect of tracking and segregation of the more privileged students from those who are less privileged. If the U.S. educational system is to bridge the gap created by family-level factors, efforts need to focus on the whole community, not just the school and families. The conditions of the community have to change if there is to be long lasting improvements in student performance.

The authors themselves note an important limitation in the study, their inability to control the data to define “the South.” However, this study does provide insight into issues to be addressed if the achievement gap is to be bridged.

Frisco, M. L., Muller, C., & Frank, K. (2007). Parents' union dissolution and adolescents' school performance: Comparing methodological approaches. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(3), 721-741.

This mixed-method study correlates data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and the Adolescent Health and Academic Achievement Study to examine the utility of a propensity scoring model. The propensity scoring model uses matching techniques to determine causality in estimating how parents' union dissolution influences changes in adolescents' mathematic course gains, overall grade-point average, and course failure rates during a 1-year window.

The researcher used data from 2,629 seventh through 12th grade adolescents in two groups: Wave 1—student lives in a home with two biological or adoptive parents; Wave 2—student lives in home with two biological or adoptive parents or a single-parent home.

In their findings, the authors state that union dissolution of families has a significant effect on the academic performance of adolescents in all three categories: course gains, overall grade point average, and course failure rates. However, the authors also explain that they did not have a method of measuring the effect difference among types of emotional trauma. For example, whether the change from a two-parent home to single-parent home differs when the change is caused by death or when it is caused by divorce.

While this study illustrates the effect on the academic performance for a child living in a home that changes from a two-parent home to a one-parent home, the authors cannot determine if the actual effect comes from event trauma or fewer adult supports. Therefore while their results do not determine causality, they were able to determine that there is a significant effect on students when this change does occur. In regard to their research design model, the authors found that the use of a propensity score match provided comparable results to other regression methods.

Glick, J. E., & Hohmann-Marrott, B. (2007). Academic performance of young children in immigrant families: The significance of race, ethnicity, and national origins. *International Migration Review*, 41(2), 361-402.

This study examines the effect of generation status (generations in the U.S.) and family origin on early school performance. The researchers compared student performance with an Item Response Theory (IRT) model in order to efficiently compare test items across populations. The authors used mathematics performance data from 22,000 children attending ½ day or whole-day kindergarten as well as the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten (ECLS-K), and additional information from National Education Longitudinal Study:1988, Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (NELS:88, CILS), and Add Health data. The participants were 1.5 generation immigrants⁺, representing diverse backgrounds.

Although the authors caution readers about overstating the conclusions of this study because of the broad categories used to identify participants in large-scale longitudinal data collection projects, they do present a number of findings that can inform family involvement efforts.

General Findings

1. While second generation students commonly fall significantly below their U.S. peers, 1.5 generation students did not typically score significantly below their U.S. peers in performance.
2. Also in line with other reports, the immigrant Asian students do perform comparably to their U.S. peers, while other populations groups did under perform U.S. peers.
3. Students who performed poorly on early assessments in math were still underperforming 3 years later.
4. Headstart students do not perform as well as non-Headstart students.
5. There was no difference in performance for students attending ½ or whole-day kindergarten.

Family Involvement Findings

1. If family members attended even one open house type event, their children scored higher than those who do not. However, there were even larger increases when families were engaged in nonschool learning activities and outings.
2. For subgroup populations, family involvement had a positive effect in comparison with those families who were less involved in their children's education.
3. As shown in previous studies, family structure and income were predictors of early academic performance. For example, children from single-parent homes don't perform as well as comparable two-parent families.
4. Students who attend center-based or nonrelative in-home preschool rather than in-home, family-run care or pre-school demonstrated higher performance as well.

⁺ 1.5 generation immigrants are school age children in the first 2 or 3 years of school

This large-scale correlational report is well grounded by its large number of participants and varied database sources. The correlation findings provide insight into the contextual issues related to generational status and student performance and provide information that can help educators to develop more effective strategies in meeting the needs of all students. The findings also help to provide a clearer picture of meaningful family involvement. However as previously stated, the authors caution those who read this study to assign causal actions to correlational relationships.

Gonida, E. N., Kiosseoglou, G., Voulala, K. (2007). Perceptions of parental goals and their contribution to student achievement goal orientation and engagement in the classroom: Grade-level differences across adolescence. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, XXII*(1), 23-39.

This study explores 1) student perceptions of their parents' goals and their own goal orientation during adolescence and 2) parent goals in relation to the student achievement orientation and student emotional and behavioral actions in the classroom. Researchers used multivariate analysis of self-report Likert scale questionnaires with three age groups of male and female students in 7th grade (N=139), 9th grade (N=149), and 11th grade (N=138).

The authors report that as students grow older they report less knowledge of their parents' educational goals for them. As students age, they also express less goal orientation to academic achievement. However, the authors discuss the lack of focus on academics in term of intrinsic and external motivation, noting that other researchers have found that extrinsic motivation becomes more and more important as students age. In families in which parents express their expectations more clearly and students are able to perceive those expectations, there is a relationship to student achievement.

In discussing the limitations of their study, the researchers state that a cross-sectional study does provide the strength of correlations that a long-term longitudinal study might have. They also noted that self-report items can be interpreted differently by those taking the surveys.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H., M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings implications. *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 105-130.

In this review of recent documents, the authors use an earlier Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model on why families engage in their children's education to explore the factors that motivate families to get involved and the school and family practices that strengthen family-school connections. The authors state that the most influential factor in involving families is the way the school welcomes and reaches out to families. However, they also discuss empowerment in a new way. Generally, when researchers speak of empowerment in relation to family involvement, they are describing or recommending that families need to be "empowered" to engage in their children's education. They note that teachers have to be empowered to involve families. It is not a new idea, but it is a new perspective on this issue.

This article presents the following constructs to consider in these efforts:

1. When family members decide to get involved, the motivation to do so is effected by their previous educational experiences and their belief that they have a role to play. A school with well-designed programs has an influence on the role families define for themselves.
2. Another important motivator in a family member's choice to get involved is the invitation to engage. The most influential invitations come from a) the welcome the school extends to the families, and b) specific teachers and the child.
3. The context of the families' lives also helps to determine the motivation they feel to get involved in their children's education. Socioeconomic status; family members knowledge, skills, time, and energy for this effort; and family culture are the most influential factors in this context.

They also make the following suggestions for schools and teachers:

1. Increase the schools' capacity for inviting parental involvement by 1) building principal leadership skills in creating a welcoming school climate; 2) preparing teachers for parental involvement, i.e., empowering teachers to reach out to parents; 3) providing staff with the opportunity to learn about parents' goals, perspectives on learning, and family context and culture; 4) collaborate with other programs that also incorporate family involvement in their programs, i.e., afterschool or Headstart; 5) offer a variety of ways for families to be involved and issue invitations for involvement personally; and 6) encourage staff and families to attend student-centered activities.
2. Enhance family members' capacity for effective involvement by 1) communicating with families about their role in their children's education; 2) offering specific suggestions for families; 3) providing information on the outcomes of family involvement to families; 4) providing information about curriculum and learning expectations; 5) giving families positive feedback on their involvement; and 6) creating and supporting family and community networks.

This review reinforces previous syntheses, and it also provides a framework that can help others develop effective school-family connections.

Ingram, M., Wolfe, R. B., & Lieberman, J. M. (2007). The role of parents in high-achieving schools serving low-income, at-risk populations. *Education on Urban Society*, 39(4), 479-497.

This mixed-method study investigates critical elements of family support for their children's education to determine causal relationships between family involvement and student achievement. The researchers use survey data from 220 families of children who attended three Chicago public elementary schools as well as voluntary open-ended questions to gather more detailed information on key topics. The selected schools serve largely minority, low-income populations, and, yet, each school's overall achievement rate ranks in the upper third of the Illinois State Achievement Test. Additionally, each school is a member of the National Network of Partnerships Schools (NNPS) and uses the partnership's materials to promote family involvement that supports student achievement.

Across the three schools, the survey data reveal that even though all of the NNPS types of involvement are part of the implementation plan, efforts at the 3 schools focus primarily on two of the NNPS identified types of involvement 1) parenting and 2) learning at home. The authors note that even though the survey data revealed limited success with implementing the full NNPS model at each of the schools, the open-ended questions provided insight into strategies and processes that support family involvement efforts.

Forty-six percent of survey responses defined the role of the parent as "someone who works with the teacher and continues learning activities at home" (p. 488) which correlates to *learning at home* from the NNPS model. For parenting, their responses included thematic statements about "encouraging, motivating, modeling, parenting, disciplining, teaching morals and values, praising, and loving" (p. 488). However, families also describe three roles that fall outside of the NNPS typologies: 1) instilling high expectations, 3) value of education, and 3) providing a good education. Families placed high value on these roles as they supported their children's education.

In their conclusion, the researchers found the total NNPS typology was not aligned to the experiences of the families in the 3 schools that caused the researchers to question the value of the NNPS typology. Moreover, they questioned if the resources required to implement a full-scale family involvement model was a value decision since the link to student achievement was indirect rather than direct. They noted that schools might be better served to allocate their resources to efforts that more directly effect student learning rather than pursuing efforts that had an indirect effect.

Although this study describes new perspectives in each of the three school's use of the NNPS model as well as provides information on three key roles families identified for themselves, it does not determine causality or provide a direct comparison to similar schools that are not participants in the NNPS model.

Junttila, N., Vauras, M., & Laakkonen, E. (2007). The role of parenting self-efficacy in children's social and academic behavior. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 23(1), 41-61.

This mixed-method study explores family involvement from multiple perspectives 1) relations among mothers' and fathers' parenting self-efficacy (PSE), self-evaluated loneliness, teacher-evaluated motivational orientation, and academic skills through a latent variable structural model. The authors research design allowed them to determine whether the mothers' and fathers' parenting self-efficacy and social networks had a connection to their children's social and academic behavior in school. By looking at self-efficacy and loneliness, the authors were able to explore the subjective factors that commonly color families' and children's engagement in education. Participants included 454 students attending one of 13 elementary schools in a small urban town and a rural community in southern Finland and their teachers as well as 876 mothers and 696 fathers.

In their findings, the researchers note that family self-efficacy and loneliness do effect family capability to be a "good" parent. Essentially, if they believed they had greater capability and effect, they did. Or if they did not belief in their capability, they were less confident in their ability and therefore provided less support or simply did not engage in supportive activities. Moreover, these qualities also transferred to the child's peer relationships and social competence. In essence, a child's self-efficacy and loneliness mirror the families. Moreover, those families who had positive networks of friends and relatives were more able to support their children's needs. The authors stated that these findings have significant relevance to families and more specifically to providing support to children at risk.

This study provides rich and insightful information on the relationship between family member confidence and beliefs about their ability and role to support their children's educations and the outcomes of their actions. Moreover, the sample is large enough and diverse enough to add weight to the authors' findings.

McGrath, W. H. (2007). *Ambivalent partners: Power, trust, and partnership in relationships between mothers and teacher in a full-time childcare center. Teachers College Record, 109(6), 1401-1422.*

This case study examines family-teacher partnerships at a childcare facility in a large urban area on the East Coast. Although the childcare facility included children from 2 to 5 years, the author narrowed her research to the mothers of 2-year olds.

Participants for this study were 13 mothers, 12 teachers, 1 kitchen staff member, 1 business manager, and 1 center director. During Year 1, the teachers represent the following demographics: 7 Latino, 2 African American, 1 Indian, and 2 White middle class; during Year 2, 5 Latino, 4 African American, 1 Indian. The kitchen staff member is Latino. The business manager and center director were White middle class. Data for this study included videotape of drop off and pick times for children, notes from interviews, classroom observations, and informal interactions as well as pre-school documents.

The author used three categories—1) power, 2) trust, and 3) partnerships—as she described interactions between teachers and mothers. Although she did attempt to delineate findings into each of these categories, in reality, their interactions blended across all of them.

Since the mothers had to rely on teachers to share time sensitive information, the author described their “trust” for one another as a type of forced “trust.” This trust was more of a convention of immediate need rather than the type of trust commonly associated with meaningful relationships and effective family involvement programs. In fact, the teachers often expressed their lack of trust for the mothers and feeling of being undermined by the mothers’ direct contact with the director. The mothers also commonly allowed the teachers to dominate interactions since the mothers needed the information the teachers had about their children’s academic performance or physical needs. The facility’s turnover of staff also contributed to this type of pseudo trust.

Both teachers and mothers stated that they worked with the other as partners in meeting the child’s needs. However, the reality was not typical of the two-way collaborative interactions commonly associated with effective partnerships. For example, the teachers stated that they did not feel families were actually capable of partnering with them. While at the same time, the mothers expected to be partners in their children’s education. For example, when a mother asked about the curriculum being taught, the teachers exhibited a fearful reaction. They did not want the mothers involved in classroom pedagogical issues; it was not the role of the family member, but the teacher to determine curriculum.

The study design allowed the researcher to obtain very personal and in-depth information about the participants’ feelings and experiences, resulting in vivid descriptions of the perceptions of both families and teachers. These descriptions can provide valuable insights for those who are looking for effective parent-teacher involvement strategies. The author provides a beginning framework for causality, but it is limited by the lack of comparable data.

Phillipson, S. & Phillipson, S. N. (2007). Academic expectations, belief of ability, and involvement by parents as predictors of child achievement: A cross-cultural comparison. *Educational Psychology*, 27(3), 329-348.

This comparison study was designed to investigate the perception of families' academic expectations about 1) their children's cognitive ability, 2) whether their degree of involvement at home and school predicts children's academic achievement, and 3) the effect of culture on achievement. The study included 158 parents of students from 3 primary schools in Hong Kong. Each school represents different economic levels: Chinese School 1 is upper class, Chinese School 2 is lower class, and Anglo-Celtic School 1 is upper class. Data was collected through family questionnaires that focus on children's memory ability, involvement in supporting learning, and performance expectations for students as well as school performance data.

The authors based their study questions on Vygotsky's theory that families serve as mediators for their children's education. In regard to this framework, they note the following findings:

1. There is a correlation between schools' programs that offer dual-language programs and family confidence in assisting their children with schoolwork at home. Similarly, there is a discomfort for families providing assistance in monolingual programs when the language is not their native language.
2. Although they found that student achievement is effected by family members' beliefs that children will be successful academically, they also found that previous successful performance is a significant factor in this belief.
3. At each school, there are different expectations for family involvement.
4. In the two upper class schools, the families have similar expectations for student achievement. The authors noted that achievement is a subjective quality depending on the parent's definition of achievement. For example, in exploring how the families define "intelligence," there is marked difference between the Anglo-Celtic school and the two Chinese schools. The Anglo-Celtic school's families place a high priority on "episodic memory" for their children, while the families at the two Chinese schools place a high priority on "categorical relationships and stores of learned information" (p. 344).

The use of comparison groups strengthens the researchers' findings and provided new insights into the different perspectives of each group in the study as well as the values and beliefs that each group passes on to their children. This study clearly demonstrates the effect of linguistic context on study performance. The authors, themselves, note the most significant limitation in this study was their inability to control all the variables that might effect the results in regard to student performance and causality.

Pomerantz, E. M., Moorman, E. A., & Litwack, S. D. (2007). The how, whom, and why of parents' involvement in children's academic lives: More is not always better. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(3), 373-410.

This review of the literature explores the reasons families choose to get involved in their children's education by looking at three aspects of their involvement:

1. In what ways do family members involve themselves in their children's education?
2. Do all children receive equal benefit from involvement?
3. Who benefits from family involvement in schools?

In their conclusion, the authors stated that the focus on proving a direct correlation between family involvement and student achievement may be blinding researchers to the innate connection between a child's mental and physical health and school performance—mental and physical health may drive school performance. Because of this natural connection, added family involvement is very likely to have a positive effect on the child's whole life including school performance. The authors go on to describe the importance of family self-efficacy in this role. When families feel they have the power to address needs, they feel equipped to provide for their children and support their education.

However, they also discuss a type of backfire involvement scenario. When the families feel overwhelming pressure to fit the child into a specified mold or expect the child to achieve unattainable goals, their frustration may actually lead to negative effects rather than positive ones. If family involvement is to result in positive outcomes, the implementation process has to include strategies that foster the families' beliefs about their ability to provide what their children need.

Quioco, A. M. L., & Daoud, A. M. (2006). Dispelling myths about Latino parent participation in schools. *The Educational Forum*, 70(3), 255-267.

This case study discussed and dispelled commonly held myths about Latino families' involvement in their children's education. The authors used interview and observation data from school staff and families at two elementary schools in large unified school districts in southern California. In the schools, teachers, administrators, and other school staff members expressed low expectations, opinions, and perceptions about Latino families. School A participants were 50 Latino families, 75 teachers, and 10 instructional aides; School B consisted of 20 families, 3 teachers, 6 instructional aids, 3 cafeteria workers, and 2 office secretaries. Classroom observations were at least 20 minutes in length.

Both schools had been identified as underperforming by the California Department of Education. School A with 976 students was on a year-round schedule with three groups of students in attendance while a fourth group was on intersession; it had a transitional bilingual program with English Learner (primarily Spanish) population of 343 or 35%. School B with an enrollment of 501 had a traditional September to June calendar; all instruction was delivered in English. In School B, there were 231 English Learners (primarily Spanish) or 46%. Staff at both schools stated they involved families on advisory committees.

As part of the study design, a public meeting was held at each school to present a data report from the interviews and observations. Two hundred and fifty families attended at School A; 80 at School B.

Based on data collected from the educators prior to the public meeting, the authors stated the following:

1. Teachers feel that Latino families are unreliable and refused to volunteer in the classroom.
2. Teachers feel that Latino families do not support the school's homework policy because they do not help their children with homework.
3. Teachers feel that Latino families do not care about their children's education.
4. Teachers feel that Latino families are unskilled and unprofessional.

Based on data collected from the families prior to the public meeting, the authors stated the following:

1. Families want their children to receive the same services as other students including curriculum content and instruction.
2. Families are concerned that curriculum focused on literacy and learning to speak English and do not address the science and social studies content areas. In particular, they ask for grade-level science instruction.
3. Families are very concerned with what they term as unfair practices. Promises are made to students, and then teachers do not follow-up. Students often do help other students when they ask for help; they feel teachers are responsible to do this.

4. Families feel that some of the teachers are justified in their view that some students watch too much TV and do not get help for homework at home. However, they also state that some teachers have students watching TV too much in school and do not provide assistance to students who needed assistance.
5. Families feel that school staff only involve “select” family members in planning and advising. These family members do not represent all the students’ families.
6. In answering questions about what they can do as families to support education, they state “help for their children and themselves, improved communication between the school and the home, respect for their children, access to core or grade-level curriculum, and partnerships with schools” (p. 263). They ask specifically that schools staff provide the following:
 - Help in understanding their children’s assignments
 - Communication that is timely and routine
 - Information on what their children are being asked to do
 - Information about when family-teacher conferences will happen
 - Respect for their children
 - Teachers who are friendly
 - Reciprocal curriculum and instruction—i.e., if other students are studying science while English learners are in pull out periods, they want their children to study the same science curriculum in the pull out, not songs and drawing
 - Access to Spanish text that explains the content and instruction so they can provide assistance to their children

The following quote summarized the themes from the family data:

The messages from Latino parents were clear. Teach our children the content you teach other students. Expect that our children will achieve, and make sure you support their achievement. Help them, when they need academic help. Make them feel like members of the school community. By seeing their faces, understanding their personalities, and valuing their needs. Parents felt that the schools were not offering their children a quality education, and they wanted the schools to be accountable for that. At one school, the teachers and administrators were offended by the candidness of parents and placed Spanish-speaking parents with English-only speaking adults (teachers and other parents) at subsequent meetings. This effectively silenced the voices of additional concerns of Spanish-speaking parents. (p. 264)

Once the interview and observation data were analyzed, the authors shared the results with school staff and family members at the meetings referenced in the data collection description. After the meetings, all stakeholders expressed new perspectives of each other . . .

School staff had the following views:

- They were impressed by the levels of articulation about curriculum and instruction Spanish-speaking family members had exhibited

- They were surprised by the turnout of families at meetings referenced above. This caused them to reevaluate their assumption that Hispanic families do not care about their children's education.

Families asked for the following:

- That the school create a liaison role for increasing communication with families as their work-life and personal context often prevent them from reaching out to the schools. They felt schools should take responsibility to increase communication by using a parent liaison, someone who welcomes and respects them.
- That the school provide translations for all material to be shared with them and a Spanish-speaking employee at the front office to greet them.

The authors concluded that school staff must find ways to communicate with the families of English learners and reach out to families by holding meetings in the community as well as at the schools.

The extensive perceptual data collected by the authors allowed them to create a multifaceted view of the feelings and actions of both families and teachers in this school. Their report provides compelling and insightful descriptions that can help those who seek to implement similar efforts.

**Resto, W. & Alston, (2006). *Parent involvement at selected ready schools.*
Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.**

This case study examines efforts in 4 schools and 1 regional organization that have been identified as effective in implementing education-related family activities that promote children's readiness for schools. These sites are located in culturally and linguistically diverse, low-income communities in Connecticut, Indiana, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia. Data were collected through family involvement surveys and telephone interviews.

This report focused on the following types of support in the home 1) nurturing children as learners, 2) establishing study time and space, 3) helping with homework, 4) modeling reading and other academic habits, and 5) tutoring children at home. It also focused on the following school-based activities 1) volunteering in classrooms, 2) helping with school activities, 3) acting as liaisons between school and other families, or 4) advocating for schools' needs or shaping governance and decision-making.

Across the sites, the researcher found that the key to increase effective forms of involvement for culturally and linguistically diverse, low-income communities was offering multiple avenues of involvement at different times, accommodating language needs, and providing refreshments. The author recommended the following actions based on the study results:

Actions schools should take to reach out to families

- Provide explicit written policy concerning family involvement that clearly describes the principal's leadership role in these efforts
- Prepare welcome packets for incoming families, with such information as staff profiles, school layout, school calendars, and other information that will help students transition to the school
- Use special events such as a summer kick-off event for new kindergarten families with information on school and community resources
- Recruit family members for a variety of volunteer opportunities offered at different times of the day, including classroom assistants, event helpers, and parent teacher associations or other leadership programs
- Hold parent-child literacy workshops to help families learn about specific home-based activities that will support their children's literacy development
- Solicit family feedback through surveys and conversations with various district and school staff routinely
- Create a process to identify and accommodate common barriers to involvement
- Create partnerships with others in the community that target new families
- Provide a process for families to check-out and take various materials home

Actions schools should take to promote home-based activities.

- Demonstrate the school's commitment to family involvement through very visible actions or structures
- Create opportunities for new families to get to know the school and the neighborhood
- Provide information on school activities frequently
- Use varied communication strategies to ensure that family members of all education levels understand school materials
- Make communicating positive messages to families a routine habit, not just communicating about problems
- Develop family capacity to advocate through ambassador programs
- Support teachers through professional development focused on working with families

Actions regional organizations should take to promote home-based activities

- Provide information or tips on helping children with homework and supplementing school lessons
- Provide opportunities for families to get involved in field trips and community activities
- Provide families with check-out school materials for use at home
- Visit families in their homes to build rapport and disseminate information
- Host community meetings in locations in which families feel comfortable
- Partner with trusted community liaisons
- Collaborate with libraries and other local agencies to develop relationships with families prior to kindergarten entry

Actions schools or organizations should take to reach out to culturally and linguistically diverse families.

- Partner with district and community organizations for translation and liaison services
- Provide translations for written and oral communications
- Provide training for bilingual family mentors, volunteers, and leaders
- Offer classes for family members to learn English and other languages
- Support teachers explicitly through professional development focused on cultural and linguistic differences

This study describes practical and numerous strategies for approaching and involving culturally and linguistically diverse families. The use of sites representing varied demographics and locations also strengthens the findings.

Robinson, G., & Fenwick, L. (2007). *More than homework, a snack, and basketball: Afterschool programs as an oasis of hope for Black parents in four cities*. Washington, DC: Black Alliance for Educational Options.

In this case study report, the authors focus on three topics 1) factors that influence Black low-income working-class families to enroll their children in afterschool programs, 2) criteria families use to determine program quality, and 3) a description of a positive afterschool experiences. To do this, they studied programs in 4 cities, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. In selecting these cities, they used four rationale, the number of Black residents in the city, the number of Black children enrolled in the city's public schools, the diversity of afterschool programs, and the existence of a local Black Alliance for Educational Options chapter.

The 407 participants in the study were working-class Black families living in the target city with at least one child in grades 1–12 who was enrolled in an afterschool program during the 2006 spring semester, 2006 summer months and/or the 2006–2007 school year and participants. These families also had an income of less that \$50,000 a year. Overall, 95% of the study participants were Black with the remaining participants describing themselves as African, Caribbean, Hispanic/Latino, or other. Seventy percent were mothers; 12%, fathers; 11 percent, grandparents; 5%, aunts or uncles; and “other.” Fifty percent worked full- or part-time, and most earned \$20,000 or less annually. Sixty percent were renters. Almost 50% were single. Almost 1/3 of the participants had completed some college coursework. Participants were scattered across each city, purposefully selected so as not to have sole representation in select areas.

Each participant completed a two-page questionnaire and engaged in 1 of 46 focus group meetings held in the selected cities.

Although this study focuses on the families' view of afterschool programs, the researchers also state that these adults were excited and honored to be heard. Having someone listen to their ideas and concerns about their children's education was important to the families participating in the focus groups.

Family members described the overall purpose of afterschool programs as to improve their children's academic motivation, school engagement and bonding, as well as achievement. Within this purpose, they expected afterschool staff to provide homework assistance and individualized tutoring, particularly in reading and mathematics; a safe environment away from negative influences; a stimulating atmosphere in which students can experience art, music, and dance; an opportunity to learn leadership and decision making skills; increased likelihood for academic and lifelong success; constructive activities while adults work; and fun activities that counterbalance the academic focus of the school day.

The families stated that they wanted afterschool programs to help their children to make better grades in school, become better disciplined, achieve greater maturity, have a broader exposure to

diverse peers and experiences, and have increased exposure to male role models. However, across these outcomes, families rated providing a male role model as the most important benefit.

Families also described traits that made afterschool programs less effective or appealing to them: staff who show little interest in their job or students, apply rewards and discipline inconsistently, fail to invite family involvement, leave children alone without supervision, have little or no structured activities, and let children be unruly or undisciplined. Family also provided qualities that would cause them not to choose a program: unwelcoming atmosphere, distance of afterschool program from home and /or school with a lack of transportation, affordability, and lack of adult literacy.

The study also demonstrated the importance of ensuring that both children and their families had a positive experience in the program in building enrollment. Other families most commonly learned about the program through word of mouth (other adults, including other families, neighbors, friends and school personnel, as well as children in the program). The only communication strategy commonly expressed aside from shared positive experiences was flyers.

Across the surveys and focus groups, the authors found the following characteristics of afterschool programs to be important for families:

- *Commitment to learning, including achievement, motivation, homework completion, school engagement, linkage to school programs and learning, reading for pleasure, and math competence*
- *Constructive use of time, including academic study and participation in creative and fun activities*
- *Support, including individualized attention, positive family communication, a caring environment, and positive adult relationships*
- *Social competence, including interpersonal competence, cultural competence, decision making, and conflict resolution*
- *Boundaries and expectations, including high expectations and adult role models*
- *Positive identify, including self-esteem, personal power and a positive view of the future*

These case studies help to define the expectations of Black low-income families for their children's afterschool programs. Most interestingly, it demonstrates that families, not matter the background, do have an understanding of a "quality" educational program.

Sheldon, S. (2007). Improving student attendance with school, family, and community partnerships. *Journal of Education*, 100(5), 267-275.

This 2-year comparison study investigates the effect of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) program on student attendance in comparison to similar non-NNPS schools. The study includes 69 Ohio elementary schools that had been using materials from the NNPS for 3 to 4 years—across all schools. Across these schools, their student demographics are more than 80% low economic status student populations; 69.9 percent White, 24.8 percent African American, 5.4 percent Hispanic; 29.4 percent large urban, 23.5 percent small urban, 23.5 percent suburban, and 23.5 percent rural. The 69 comparison schools are chosen for their similar demographics. Data collection includes NNPS action team reports; publicly accessible data from the OH Department of Education that included percent of 4th graders passing reading and mathematics state assessments, enrollment and attendance information, and per pupil funding allocations.

NNPS schools had an average increase in attendance of 0.5%; in comparison to non-NNPS schools, which had a slight decline in attendance each year. This difference was attributed to the outreach efforts incorporated in the NNPS processes and materials.

Although the schools were as closely matched as possible, the NNPS schools did have a higher representation of lower income families and the per pupil expenditure for the “pupil support”: 9% NNPS schools; 11% for non-NNPS schools. In expanding these findings, the author notes the following:

1. Across the non-NNPS schools, the schools with the highest per pupil support allocation have the highest attendance rates.
2. Across all schools, schools with higher percentages of lower income families have lower rates of attendance.
3. Across all schools, schools with higher percentages of Title I students have lower rates of attendance. However, since Title I status is determined by income, this is not surprising.
4. The programs with the strongest evidence of school, family, and community partnerships also have the strongest positive effect on student attendance. A central component of the stronger programs are outreach from the school to the families.

The author provides information on the effect of family involvement on a central concern of schools across the nation—attendance. By comparing intervention schools to similar schools, the author strengthens the findings and provides insight into the causes for differences across schools.

Stewart, E. B. (2008). School structural characteristics, student effort, peer associations, and parental involvement: The influence of school- and individual-level factors on academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(2), 179-204.

For this probability study, the researchers investigated the relationships between academic achievement and individual-level and school structural predictors. The authors used statistical model on a select set of data—10th grade students, teachers, school administrators, and families— from second wave National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) longitudinal survey collection (1990). Data collection methods included participant interviews every 2 years, student reports, and school descriptive information from print and interviews. This report includes 11,999 students attending 715 high schools with an average of 17 students per school. The sample included 12% African American, 9.6% Latino, 7.2% Asian, 1.2% Native Americans, and 70% White. Fifty-three percent was female.

The authors explored student within-school measures, including student effort, student involvement in school activities, and student school commitment as well as student outside-of-school measures, including student association with positive peers, family involvement in school activities, and parent-child discussion. Family structure, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were controlled because of their association with academic achievement.

They also investigated school measures such as between-schools measures, including school social problems and school cohesion—trust, shared expectations, and positive interactions among students, teachers, and administrators.

The authors found two factors had significant effect on student achievement: student-level factors and school cohesiveness. In brief, the findings are as follows:

1. Students who felt a sense of attachment and demonstrated commitment to the school had higher GPAs.
2. Students with well-defined educational goals may be more committed to their education.
3. There was no correlation between student achievement and student involvement in school activities such as extracurricular events.
4. Positive peer associations had a strong relationship to student achievement.
5. Family-child discussions had a significant relationship to academic achievement. However, other forms of involvement studied did not demonstrate significance.
6. Higher socioeconomic status, family structure, and ethnicity were found to be significantly associated with academic achievement, though gender had no effect.
7. In schools with a supportive and inviting environment, students had higher academic achievement. More importantly, in these schools, socioeconomic status, family structure, and ethnicity did not effect achievement in these schools.

The longitudinal design of this study strengthens its results and allows the authors to build a strong case for their identification relationships that support student achievement. It helps to define what “really matters” in supporting student success.

Valencia, Pérez, & Echeveste, and Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. (2006, April). *Latino public opinion survey of pre-kindergarten programs: Knowledge, preferences, and public support. A report conducted for Pre-K Now.*

This evaluation used a survey process to gauge support for government-subsidized prekindergarten programs among the Latino community as well as better understand Latinos' motivators and barriers for supporting or involving their children in these programs. Pre-K Now planned to use information from this report to develop effective, culturally-relevant messages to increase support for prekindergarten programs.

A total of 1,000 survey interviews were completed between March 1, 2006, and March 12, 2006. The survey sample was drawn from Spanish surname samples in targeted states and from nationality targeted sample lists to draw in wider Latino representation. The nationality target sample was 24 percent of the final survey sample. Ninety-five percent of the survey interviews were conducted in Spanish, although interviewers were prepared to use either English or Spanish. Each survey interview lasted approximately 15 minutes and had 20 questionnaire items and 15 demographic items.

Participants included representation from Mexican, Central American, Cuban, and Puerto Rican/Dominican homes. Mexican homes account for 61% of the surveys and Central America for 19%. Central American representation included El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Cost Rica, and Belize. Researchers included 300 samples from states that did not traditionally have high Latino populations—Arkansas, North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee—as well as 700 surveys from states with traditionally high Latino populations—California, Texas, Illinois, Florida, New York, and New Jersey. Sixty-five percent of the sample was female, working class, first-generation (87% foreign born), and relatively young. The researchers used a weighted system to balance the female predominance since the percentage did not mirror the actual demographics of the Latinos. The authors described the following findings.

Respondents from traditionally Latino states were more established, older, had a higher socioeconomic status, and tended to be U.S. citizens. They also were more likely to vote and enroll their children in kindergarten at higher rates. Respondents from nontraditionally Latino states were younger, more likely to live in a Spanish-speaking home, had younger children, and were single or unmarried. In general, all respondents felt that prekindergarten was important for their children.

After a description of these programs was read to the respondents, their positive support rose 15%. Ninety-five percent of the respondents feel children who attended prekindergarten had an advantage in school over children who did not attend prekindergarten. However, while they clearly expressed their view that prekindergarten was very important, a significant percentage of respondents did not feel enrolling their children in prekindergarten was feasible for the following reasons:

- Family members can't afford to send their children (21%).
- Family member can stay home with child (11%).
- Family's schedule makes attendance too inconvenient (12%).

- Kindergarten program is not of good quality (2%).
- Families want child to stay with a family member (8%).
- Families don't have documents needed to enroll child (12%, predominately nontraditional Latino states).
- Prekindergarten teacher doesn't speak English (8%).
- Family members don't know of programs in the community (33%).
- Other (12%).
- Do not know (10%).

When the authors explored sources of information about prekindergarten family members accessed, they found that the most common source of information about prekindergarten was the local elementary school. However, 23% of the respondents noted that they did not know where to enroll their children. Overall, 45% of the respondents had a limited or no knowledge about prekindergarten programs.

When respondents were asked who families felt would be the best spokesperson for prekindergarten programs, 67% stated that a teacher was the most trusted source; other family members received a 14% response. However, respondents from English-speaking homes or those with postsecondary education did not have the same preferences for teachers as the spokesperson, but, instead, they preferred to talk to other family members.

When asked their preferences, the 96% of respondents said they would enroll their children in free, prekindergarten programs if offered. Eighty-eight percent felt that programs that also included efforts to help family members strengthen their reading, academic, and social skills were important. Ninety-five percent stated that bilingual teachers were important although Spanish-speaking homes rated this as the highest, and U.S. respondents ranked it the lowest.

There was a large variance in responses about educational requirements for prekindergarten teachers, but all respondents felt it is important to have qualified staff.

The large number of participants and efforts to ensure that the participants were representative of national demographics strengthens the results of this study. This large-scale evaluation provides insight into central issues concerning prekindergarten and underserved populations; phone surveys cannot demonstrate causality.

Weiss, H., Mayer, E., Kreider, H., Vaughan, M. Dearing, E., Hencke, R., & Pinto, K. (2007). Making it work: Low-income working mothers' involvement in their children's education. *Research Digest* [Retrieved on August 15, 2007, from <http://www.gse.harvard.edu.hfrp>].

Adapted from Weiss, H. B., Mayer, E., Vaughan, P., Kreider, H., Dearing, E., Hencke, R., & Pinto, K. (2003). Making it work: Low-income working mothers' involvement in their children's education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(4) 879-901.

This mixed-method follow-up to an experimental impact evaluation examined the connection between maternal work and low-income mothers involved in their elementary school children's education. The authors used family surveys that included involvement record sheets as well as the School Transition Study (STS) longitudinal follow-up. Mothers were asked to record the number of hours they work at or attend events at school and their out-of-school involvement related to education. The study included 390 low-income children who were 37% African American, 36% White, 24% Latino. A subset of 20 families also participated in a case study based on interview data.

The authors noted the following findings in their report:

1. The number of hours a mother works or the number of hours devoted to improving educational status correlate to fewer hours in support for their children's education; however, mothers who were not working or not seeking further education have even less involvement time in support of their children's education.
2. Working mothers or those improving their educational status often use creative scheduling or procedures to involve themselves in their children's education, such as
 - Moving a lunch hour
 - Using family/friend networks to gain information or provide support for their children's learning
 - Using the workplace resources (for example calling the school during work time to schedule meetings or check on student progress, holding informal meeting at the workplace with teachers, using office computers, or providing a future work world perspective by bringing children to work)
 - Making the home their center of support

The authors also provided the following recommendations for schools:

1. Collect information about families' work setting when inquiring about children's family and after-school arrangements in order to determine the most effective ways of communicating with and engaging families.
2. Create flexible scheduling for the timing of school-family interactions so that all families have an opportunity to engage in both formal and informal activities.
3. Partner with local employers so that families have support in their efforts to engage in their children's education.

4. Use a range of technological tools to facilitate communication between teachers and families in their workplace in order to increase information sharing.
5. Redefine and expand what family involvement means so that both families and school staff recognize a wide range of possible ways that families can contribute to the education of their children.

This long-term, large scale mixed-method evaluation is strengthened by its inclusion of participants representing diverse population groups and its subset follow-up. The varied research methods allowed the authors to provide rich descriptions and recommendations that can provide insight to those seeking to improve their efforts. The use of an experimental design also allowed the authors to determine causality.

Wong, S. W., & Hughes, J. N. (2006). Ethnicity and language contributions to dimensions of parent involvement. *School Psychology Review, 35*(4), 645-662.

This study examines differences among varied ethnic and language groups on dimensions of parent-rated and teacher-rated parent involvement. Study participants included 179 teachers and 481 parents of first-grade students who had scored below the media score on state-approved, district administered measures of literacy from 1 of 3 ethnically diverse school districts (1 urban, 2 rural) in Texas. Students represented Black, Hispanic, and White populations. Each family member and teacher participating received a questionnaire, and multivariate analysis was performed on the data.

The authors reported the following findings:

- Black families report more frequent communication with schools than Hispanic families.
- Black and White families report more instances of shared responsibility for student learning than Hispanic families.
- Hispanic families who spoke English report more instances of shared responsibility for student learning than Hispanic families who were not able to communicate in English.
- Hispanic families, particularly in Spanish-speaking homes, report less communication with the school and less of a feeling of shared responsibility for the children's education.
- There are no significant differences between school-family involvement between any of the ethnic groups.
- Teachers rate their involvement activities with Black families lower than interactions with White or Hispanic families. In fact, teachers stated that Black families were the least involved ethnic group.
- There is a high correlation between home-school relationship, indicating that the stronger the connection between the two, the more support there is for the child's education.

Although there are likely to be a large number of factors at play, these findings demonstrate again the difference in perspectives between teachers and families. Neither group is using the same scales or activities as the other.

Although the authors state that this study cannot provide causal relationships, they do raise important questions for schools to consider as they plan school-family involvement efforts, specifically teachers need to find ways to communicate with families to support their children's education, particularly Hispanic families who report less engagement.

Zarate, M. E. (2007). *Understanding Latino parental involvement in education: Perceptions, expectations, and recommendations*. New York, NY: The Thomás Rivera Policy Institute.

This study examines Latino families' perceptions of their participation in their children's education; schools' and teachers' expectations for families; programs that are designed to increase school-family involvement; and Latino students' perceptions of the role of their parents in their education. Data for this study was collected in 3 large metropolitan areas with significant and diverse Latino representations—Miami, New York area, and Los Angeles through the following methods:

- Focus groups with parents—3 focus groups of 8 to 10 Latino parents in each city. In each city, 1 focus group was conducted in English; 2 focus groups were conducted in Spanish (1 for middle school; 1 for high school); 53% of the participants were female; 59% had not graduated from high schools; and 85% were foreign-born; lived in the U.S. for 21 years and primarily from Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.
- Interviews with 2 teachers, 2 counselors, and 1 school administrators in each of the 3 cities—open-ended, 30-minute interviews, with staff representing 3 different middle schools and 2 high schools, each having more than 50% minority enrollment
- Focus groups with students in Los Angeles—2 focus groups with a total of 10 public high school students in the 11th and 12th grade who were in programs target at students who would be the first in their families to attend college; all self-identified as Latino/a and most came from families from Central America or Mexico with less than a high school education
- Interviews with 14 directors or coordinators of family involvement programs located in 1 of the cities—from organizations identified through an Internet search, previously known programs, or referred through interviews

In response to questions about family member perception of their involvement in their children's education, participants responded on two levels—supporting academic development and educating the child for “life participation” (p. 8). While families did note important actions related to academic development, the responses that described efforts related to providing a holistic framework for life were of much more importance to families.

In describing their efforts to assist with homework, the family members state this is important and, at the same time, state their limitations in doing this—language, formal education, work hours, and school policy. When discussing ways to gain knowledge about the school's educational system, the author notes that family members were concerned about schools assessing their parenting skills. She also states that language differences between the teacher and the family are not really an issue, because there is so little communication occurring between the two. Although other studies discuss the culture of the schools, this study examined more practical issues related to the school such as located doors and gates and inability to talk to a teacher during the school day.

Across the educator responses to define family involvement in education, there was a united voice. For example, they identified parent-teacher organizations, yet not one parent group mentioned this

organization. Teachers referred to “behavior monitoring” in which parents listed this as one of the issues related to educating the child for “life” (p. 11). Educators also identified family attendance events like back-to-school nights or open house as important in contrast to the families who did not.

Even though there were wide differences in their perceptions, educators readily attributed much of a child’s success in school to the families. However, on closer investigation, the contributions described by the educators were actually about the high-achieving student, not other students. In reality, the most common form of school-family interaction was for negative situations, such as behavior.

In all the schools, the researchers did not find any kind of organized, long-term planning or programs concerning family involvement. Most often the implementation of any school-family connections was dependent upon the teacher; there was minimal if any system wide support for these efforts.

The authors described four types of organizations that performed outreach to families related to education:

1. K–12 Dissemination—offering training, classes, or information to increase family-school connections, specifically focused on student achievement
2. Leadership—training directed toward developing parental leadership in order to facilitate communication between the school and home
3. Training/Advocacy—providing support to families in order to help them become advocates for their children in the schools and the community
4. Community Organizing—providing information and support to help families leverage partnerships to identify and engage in important school issues

By intention, every high school student included in this study was college bound. Statistically, this does not make these students typical of other Latino students. However, the study of successful Latino students provides information on the effective family support that might prove effective in other settings. These students described the most effective support as not direct academic assistance, but, instead, encouragement for academic success. Giving students emotional and motivational support was the highest priority for them. Establishing trust was the next most important. The students provided the following lists of ways for family to support them:

- Sharing examples of success and failure
- Asking questions about the student’s day
- Giving general encouragement
- Establishing a trustful relationship
- Encouraging brothers and sisters to look out for each other
- Providing needed transportation
- Disciplining them
- Monitoring their attendance
- Giving them incentives or deterrents for behavior

When questioned about how their families supported them at the elementary level, most of the students felt their families had been very supportive of their education by enforcing attendance, establishing high expectations for performance, and enforcing discipline. They attributed these qualities as important in establishing patterns of behavior that helped them to be successful in high school. At that age, family members also gave homework support or helped them with other academic needs, although they felt it was language that prevented families from giving support as students moved into higher grades. They also remembered family attending school meetings and open houses. These students also talked about the importance of their families selecting middle and high schools that focused on college preparation; often, this meant they did not attend the schools closest to them.

Based on the findings, the author made the following recommendations:

For policymakers

- State and national policies should require family involvement and measure that involvement through mandated accountability systems. The progress of schools in this area should be published.
- Federal, state, or local legislation should encourage or require employers to allow flex time or work leave to attend school activities.
- Schools with high concentrations of Spanish speakers should provide incentives for staff to become bilingual.
- Federal and state programs should fund innovative and sound school-family involvement programs, targeting schools with low-academic performance first.
- Funding should support large-scale partnerships between communities, universities, and schools to promote English language, literacy, and computer training for families in districts with low performance ratings.

For schools and organizations

- Districts and schools should develop and publicize measurable goals and objectives to increase family involvement to support student learning.
- Activities that target families should be held at times convenient to families and use strategies and incentives that encourage families to attend.
- Teachers and counselors who reach out to families and practice innovative strategies to do so should be recognized and rewarded for their actions.
- Schools should offer professional development for teachers and staff that gives teachers strategies and examples of best practice.
- School-based committees and organizations should recruit representative membership and use strategies to ensure participation of all families.
- Schools should provide a space just for families to learn about how to support their children and to engage in study or learning to better themselves.
- Districts, schools, and organizations should use DVD technology to provide training and information to families on the U.S. educational system and other areas of need.
- Districts, schools, and organizations should give incentives for family members to accumulate hours of service or volunteer hours.

- Schools and organizations should routinely evaluate their efforts, using surveys and interviews or other accessible means.

For teachers

- Teachers should reach out to families for positive reasons, not only for negative reasons.
- Teachers should offer meetings, calls, or other events at times more convenient to families and use contact strategies that are more attune to the families' schedules and habits.
- Teachers should be willing to expend the time and energy it takes to be successful in these efforts.

This study targets a very specific context and participants with the intention of communicating best practice. While the findings and recommendations may not be applicable to all settings, they will add insight and food for thought for those implementing school-family involvement programs.

Appendix D

Detailed Information on Current Research Describing the Effect of Working Systemically to Improve Student Performance That Promotes Family-School Connections as an Important Aspect of Working Systemically[^]

Center for Mental Health in Schools. (2005a). *School improvement planning: What's missing?* Los Angeles, CA: Center for Mental Health in Schools. [One of series of reports for Center for Mental Health in Schools, University of California-LA, Los Angeles, CA]

Study Description: Mixed-method case studies; (New York, NY; Boston, MA)

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work

The authors note that an underlying cause for the lack of systemic guidance in school improvement lies with focusing on the symptom rather than on the whole system, which results in fragmentation of actions rather than unified approaches. They provide the following recommendations for those who wish to foster systemic planning for improvement.

Every system should have guidelines that do the following:

1. Focus its school improvement planning guide on the development of comprehensive, multifaceted, cohesive learning as a supportive system which is fully integrated with plans for improving instruction at school,
2. Delineate the content of an enabling or learning supports component
3. Incorporate standards and accountability indicators for each area of learning supports content;
4. Specify ways to weave school and community resources into a cohesive and integrated continuum of interventions over time
5. Include an emphasis on redefining and reframing roles and functions and redesigning infrastructures to ensure that every staff member's tasks are aligned to efforts to support learning as a primary and essential component of school improvement as well as to promote economies of scale

[^] These abstracts do not provide an exhaustive review of the cited materials.

Corcoran, T. and Christman, J. B. (2002). *The limits and contradictions of systemic reform: The Philadelphia story*. Madison, WI: Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE). [One of a series of studies for Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI]

Study description: Mixed-method evaluation reports with comparison achievement data; teacher survey data (pre and post); student demographic reports; qualitative data from 49 schools (26 elementary, 11 middle, 12 high school) in 14 clusters—interviews (teachers, principals, family members, and outside partners), observations (classrooms, students, small learning community meetings, professional development sessions, leadership team meetings), review of school improvement documentation, multi-year case study research in a subset of 25 schools (13 elementary, 5 middle, and 7 high schools)—interviews with central office staff and cluster staff, observations of meetings and other events; and interviews with 40 Philadelphia civic leaders (including political leaders, leaders in the funding community, public education advocates, journalists, and business leaders)

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work

The district used the following strategies to support their systemic reform efforts:

1. Fair funding—a political effort seeking statewide funding equity
2. High standards for achievement
3. Accountability for student performance
4. Decentralization of decision making by organizing clusters of schools around high school feeder patterns, developing small learning communities within schools, and creating local school councils
5. Leadership and support by preparing teachers and administrators to understand, support, and implement systemic reform initiative
6. Better coordination of resources to ensure student needs are met
7. Civic and family engagement by supporting family and community leadership and participation in schools
8. Doing it all at once—begin with all strategies from day one

While the authors point to the district's lack of sustained success in creating an effective systemic effort, they also noted successes. The reform effort raised public awareness and concern about the need to support the education of all children. There were achievement gains. The authors provide the following lessons about systemic reform:

1. The plans for this effort included a process for accountability procedures to be developed at the district level, but implementation methods were not well aligned at the school level. In fact, there was a gap between the two levels rather than a collaborative approach. Systemic reform cannot function unless districts and schools negotiate a balance of control in developing and assessing curriculum and instruction.

2. Although there were transparent efforts to decentralize decision making, school staff still saw recommendations and information coming from the district office as mandates. They did not seem themselves as collaborative partners.
3. By taking a do-it-all-today approach, the speed of implementation prohibited the necessary conversations that build relationships and buy-in.

Findings about Student Achievement

The authors of this synthesis of reports present both quantitative data and narrative to explain gains made in the Philadelphia School District under the leadership of David Hornbeck. However, before the project reached the end of goal time line, Mr. Hornbeck left the district for political and financial reasons. This report provides information on the results of his efforts to facilitate systemic changes in the district. Between 1995 and 2000, elementary schools gained almost 17% in students scoring above basic in math; middle school almost 8%; and high school almost 5%. For reading, during the same period, elementary schools gained almost 18%; middle school over 12%, and high school over 15%. For science, during the same period, elementary schools gained over 24%, middle school over 9%; and high school over 15%.

Darling-Hammond, L.; Hightower, A.H.; Husbands, J.L.; Lafors, J.R.; Young, V.M.; & Christopher, C. (2003). *Building instructional quality: "Inside-out" and "outside-in" perspectives on San Diego's school reform, a research report*. Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, A National Research Consortium. [One of a series of studies for Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, A National Research Consortium, University of Washington, Seattle, WA]

Study Description: Mixed-method studies with intervention sites with comparisons made to the state performance data as well as qualitative data collection; case study; principal (all) and teacher (stratified, random sample of 11 schools) surveys; document analysis; 200 observations of district and school events; 250 interviews and focus groups with teachers, principals, central office administrators, locally relevant community members, and state officials; achievement data from 3 high schools, 3 middle schools, 4 elementary schools; supplemental interviews of 35 principals (roughly 20% of districts principals); 5 years beginning in 1998.

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work:

The authors focus on the early years of the systemic reform effort done in San Diego City Schools. The two driving forces for the change were the superintendent and his instructional leader for the district.

The two leaders adopted the following principles to drive the reform effort:

1. Theory of Instruction: a) setting clear goals and performance standards that targeted higher order thinking skills and performance; b) well defined process for assessing student learning by evaluating students' thinking, strategies, skills, and products and then developing a scaffolded instructional approach to ensure that all students reach expectations; c) multiple instructional skills that engage students in meaningful, active learning, allowing students to tap into previous learning and their cultural experiences, and developing skills to process information metacognitively.
2. Theory for Change: The district office directed a change process and schedule that was "directive, prioritizing speed of implementation and fidelity to the instructional theory over mechanisms to solicit input and ensure backing from organizational members about changes underway" (p. 13). They felt the system had to be "jolted" out of their existing practices.

As these changes began to roll out, there were changes to the system:

1. The district shifted from a process of building programs around funding sources to determining the instructional direction needed and then finding resources to fund the work.
2. Positions at the central office were either reorganized or deleted based on their relationship to support student achievement.

3. The district reevaluated its staff patterns and developed an online job application procedure to allocate staff to meet improvement needs as quickly as possible. In line with those two processes, the district created a stronger professional accountability system.

The central element in all of the reform efforts was the following new set of instructional priorities:

1. They developed professional practice through structured time to interact with peers and reflect on practice as well as use of context-specific learning networks for teachers and administrators.
2. They strengthened efforts to target literacy development, as they felt it was the key to student success throughout their education.
3. They created a structure for local accountability to foster student equity and teacher professionalism with the goal of insuring that each student received an equally good education and reached maximum possible performance.

Within the central office, there were significant changes in how staff interactively collaborated on projects and with other school-based staff as well. Collaborations between project staff and budget staff proved to be vital to their efforts. Although funding coming into the district dropped initially as programs were eliminated or refocused, funding reached its previous levels and higher once a clear focus was developed. In the early years, maintenance and other upkeep costs were often lost in the budgeting and funding process. This did change later in the effort. Staff also had to take on new roles that they were not accustomed to doing.

School-level leaders indicated that the efforts were well appreciated but were significantly uncomfortable for staff. The administrators, while excited about the changes were also worried about new responsibilities and duties. The commitment of principals did tend to increase with each year, and they appreciated the need for refocusing instructional processes.

Elementary teachers were more comfortable with the changes than secondary staff. However, there was overwhelming support for the principals' efforts expressed by the teaching staff. Teachers were also spending substantial larger amounts of time in professional development activities. The doors to the classroom were opening as more and more teachers engaged in collaborative efforts. However, ongoing deterioration of the teacher union's relationship with the district administration was a major rift in the process.

Findings about Student Achievement:

Since the effort began, the district has seen substantial increases in student performance on the SAT-9 (state assessment). The overall student scoring above the 50th percentile has increased from 41% to 47% and in mathematics 45% to 53%. At the grades levels that received the most substantial effort, 2nd graders scoring above the 50th percentile in reading increased from 43% to 55%; in mathematics from 50% to 61%. Of note, San Diego has a larger percentage of students of color and a low economic status than the state average. Participation on the test grew more than 20% on both tests. By 2001, most schools in the district had 98% of their student taking the tests. For students scoring in the lowest 2 quartiles for the SAT-9, the proportion of students scoring at the

bottom quartile dropped from 36% in 1998 to 29% in 2001, while students moving from the 3rd to the 4th grade increased from 20% to 24%.

Datnow, A., Lasky, Stringfield, S. C., & Teddlie, C. (2005). Systemic integration for educational reform in racially and linguistically diverse contexts: A summary of the evidence. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, 10(4), 445-453. [One of a series of reports for the Center for Research on Education]

Study Description: Synthesis of research reports; studies published 1983 to 2003, majority of studies mid-1990s to the present; quantitative (quasi studies that used matched control designs) and qualitative studies (survey, longitudinal studies, rigorous ethnography), 50 studies

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work

The studies they selected focused on systemic improvements related to student achievement within racially and linguistically diverse settings in which efforts bridge at least two levels of the system. Three of their seven findings relate specifically to the approach districts take in implementing systemic improvement efforts:

1. "Practices associated with the creation of effectiveness and equity in schools are closely related to those factors that produce good learning environments for racially and linguistically diverse students. . .
 - focus on learning, attention to producing a positive school climates,
 - initiatives to involve family members in productive ways,
 - support students to help student achieve successes,
 - specific efforts to achieve equity in learning opportunities and outcomes,
 - multicultural education strategies, challenging academic content, and
 - opportunities for student to use dialogue and ideally develop both their native language and English language skills" (p. 447).
2. "The role of the district in educational improvement is vital, and districts are taking an increased role in directing improvement" (p. 148).
3. "Improving education for minority youth involves both change in education and community capacity building" (p. 448).

They also provide implications for educational improvements with racially and linguistically diverse populations as follows:

1. "A carefully planned reform initiative process is essential to long-term success.
2. Support is required from leadership at multiple levels.
3. High quality professional development is needed at multiple levels.
4. Ample resources are required to support reform.

5. Trusting professional relationships can assist across the system.
6. Capacity building is essential.
7. New political arrangements are needed to support reform.
8. Educational reform plans and policies need to focus specifically, rather than peripherally, on the needs of racially and linguistically diverse students.
9. Reform efforts need to call on individuals to address their own belief systems about teaching racially and linguistically diverse students.
10. Educational reform needs to be likened to the social reconstruction of urban and rural communities” (p. 454).

Herbert, K. S.; Murphy, K. M.; Ramos, M. A.; Vaden-Kiernan, M. & Buttram, J. L. (2006). *SEDL's Working Systemically Model Final Report*. Austin, TX: SEDL. [One of series on SEDL's working systemically approach, Austin, TX]

Study Description: Mixed-method studies with intervention sites with comparisons made to the state performance data, as well as qualitative data collection; achievement data; interviews, survey, focus groups, and field notes; 16 districts, 30 schools, 5 states; over 4 years

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work

The researchers found that using survey tools to provide another perspective of the working systemically approach was difficult at best because of the variety of contextual issues that continually effected survey results. These contextual issues included everything from staff turnover, community upheavals, knowledge and experience of the staff, and other factors. On the other hand, the correlation data does demonstrate encouraging and promising results for this type of work. Data revealed that staff in each of the sites did develop skills and practices that enabled them to integrate and direct the various facets of their school systems toward achieving student leaning goals.

The researchers also drew conclusions from the other data sources. In comparing the developmental sites (began the first year of the project) to the test sites (began in the 2nd or 3rd year and used a tested and more streamlined set of activities), the researchers found that the newer sites reached the same level of implementation as the earlier sites. This seems to demonstrate that the more refined approach accomplishes the same goals in less time. The researchers also found that each site progressed at a different rate from others, again emphasizing the contextual nature of the work.

This approach incorporated a three-prong approach to systemic improvement:

1. Work at all levels of the system simultaneously—district, school, and classroom
2. Provide direct intervention to address the components of the system—standards, curriculum, instruction, assessment, resources, policy and governance, family and community, and professional staff
3. Build the capacity of all those involved to address the components by increasing their skills and knowledge of needed competencies—creating coherence; collecting, interpreting, and using data; ensuring continuous professional development; building relationships; and responding to changing conditions.

Findings about Student Achievement

Across the developmental and test sites, 13 grade levels (different states test at different grade levels, so there is no way to compare by specific grades across states) increased the proportion of students meeting the state standards in either reading or math, 8 declined, and 1 showed no change. In comparing these results to similar schools in each state, researchers were able to make valid

comparisons in three of the states, but data did not exist in the other two to allow such a comparison. In the first three states, there were significant increases in the proportion of students meeting the standards in the working systemically sites in comparison to the similar schools in their states. However, the researchers also noted that in some states, schools are already achieving near the ceiling for rating performance. Any gains at this level are often in small increments.

Hui, S. B.; Buttram, J. L.; Deviney, F. P.; Murphy, K. M.; & Ramos, M., A. (2004). Alignment in SEDL's working systemically model: Research report. Austin, TX: SEDL. [One of series on SEDL's working systemically approach, Austin, TX]

Study Description: Mixed-method studies with intervention sites with comparisons made to the state performance data as well as qualitative data collection; achievement data; interviews, survey, focus groups, field notes; 16 districts, 30 schools, 5 states, over 4 years

Key Findings:

Findings about Student Achievement:

Although the researchers were limited in the information on student achievement they were allowed to use, they still found gains across the vast majority of the districts. In 19 of the 22 schools, students in one or more grade levels showed increases in the percentages of students meeting expectations for the standardized tests. In 21 of 28 sets of test results, there was a decrease of greater than 5% in the percentage of students categorized at the lowest performance designation for the schools.

Kim, J. J., & Crasco, L. M. (2006). Best policies and practices in urban educational reform: A summary of empirical analysis focusing on student achievement and equity. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 11(1), 19-37. [Ones of series for reports for the Urban Systemic Initiative]

Study Description: Mixed-method evaluation reports with comparison achievement data; 3-year study, longitudinal data up to 6 years, using a district-level data collection instrument (Key Indicator Data System, KIDS), document reviews, sites visits, interviews, focus groups, teachers surveys; 21 Urban Systemic Initiative (USI) program; data analysis using 46 rubric elements;* high-poverty, high-need, English language learners (ELL), at-risk student populations; no comparable school sites exist.

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work

The authors found six systemwide educational reform drivers using their rubric elements to help determine independent variables, process drivers, dependent variables, and outcome drivers:

Processes

1. Standards-based curriculum, standards-based instruction, and assessment and accountability
2. Policy that supports teachers' qualifications, professional development, enacted curriculum, and student support programs
3. Convergence of resources: materials, fiscal, and intellectual
4. Broad-based support: leadership, governance and management; partnerships with higher education, business, family members, and community

Outcomes

5. Student achievement
6. Improvement for historically underserved

They found that the four process variables worked to together dynamically to improve the two outcome drivers. Thus, they stated that while each driver was a single item of influence, it was the combined use of these drivers that produced the gains.

Findings about Student Achievement

Performance on tests demonstrate USI students made gains in mathematics and science: 8th grade mathematics assessments improved in 17 of 18 sites; 12th grade students taking Advanced Placement examinations increased—35.9 % taking these exams in comparison to the national rate of 28.4; similar results for the SAT/ACT; enrollment of subpopulations groups also increased; 8th grade science assessment results improved in 14 of 15 sites; 7 sites made significant gains in narrowing the achievement gap. Researchers noted that the longer the participation as a USI, the higher the gains.

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research to action*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD [An updated school improvement series]

Study Description: Synthesis of research reports; 35 years of research on best practices in schools

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work:

In his latest edition of *What Works in Schools*, Marzano elucidates three levels of the educational system and the related factors that are common to effective schools:

1. School-level factors
 - A guaranteed and viable curriculum
 - Challenging goals and effective feedback
 - Family and community involvement
 - Safe and orderly environment
 - Collegiality and professionalism
2. Teacher-level factors
 - Instructional strategies
 - Classroom management
 - Classroom curriculum design
3. Student-level factors
 - Home environment
 - Learned intelligence and background knowledge
 - Student motivation

However, while each item on the list of factors holds a key to effective schools, it is the process by which school systems attempt to implement changes that determines the success of any effort.

He notes Fullan's view that there is an abundance of well-defined descriptions of successful schools; however, having a description does not tell educators how to make their school successful. It is the leadership in the system that sets the tone and fosters the willingness to accept and take on improvement efforts.

Marzano describes a series of phases for leadership that promote effective change:

1. Take the pulse of staff to see how they feel and their knowledge and experiences about important issues.
2. Identify and implement an appropriate intervention to address the area of need.
3. Routinely examine the effect of the intervention, particularly in light of achievement gains.

4. Move to the next issue.

At first glance, many of Marzano's statements seem to be school centric; however, in the text detailing each of his factors and influences, the backbone for implementation relies in systemic implementation and systemwide organizational structures.

National Center for Education Accountability. (2002). *Showcasing success, rewarding achievement*. Austin, TX: National Center for Education Accountability. [One of a series of reports for National Center for Education Accountability, Austin, TX]

Study Description: Mixed-method panel review of high-performing schools; publicly available statistical data on the largest school districts in urban centers; student demographic and performance data; onsite observation, interview

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work

The panel investigated all of the large districts in the U.S. and then developed criteria and selected 108 districts to study more intensively. The report describes examples of best practice that promote systemic improvement:

1. Districtwide communication of academic objectives and expectations
 - In Houston Independent School District (Texas), the district provides a process for teachers and grade-level leaders to collaborate regularly with district-level leadership.
 - In Garden Grove Unified School District (California), the district uses a variety of strategies to ensure that teachers, family members, community members, and students know and understand the state standards and related academic objectives.
2. Districtwide support system for leaders to provide resources and professional development on strategies to achieve academic objectives
 - In Houston Independent School District, district leaders communicate a clear expectation that principals are “strong instructional leaders” (p. 14). They provide support in developing the knowledge and understanding of student performance data. One of their strategies is to recruit principals that have the capacity to serve in this role. They use an online system of recruitment to maintain a large pool of applicants and screen for suitability.
 - In Atlanta Public Schools (Georgia), new recruits are given a detailed package of assessment data and asked to develop one or more interventions that target needs revealed in the data.
 - In Garden Grove Unified District, teachers, principals, and district administrators use achievement data to review and strengthen curriculums and instruction. One data source for this process is the cumulative record of all assessments teachers keep in notebooks. These notebooks are shared and used to determine needed adaptations. Teachers and principals also meet weekly in grade levels to identify successes and needs.
 - In Long Beach Unified School District (California), the district has implemented a 5-year, standards-based, results-driven plan for all K–12 staff; professional development is

aligned to this plan. New staff are also given special professional development sessions to ensure that they have the needed understanding of the plan to support the work.

3. Districtwide system to monitor school and student performance
 - In Houston Independent School District (Texas), the principal for each campus compiles and ensures that data filtering from the district office and classrooms comes together in one place for review and analysis by teachers, lead teachers, assistant principals, and mentors.
 - In Long Beach Unified School District (California), all data coming from the state, the district, and classroom assessments are collected by the district's research office where it is formatted into a reader-friendly report for staff discussion and review.
 - In Boston Public Schools (Massachusetts), using a data notebook the district creates, the principal convenes teachers and other staff to determine needs and priorities as well as negotiate resource allocation with the district-level staff.

4. Districtwide procedures for reward, interventions, and adjustable support based on student performance
 - In Houston Independent School District (Texas), the district has created an automatic data-monitoring tool that signals low performance by a classroom or grade level. As soon as the low-performance site is noted, a team—composed of district, subdistrict, and school leadership—is formed to respond to the situation.
 - In Atlanta Public Schools (Georgia), the district has created a staff evaluation procedure for all staff—superintendent, executive directors, academic coaches, and teachers—to determine how well they contribute to the success of all students. The evaluations and accompanying compensation plans for district staff clearly and specifically state how they are held accountable for improving student achievement.
 - In Boston Public Schools (Massachusetts), the district has developed a process for directing resources to low-performing students by creating a monitoring process for all intervention strategies.

Shannon, G. S., & Bylsma, (2004). *Characteristics of improved school districts: Themes from research*. Olympia, WA: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Retrieved on October 2, 2006, from <http://www.k12.wa.us/research/pubdocs/DistrictImprovementReport.pdf> [published 2006 in *Research Brief*. Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement]. [One of a series for Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, Learning Point Associates, Washington, DC]

Study Description: Syntheses of research reports; 80 research studies

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work

The authors describe 13 themes that are common to districts that adopt a systemic approach. They group the themes into four categories. While the third category overtly frames the words “system wide,” each of the categories is reflective of processes that reach across all levels of the educational community as described below:

1. Quality teaching and learning
 - High expectations and accountability for adults
 - Coordinated and aligned curriculum and assessment
 - Coordinated and embedded professional development
 - Quality classroom instruction
2. Effective leadership
 - Focus on all students learning
 - Dynamic and distributed leadership
3. Support for system wide improvement
 - Effective use of data
 - Strategic allocation of resources
 - Policy and program coherence
4. Clear and collaborative relationships
 - Professional culture and collaborative relationships
 - Clear understanding of school district roles and responsibilities
 - Interpreting and managing the external environment

Togneri, W. & Anderson, S. E. (2003). *Beyond islands of excellence: What districts can do to improve instruction and achievement in all schools—a leadership brief*. Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance. [One of a series of reports for Learning First Alliance, Washington, DC]

Study description: Mixed-method studies with qualitative data, intra district/school data comparisons; case study of 5 high-poverty districts making steady achievement gains for all students; individual interviews, 15 school visits, 60 focus groups

Key Findings:

Findings about Processes and Focus of Systemic Work

The report identified seven factors as essential to systemwide improvement efforts:

1. Districts had the courage to acknowledge poor performance and demonstrate the will to seek solutions. They had “key leaders who were willing to accept ownership of difficult challenges and seek solutions without placing blame. The leaders varied by district—school board members, superintendents, community leaders” (p. 10). These leaders were able to aggregate staff resources, commitments, and actions around improving instruction across grade levels, from campus to campus, and at the district level.
2. Districts implemented a systemwide approach to improving instruction that incorporates specific strategies to articulate curriculum and instructional supports. As in other studies, while a systemic approach has to adopt well-defined structures that apply to every level and every staff member, there also has to be a process for flexibility in order to address unique contextual factors for a single campus or student group. Successful leaders are able to find the balance between structure and flexibility.
3. Districts instilled visions that focused on instruction and guided instructional improvement to promote student learning. While a district having a vision is not unusual, in these districts, it was the manner in which districts used their visions to guide their decisions and frame their efforts that made their visions different from the typical school.
4. Districts made decisions based on data, not instinct. At each step in the process, data was used to ground all decisions.
5. Districts adopted new approaches to professional development that involved a coherent and district-organized set of strategies to improve instruction. Districts had to adopt and allow schools to adopt innovative approaches to professional development that aligned closely to the district’s vision for instruction. Strategies included creating principles for professional development that guided decisions about training, fostering networks of

instructional experts, supporting systems for new teachers, allocating financial resources strategically, and encouraging and assisting staff in using data.

6. Districts redefined leadership roles. One key difference in their refined definition of leadership roles was the importance for leaders to establish sound relationships with a variety of stakeholder groups. They also redefined the structure of working across levels; they established collaborations to focus on instructional needs, rather than create power structures.
7. Districts committed to sustaining reform over the long haul. This type of change was not easy for any of the districts. However, three significant challenges had to be addressed in order for the work to be sustained: "Old system structures do not easily support new approaches to professional development. High schools struggle to improve achievement. Finding funding to support new approaches to instructional improvement remains difficult."

The authors included the following 10 lessons for all districts seeking to implement a systemwide improvement process:

- Districts can make a difference.
- Let the truth be heard.
- Focus on instruction to improve student achievement.
- Improving instruction requires a coherent, systemwide approach.
- Make decisions based on good data.
- Rethink professional development.
- Everyone has a role to play in improving instruction.
- Working together takes work.
- There are no quick fixes.
- Current structures and funding limit success.

The authors also provided the following recommendations to guide others:

1. Mobilize political will to improve instruction across the district; engage everyone for the long haul.
2. Implement a systemwide approach to improving instruction that specifies the outcomes to be expected, the content to be taught, the data to inform the work, and the supports to be provided.
3. Make professional development relevant and useful.
4. Redefine schools and district leadership roles.
5. Explore ways to restructure the traditional school day and year.
6. Attend to funding.