

## Overview of Chapters

Ten chapters offer step-by-step strategies to establish, strengthen, and sustain excellent partnership programs.

**Chapter 1: A Comprehensive Framework.** Three articles summarize the theory and research on which the *Handbook* is based. The first article describes the framework of six types of involvement, identifies challenges that must be met, and provides results of well-implemented programs of school, family, and community partnerships. It also discusses an action team approach for developing comprehensive partnership programs. The second article presents an overview of how connections with the community can be organized to strengthen partnership programs. The third article summarizes research on the effects of family and community involvement on student academic and behavioral outcomes. Along with excellent teachers and well-managed schools, goal-oriented family and community involvement can affect a range of important student outcomes in reading, math, science, attendance, behavior, and other important indicators of student success in school.

**Chapter 2: Use the Framework to Reach School Goals—Stories From the Field.** Examples from elementary, middle, and high schools illustrate how the six types of involvement and action team approach work in diverse schools and communities. The examples show how elementary, middle, and high schools are working to create a welcoming climate for partnerships and to implement partnerships that contribute to student success.

**Chapter 3: Take an Action Team Approach.** Twelve common questions are addressed on how to organize an effective Action Team for Partnerships. Team members—principals, teachers, parents, other school staff, and community members—play important roles and share leadership for planning, implementing, and evaluating partnership programs. Several tools and guidelines are included to help develop strong and successful teams.

**Chapter 4: Conduct Workshops.** Agendas are provided for district, school, and other leaders to conduct team-training workshops and end-of-year celebration workshops for schools' Action Teams for Partnerships. The chapter includes scripts, group activities, and other guidelines to help workshop leaders present key topics and to enable attendees to apply the content to their own schools. These workshops, which prepare educators, parents, and community partners to work together, are important professional development activities.

**Chapter 5: Select Materials for Presentations and Workshops.** Charts and diagrams are supplied for presentations, handouts, and activities for the team-training workshops described in Chapter 4 and for other presentations on partnership program development. These materials guide workshop leaders to present and discuss the framework of the six types of involvement, challenges that must be solved, results of partnerships, team structures, and how to write a One-Year Action Plan for Partnerships. These materials also are on the *Handbook* CD, along with PowerPoint slides for team-training workshops and other presentations.

**Chapter 6: Strengthen Partnership Programs in Middle and High Schools.** Three articles summarize research and practical approaches to family and community involve-

ment in secondary schools. Reproducible materials are included to use in workshops attended by Action Teams for Partnerships from middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools, or in presentations to leaders who will assist middle and high schools with their partnership programs. The discussion of goal-oriented partnership programs is pertinent for elementary and secondary school teams.

**Chapter 7: Develop District and State Leadership for Partnerships.** District and state leadership activities are outlined and discussed to increase expertise on school, family, and community partnerships. Information is included on the costs of partnership programs and sources of funds. New inventories are provided to help district and state leaders organize their offices and activities and guide school-based partnership programs. Improved templates are included for district and state leadership plans for partnerships.

**Chapter 8: Implement Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS).** Two research-based partnership approaches are described. *TIPS Interactive Homework* increases family involvement with students at home in positive conversations about interesting work that students learn in class. Ten purposes of homework and the components of an effective interactive homework process are discussed. *TIPS Volunteers in Social Studies and Art* increases family and community involvement at school by organizing volunteers to present prints of art masterpieces that are linked to social studies units to increase students' art appreciation and critical thinking. The chapter includes sample interactive homework assignments for the elementary, middle, and high school grades and a sample social studies and art presentation.

**Chapter 9: Evaluate Your Partnership Program.** An introductory article discusses basic ideas for evaluating the quality of partnership programs and results. It identifies guidelines and tools for Action Teams for Partnerships to use each year to monitor progress. An inventory, *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships*, assesses how well a school is implementing activities for the six types of involvement and is meeting challenges to reach all families. The *Annual Evaluation of Activities* helps a team assess the quality of each activity for family and community involvement as it is implemented throughout the school year.

**Chapter 10: Network With Others for Best Results on Partnerships.** Readers of this *Handbook* are invited to join other schools, districts, states, and organizations in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. NNPS provides ongoing professional development on school, family, and community partnerships and organizes opportunities for members to share ideas and progress. A Web-map is included for readers to obtain more information about NNPS, about promising practices in schools across the country, and about partnership program development.

## Time for Action

Some say of partnerships: This is not hard work, but *heart* work. Not more work, but *the* work. Not harder work, but *smarter* work to mobilize all available resources that will contribute to student success. Educators and parents know *that* family and community involvement is important. This *Handbook* shows *how* to organize effective partnership

## 1.1 School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share

Joyce L. Epstein

**T**he way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. If educators view children simply as *students*, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave the education of children to the schools. If educators view students as *children*, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students.

There are many reasons for developing school, family, and community partnerships. Partnerships can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work. However, the main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life. When parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins its work.

What do successful partnership programs look like? How can practices be effectively designed and implemented? What are the results of better communications, interactions, and exchanges across these three important contexts? These questions have challenged research and practice, creating an interdisciplinary field of inquiry into school, family, and community partnerships with "caring" as a core concept.

The field has been strengthened by supporting federal, state, and local policies. Since the late 1980s, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has included increasingly specific, research-based mandates and guidelines for programs and practices of family and community involvement. Most recently, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) outlines a "nested" system of school, district, and state requirements for developing research-based programs that involve parents in ways that contribute to student achievement and success in school. These guidelines must be met to qualify for and maintain federal funding.

As important, many states and districts have developed or are preparing their own policies to guide schools in creating more systematic connections with families and with community partners. The policies reflect research results and exemplary practices that show that goals for more effective programs of family and community involvement are attainable (Epstein, 2005a).

Underlying all the policies and programs is a theory of how social organizations connect with each other; a framework of the basic components of school, family, and community partnerships for children's learning; a growing literature on positive and negative results of these connections for students, families, and schools; and an

## 1.2 Community Involvement in School Improvement: The Little Extra That Makes a Big Difference

Mavis G. Sanders

### Rationale for School-Community Partnerships

Families and schools traditionally have been viewed as the institutions with the greatest effects on the development of children. Communities, however, have received increasing attention for their role in socializing youth and ensuring students' success in a variety of societal domains. Epstein's (1987, 1995) theory of overlapping spheres of influence, for example, identifies schools, families, and communities as major institutions that socialize and educate children. A central principle of the theory is that certain goals, such as student academic success, are of interest to each of these institutions and are best achieved through their cooperative action and support.

Similarly, Heath and McLaughlin (1987, p. 579) argued that community involvement is important, because "the problems of educational achievement and academic success demand resources beyond the scope of the school and of most families." They identified changing family demographics, demands of the professional workplace, and growing diversity among students as some of the reasons that schools and families alone cannot provide sufficient resources to ensure that all children receive the experiences and support needed to succeed in the larger society.

When describing the importance of community involvement in educational reform, Shore (1994) focused on the mounting responsibilities placed on schools by a nation whose student population is increasingly placed "at risk." She stated, "Too many schools and school systems are failing to carry out their basic educational mission. Many of them—in urban and rural settings—are overwhelmed by the social and emotional needs of children who are growing up in poverty" (p. 2). She contended that schools need additional resources to successfully educate all students and that these resources, both human and material, are housed in students' communities.

Other authors also have emphasized the importance of schools, families, *and* communities working together to promote students' success. Toffler and Toffler (1995) asserted that school-family-community collaborations are one way to provide a caring component to today's often large, assembly line schools. Still others have suggested that school-community partnerships that focus on educational improvement and neighborhood revitalization can strengthen the social networks, resources, and capital available to children and youth (Benson, 1997; Crowson & Boyd, 1993; Decker, Decker, & Brown, 2007; Dryfoos, 1998; Warren, 2005).

School-community partnerships, then, can be defined as the connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to directly or indirectly promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Community, within this definition of school-community partnerships, is not constrained by the geographic boundaries of neighborhoods, but refers more to the "social interactions that can occur within or transcend local boundaries" (Nettles, 1991b, p. 380).

## TYPE 5–DECISION MAKING

### Parent Involvement With School Improvement Team

Washington Junior High School  
Naperville, Illinois

**Goal for Partnership Climate:** Include parent representatives on the school committee focused on improving classroom tests and assessments.

**Goal for Student Success:** With parent input, improve students' test-taking experiences and, ultimately, test scores.

**Level:** Junior High (adaptable to other grade levels)

As members of the School Improvement Team at Washington Junior High School, three parents got a behind-the-scenes look at how classroom tests are developed. They learned about the philosophies and strategies that drive assessment. These parents also helped school administrators and teachers improve the school's assessment practices.

"It was exciting and interesting to be included as part of this team. It gave us an opportunity to see how teachers and administrators tackle issues like assessment and learning," said one parent. "We were treated as equal partners."

The school administration wanted to find ways for parents to help evaluate the testing practices for the school's sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. After discussing this with parents and the principal, three parents joined the School Improvement Team to work with teachers and administrators. Beginning in July 2004, the group met monthly to discuss issues surrounding classroom testing, assessment strategies, and achievement scores. The principal assigned readings from the book *Student-Involved Classroom Assessment* by Rich Stiggins, which each member came prepared to discuss at the meetings. The readings led team members to examine trends, strategies, and current practices in testing as they applied to their school.

School Improvement Team members also shared information with others in the school. Teachers were responsible for spreading the word among other teachers, and parents shared information at Home and School meetings (the school's PTO) and through the monthly school newsletter.

During the school year, teachers began to use new assessment strategies. Teachers in all grades and subjects applied the same strategies, so students experienced continuity in instruction and assessment. "Adding parents to the school improvement process has been very positive for the school," said the school's principal. "Parents' perspectives have been well received and taken back to the team for discussion."

Not surprisingly, one of the group's biggest challenges was finding enough time for discussions. Teachers' time was especially limited. Having a focus and an agenda for each meeting helped the group use its time well. Reading and studying the issues beforehand meant team members were ready to give feedback, ask questions, and participate in discussions.