Building Block: Shared Leadership

Indicator: Parent (Family) representatives advise the School Leadership Team on matters related to family–school relations.

Evidence Review:

> Partnership requires sharing power. The starting point for teachers and administrators is to see families as partners and not simply as clients or guests. All partners must have a voice in school affairs, including decisions about budgets, school programs and personnel, changes in curriculum and instruction, and student behavior. (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007, p. 188)

The current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also referred to as No Child Left Behind) requires in Section 1118 that schools receiving Title I funds have a written Parent Involvement Policy, that the policy is written with the assistance of parents, and that it establish expectations for parental involvement, coordinates with early childhood program's parent involvement strategies, and identifies and attempts to eliminate barriers to greater participation and more effective involvement. Research and best practices from exemplary districts exhibit the need for *all* schools to develop a shared vision of family engagement (Henderson et al., 2007; Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez & Weiss, 2009). It is necessary to go beyond a compliance-driven approach; schools that lack a systematic approach to design and implementation of parent involvement efforts will be ineffective in improving student outcomes (Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002; Paredes, O'Malley, & Amarillas, 2012).

Research has established the important role of the family in student learning (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Redding, Langdon, Meyer, & Sheley, 2004). The figure below depicts relationships among student, family, and school variables and their effects on student learning outcomes (from Redding et al., 2004):
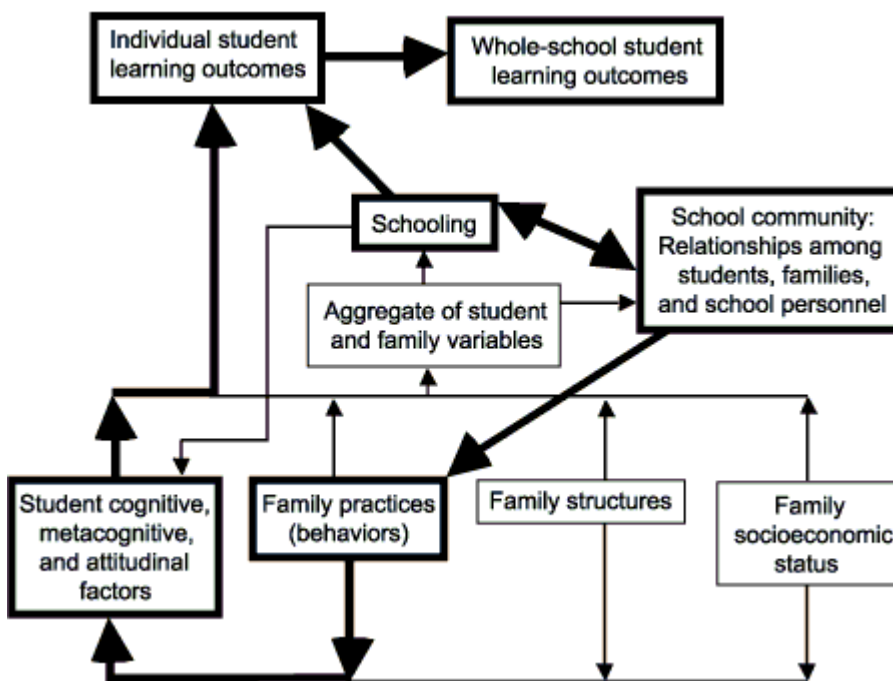

Figure 1. Note: Bold lines show path of malleable variables the school can affect to improve student learning outcomes.

Comprehensive engagement of students' families, including seeking parental input for the School Leadership Team/School Improvement Team, exerts influences in two directions (see the box titled "School community: Relationships among students, families, and school personnel" in the above figure): on the individual families of students, and on the operation of the school itself. "The cumulative effects of more frequent and higher quality interactions among teachers and parents are a greater reservoir of trust and respect, increased social capital for children, and a school community more supportive of each child's school success. Community-based organizations and schools will be most effective in engaging families in their children's education if their efforts are comprehensive, focused, and coherent," resulting in significant learning gains (Redding et al., 2004, p. 6).

Representation before the School Leadership Team may be individual parents/family members of currently enrolled students (not employees of the school district) or may be representatives of a School Community Council or similar school-based team with a majority of members being parents, along with teacher, administrator, and community representatives. The National Network of Partnership Schools calls their version an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and recommends that

> At least one member of the ATP should also be a member of the School Improvement Team (SIT) so that partnership efforts are in concert with other school improvement efforts. The ATP chair should communicate with the school principal and attend SIT meetings. A primary responsibility of the ATP is to construct an annual action plan in the spring that will coordinate, guide, and document the family and community engagement efforts the following school year. (Sheldon, 2011, p. 100)

The School Community Council can look at the connections between the school and the families it serves and make recommendations for strengthening the School Improvement Plan's emphasis on family–school connections (ADI, 2011). This council works in cooperation with other groups and organizations in the school, and the work is typically behind the scenes, planning activities and maintaining a focus on the mutual roles of the family and the school in promoting school community goals such as reading, studying, and responsible behavior (ADI, 2011). Henderson et al. (2007) offer the following suggestions to begin to involve parents in leadership and to engage a greater number of families:

> One way for your action team to start is to hold a town meeting or a series of discussion groups to plan workable ways for teachers and other staff, parents, and students to express concerns and take part in decision making….Ask all participants for their ideas about how to strengthen the school's links to families and community members. Offer other opportunities to invite suggestions such as homeroom discussions, parent association meetings, or surveys that older students or parents could design and administer. (p. 188)

Shared or distributed leadership is a common element in school improvement research and practice (Walberg, 2007). Unfortunately, too often this merely means distributing decision-making among various administrators and perhaps a few lead teachers.

> Sharing leadership with parents breaks new ground in many schools, but where it is prevalent, research demonstrates its power in boosting school improvement (Moore, 1998; Redding & Sheley, 2005). (Henderson & Redding, 2011, pp. 105)

Henderson & Redding (2011) go on to describe how parents or other family members may be nurtured as leaders for a variety of purposes:

Deciding

1. Providing input to critical school decisions about curriculum, instruction, schedules, resource allocation, student services, school leadership, and co-curricular programs.

2. Making decisions, setting guidelines, developing plans, and implementing activities related to areas where the responsibility of the school and the home overlap.

Organizing

3. Planning and administering open houses, family–school nights, transition nights, college and career fairs, and other school events.

4. Building a strong, broad-based parent organization that can serve to create an inclusive school community, formulate positions, build consensus, develop proposals, and select leaders to serve on decision-making groups such as a school council or school improvement team.

Engaging

5. Providing outreach to engage other parents in support of their children's learning and in assisting with the school's functions.

6. Convening groups of parents in homes to meet with teachers in "home gatherings."

7. Organizing and conducting home visits, community walks, and other opportunities to build collaborative relationships between families and school staff.

Educating

8. Serving as leaders to facilitate workshops and courses for parents.

9. Participating in professional development for teachers related to teachers' work with families.

10. Planning and providing training for school personnel to make the school a more welcoming place.

11. Planning and providing training for volunteers who work in the school.

Advocating and Connecting

12. Advocating on behalf of the school and families with community and political leaders and groups.

13. Connecting school staff, students, and families to community resources for the benefit of the school and its families.

> The personal benefits derived by parents in leadership roles also flow to their children and to the school itself. Parents and families acquire skills, confidence, and a sense of self-efficacy. Researchers Lee Shumow and Richard Lomax, in *Parental Efficacy: Predictor of Parenting Behavior and Adolescent Outcomes* (2001), show the connection between parents' sense of efficacy and their children's higher achievement in school. (Henderson & Redding, 2011, pp. 105–106)

References and other resources:

Academic Development Institute (ADI). (2011). *Solid Foundation planning guide*. Lincoln, IL: Author.

Corbett, H. D., & Wilson, B. (2008). *Knowledge is empowering: Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership Fellows' involvement and influence after training.* Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

Henderson, A. (2010). *Building local leadership for change: A national scan of parent leadership training programs.* Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. Retrieved from http://annenberginstitute.org/publication/building-local-leadership-change-national-scan-parent-leadership-training-programs

Henderson, A., Jacob, B., Kernan-Schloss, A., & Raimondo, B. (2004). *The case for parent leadership*. Lexington, KY: The Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence.

Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: SEDL. Retrieved from http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/fam33.html

Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family–school partnerships.* New York, NY: New Press.

Henderson, A. T., & Redding, S. (2011). Parent leadership. In S. Redding, M. Murphy, & P. Sheley (Eds.), *Handbook on family and community engagement* (pp. 105–109). Charlotte, NC: Information Age. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/Default.aspx

Mattingly, D., Prislin, R., McKenzie, T., Rodriguez, J., & Kayzar, B. (2002). Evaluating evaluations: The case of parent involvement programs. *Review of Educational Research, 72*, 549–576.

Moore, D. (1998). *What makes these schools stand out: Chicago elementary schools with a seven-year trend of improved reading achievement*. Chicago, IL: Designs for Change.

Paredes, M., O'Malley, M., & Amarillas, A. (2012). *What Works Brief #9: Family engagement*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/1248

Redding, S., Langdon, J., Meyer, J., & Sheley, P. (2004). *The effects of comprehensive parent engagement on student learning outcomes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/the-effects-of-comprehensive-parent-engagement-on-student-learning-outcomes

Redding, S., & Sheley, P. (2005). Grassroots from the top down: The state's role in family–school partnerships. In E. N. Patrikakou, R. P. Weissberg, S. Redding, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *School–family partnerships for children's success* (pp. 148–163). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Sheldon, S. B. (2011). A framework for partnerships. In S. Redding, M. Murphy, & P. Sheley (Eds.), *Handbook on family and community engagement* (pp. 99–104). Charlotte, NC: Information Age. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/Default.aspx

Shumow, L., & Lomax, R. (2001). *Parental efficacy: Predictor of parenting behavior and adolescent outcomes.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA.

Walberg, H. J. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. Retrieved from www.centerii.org [See Download CII Publications]

Westmoreland, H., Rosenberg, H. M., Lopez, M. E., & Weiss, H. (2009). *Seeing is believing: Promising practices for how school districts promote family engagement* (issue brief). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project and Chicago, IL: PTA.

Indicator: The school's mission statement, Compact, and homework policy are included in the school improvement plan.

Evidence Review:

"A common understanding of the destination allows all stakeholders to align their improvement efforts. And the best part of planning for this journey is that it doesn't cost anything to decide where you want to go" (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009). The schools that are most effective in increasing achievement show a clear sense of purpose grounded in a shared set of core values that have been collaboratively agreed upon (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009; Redding, 2006, 2011). A school improvement plan should not be shaped by a select few, but by a team of stakeholders representative of all who will be affected by its content.

> The school improvement plan (SIP) is the tool that will help you get the most out of your vision, mission, and goals. It is a more detailed document than the mission and vision statements. Like the mission statement, it falls within the scope of the vision. The SIP is a blueprint for the school's progress toward its goals. It helps propel grade-level teams, curriculum teams, and departments toward meaningful improvement. It provides detailed expectations for administrators, teachers, counselors, and other stakeholders and includes specific plans that guide improvement efforts throughout the year. Although the majority of school improvement plans focus on improving student achievement through such measures as high-stakes tests, advanced placement exams, and the SAT, we recommend enriching the document to include several areas outside the realm of assessment. For example, you might add a section about improving student attendance or reducing the number of disciplinary infractions.…Use your SIP as an opportunity to develop goals, plans, and actions to improve all facets of your school's life. (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009).

This should include plans to respectfully and inclusively engage students' families in their children's education, a research-proven path to improvement (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Patrikakou, Weissberg, & Rubenstein, 1999; Redding, 2000; Redding, Langdon, Meyer, & Sheley, 2004). The SIP should also include key documents such as the school's mission statement, compact, and homework policy.

The function of a mission statement is to create a shared understanding and sense of purpose for the members of the school community, including administrators, teachers, other staff, students, their family members, and other community partners (Hatch, 2006). High expectations must be evident (Bafile, 2007; Redding, 2006). The mission statement must be translated into specific and measurable end results; it should "prompt change and growth. The mission is the touch point that can help you determine whether what should be happening is, in fact, happening" (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009). Communication is vital; it is helpful if the mission statement is brief and easy to state and remember (Bafile, 2007). This mission should drive your improvement plan.

Many schools have developed Compacts that outline the responsibilities of students, teachers, parents, and sometimes principals (they are required for Title I schools under ESEA). Title I schools often call these "Learning Compacts." Some schools use the U.S. Department of Education's "Reading Compact" process. Parents must help to create the compact; best practices also indicate that a compact should focus on learning, including ways that parents can support their child's learning at home and

opportunities for parents to communicate with the school to increase these supports (ADI, 2011; Henderson, Carson, Avallone, & Whipple, 2011; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). The value of family involvement extends into high school, although it is important that parental engagement practices are developmentally appropriate and responsive to maturing adolescents' needs (Hoover-Dempsey, Ice, & Whitaker, 2009).

<u>Essential Elements of a Compact</u>

- Lists the responsibilities (some schools prefer the term "expectations") of parents/families, students, and teachers. It may also include a list for the principal.

- Provides guidelines for homework and home study habits.

- Provides guidelines for parent-child reading and teacher's reading assignments.

- Provides guidelines for encouraging respectful, responsible behavior.

- Provides guidelines for communication within the school community.

- Encourages attendance at parent-teacher-student conferences, open houses, and parent education programs offered by the school. (ADI, 2011)

Homework is a primary point of interface between the school and the home, and parents are best able to support the school's purposes for homework when they understand what is expected of students and their role in monitoring their children's homework. Consistency from teacher to teacher and across grade levels and subjects, established by a homework policy, contributes to teachers', parents', and students' understanding of the school's purposes for homework and also reinforces students' formation of independent study habits (Redding, 2006). For the policy to be effective, those affected by it must be given assistance in carrying it out, actual practices must be monitored to detect and correct problems, and successes should be celebrated (ADI, 2011). For example, some schools allow the class with the highest homework completion rate for that quarter to have a party. Research indicates that "students learn best when homework is assigned regularly, graded, returned promptly, and used primarily to rehearse material first presented by the teacher at school" (Redding, 2000, p. 15). Studies of homework that included an interactive element requiring children to talk with someone at home about the assignment have shown a variety of significant, positive outcomes, including improved student skills, increased parent involvement, and better teacher attitudes (Bennett-Conroy, 2012; Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1997; Van Voorhis, 2003).

References and other resources:

Academic Development Institute (ADI). (2011). *Solid Foundation planning guide*. Lincoln, IL: Author.
Bafile, Cara. (2007). State your mission: Creating mission statements that work. *Education World*. Retrieved from http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin412.shtml
Bennett-Conroy, W. (2012). Engaging parents of eighth grade students in parent-teacher bidirectional communication. *School Community Journal, 22*(2), 87-110. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx
Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9), 701-712.
Epstein, J., Simon, B., & Salinas, K. (1997). Involving parents in homework in the middle grades. *Phi Delta Kappan Research Bulletin, 18*.
Gabriel, J. G., & Farmer, P. C. (2009). *How to help your school without breaking the bank*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/107042/chapters/Developing-a-Vision-and-a-Mission.aspx
Hatch, T. (2006). *Practice Brief #1: Mission, mission on the wall…What role do missions play in successful schools?* New York, NY: National Center for Restructuring Education Schools & Teaching (NCREST). Retrieved from http://www.tc.edu/ncrest/onlinepub/practiceBrief1.pdf

Henderson, A. T., Carson, J., Avallone, P., & Whipple, M. (2011, May). Making the most of school–family compacts. *Educational Leadership, 68*(8), 49–50.

Henderson, A., & Mapp. K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships.* New Press: New York, NY.

Hoover-Dempsey, K., Ice, D., & Whitaker, M. (2009). "We're way past reading together": Why and how parental involvement in adolescence makes sense. In N. Hill & R. Chao (Eds.), *Families, schools, and the adolescents: Connecting research, policy, and practice* (pp. 19-36). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Patrikakou, E. N., Weissberg, R. P., & Rubenstein, M. (1999). School–family partnerships. In A. J. Reynolds, H. J. Walberg, & R. P. Weissberg (Eds.), *Promoting positive outcomes* (pp. 95-127). Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

Redding, S. (2000). *Parents and learning.* Geneva: UNESCO Publications. Retrieved from http://www.ibe.unesco.org/publications/EducationalPracticesSeriesPdf/prac02e.pdf

Redding, S. (2006). *The Mega System: Deciding. Learning. Connecting. A handbook for continuous improvement within a community of the school.* Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/mega

Redding, S., Langdon, J., Meyer, J., & Sheley, P. (2004). The effects of comprehensive parent engagement on student learning outcomes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/the-effects-of-comprehensive-parent-engagement-on-student-learning-outcomes

Redding, S. (2011). The school community: Working together for student success. In S. Redding, M. Murphy, & P. Sheley (Eds.), *Handbook on family and community engagement* (pp. 15–20). Charlotte, NC: Information Age. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/Default.aspx

Van Voorhis, F. (2003). Interactive homework in middle school: Effects on family involvement and science achievement. *Journal of Educational Research, 96*(6), 323–338.

Indicator: The school has a written statement of purpose for its Parent–Teacher Organization/PTA.

Evidence Review:

The current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also referred to as No Child Left Behind) requires in Section 1118 that schools receiving Title I funds have a written Parent Involvement Policy, that the policy is written with the assistance of parents, and that it establish expectations for parental involvement, coordinates with early childhood program's parent involvement strategies, and identifies and attempts to eliminate barriers to greater participation and more effective involvement. Research and best practices from exemplary districts exhibit the need for all schools to develop a shared vision of family engagement (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez, & Weiss, 2009). It is necessary to go beyond a compliance-driven approach; schools that lack a systematic approach to design and implementation of parent involvement efforts will be ineffective in improving student outcomes (Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002; Paredes, O'Malley, & Amarillas, 2012). It follows that a written statement of purpose for the school's PTA or PTO will be helpful in establishing common expectations, goals, and channels for regular communication.

In *Beyond the Bake Sale*, Henderson et al. (2007) propose that when a parent group includes a "solid cross section of a school's parent community, they can support school improvement, provide a training ground for civic leadership, and build support for the public schools" (pp. 194–195). Further, they provide comparisons of a traditional-style parent organization with a leadership-style parent organization and also steps for developing into a more inclusive and powerful organization. They recommend assessing the parent group's strength in these areas:

- The parent group is focused on improving academic achievement for all students.
- Surveys and focus groups are some of the ways that the parent association reaches out to families, builds its membership, and draws out their ideas and concerns.
- The PTA or parent organization invites the principal to report on student academic performance, review the school's scores on the state test, and describe how the school plans to improve. (Henderson et al., 2007, p. 215)

ADI (2011) offers these action steps for an effective parent–teacher organization:

- Develop a team of parents that have a clear understanding of the purpose of the organization
- Develop guidelines for organizing your team by having expectations of each member: meeting schedule, procedures for recording decisions and planning between meetings, etc.
- Connect with other committees in the school that have similar goals, Ex. School Improvement Team
- Review the school's Parent/Family Involvement Policy
- Develop an Action Plan that includes:
  - Objectives
  - Activities
  - Implementation plan – assign tasks so activities run smoothly
- Evaluate the work of the organization and adjust accordingly

References and other resources:

Academic Development Institute (ADI). (2011). *Solid Foundation planning guide*. Lincoln, IL: Author.

Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family–school partnerships.* New York, NY: New Press.

Mattingly, D., Prislin, R., McKenzie, T., Rodriguez, J., & Kayzar, B. (2002). Evaluating evaluations: The case of parent involvement programs. *Review of Educational Research, 72*, 549–576.

Paredes, M., O'Malley, M., & Amarillas, A. (2012). *What Works Brief #9: Family engagement*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/1248

Westmoreland, H., Rosenberg, H. M., Lopez, M. E., & Weiss, H. (2009). *Seeing is believing: Promising practices for how school districts promote family engagement* (issue brief). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project and Chicago, IL: PTA.

Building Block: Shared Leadership

Indicator: A School Community Council (SCC) consisting of the principal, parent facilitator, social worker or counselor, and parents oversees family–school relationships and helps parents to be better equipped to support their student's learning at home.

Evidence Review:

> Sharing leadership with parents breaks new ground in many schools, but where it is prevalent, research demonstrates its power in boosting school improvement (Moore, 1998; Redding & Sheley, 2005). (Henderson & Redding, 2011, p. 105)

Research shows that schools can improve their students' learning by engaging parents in ways that directly relate to their children's academic progress, maintaining a consistent message of what is expected of parents, and reaching parents directly, personally, and with a trusting approach (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005; Redding, 2000, Redding, Langdon, Meyer, & Sheley, 2004). Thus, effective parent engagement must be comprehensive in nature, with the school consistently interfacing with parents at many points, in many venues, over the course of the schooling years (Swap, 1993). This is vital for all students at all grade levels, in all settings (urban to rural), and even more so for those with disabilities and English language learners (CII, 2011). Epstein's (1995) typology has become the standard of the field and appears in various adaptations, including the National Standards for Family–School Partnerships from the national PTA; a comprehensive family–school partnership (which Epstein defines as an ongoing relationship rather than a program or event) addresses all six types of family involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995; CII, 2011).

A School Community Council (SCC) gives

> focused attention to the area of overlapping responsibility between the home and the school, providing a venue for shared leadership and articulation of policies and practices relative to families consistent with the school community's purpose. Especially, the SCC attends to the areas in which the school and home most commonly interface. The SCC also assists parents in understanding and providing the "curriculum of the home," and it provides ways to supplement the curriculum of the home for children whose parents do not provide the parent–child relationships, routine of family life, and supervision and expectation that all children need. (Redding, 2006, p. 157)

The "curriculum of the home"—the bundle of attitudes, habits, knowledge, and skills that children acquire through their relationship with their family and that facilitates their school learning—is more predictive of academic learning than the family's socioeconomic status (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Redding, 2000). In his meta-analysis, Jeynes (2002) found the nuances of parent–child communication regarding expectations to be a particularly powerful source of motivation for minority children and children living in poverty.

A School Community Council is typically comprised of the principal, counselor/social worker, teachers, and parents of currently enrolled students, with parents who are not school district employees constituting the majority of the membership (CII, 2011; Redding, 2007). If no counselor is available, another teacher may be added; in schools with preschool programs, a preK teacher and the parent of a preK student are also added to the Council (ADI, 2012). This council is similar in many ways to the Action Teams for

Partnership utilized by the National Network of Partnership Schools and to the Local School Councils used in Chicago (although their parents representatives are elected by parents and community residents).

To make the SCC an effective body, it needs its own constitution, by-laws, and official status within the school's system of governance (Redding, 2006). To be productive, the SCC also needs a scope of work and specific duties to perform. Additionally, its members must be trained in the research and best practice of parenting, parent programs, and team functioning. Above all, the SCC must be respected through the active participation of the principal and the serious application of its directives (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Redding, 2006). Henderson et al. (2007) further advise that the council members should be provided with support and resources to do their work (e.g., access to computers, copiers, etc.), training (for both parent and teacher members), and encouragement to reach out of families who have not previously been involved.

The School Community Council advises, plans, and assists with matters related to creating, communicating, and implementing the school–home compact, homework policy, open houses, parent–teacher conferences, school–home communication, and parent education, including training and information about learning standards and the parents' role in supporting children's learning at home (Redding, 2006, 2007). "As school councils develop their focus and action plan, council members might be prudent to avoid addressing daily school operations" (Pharis, Bass, & Pate, 2005, p. 37).

An ongoing conversation between parents and teachers around documents and events connecting the home and school builds understanding and a sense of common endeavor toward each student's success, and each can be planned to advance an understanding of the school community's purpose, each member's role in that purpose, and the relevance to each child (Redding, 2006). Parents should receive "practical, jargon-free guidance on ways to maintain supportive verbal interaction with their children, establish a quiet place for study at home, encourage good reading and study habits, and model and support respectful and responsible behaviors" (CII, 2011, p. 185). Families need "honest and timely information about budgets, policies, and student achievement. Use test data to identify problem areas that need improvement" (Henderson et al., 2007, pp. 190–191). Further, the school should provide "culturally and linguistically appropriate opportunities for parents to meet with one another to encourage the sharing of norms, standards, and parenting concerns and successes" and should provide "teachers and staff with professional development and consistent policies to build their capacity to work with all families and to reinforce the school's clear expectations of parents. This includes promoting a strengths-based (rather than deficit-based) view of families" (CII, 2011, pp. 185–186). Parents appreciate knowing:

- how their children are doing,
- what the school is doing,
- what the school expects of parents, and
- how parents may contribute to the operation and improvement of the school. (ADI, 2010)

The SCC should also have a representative on the School Improvement Team so that family–school "partnership efforts are in concert with other school improvement efforts" (Sheldon, 2011, p. 100). The School Community Council can look at the connections between the school and the families it serves and make recommendations for strengthening the School Improvement Plan's emphasis on family–school connections (ADI, 2010).

> Involving family and community members on councils and committees means that different points of view and opposing interests will be represented. That is the whole point, of course, but it means there will sometimes be conflict and disagreement. This is a good thing. Better decisions usually emerge from debate and compromise. (Henderson et al., 2007, p. 191)

Voyles (2012) reported on a case involving a steering committee planning for better outreach and services in a rural school. The committee included a school principal, special education teacher, psychologist, and various community representatives. While the committee invited two "at-risk" parents to participate, Voyles noted:

> The parents were infrequent participants in the committee's conversation, which was not surprising since they were significantly outnumbered by college-educated professionals. The principal chaired the meetings and made a point of occasionally asking the parents direct questions, especially in areas where he knew they had opinions or experience, and then they would speak. However, as time went on, both parents had irregular attendance. (p. 41)

In addition, her recommendations included the following reflection:

> All the other participants were paid because they could attend committee meetings as part of their job, so it was a major oversight not to pay the parents. In addition, depending on need, child care and transportation should be provided, and the parent's stipend should be sufficient for them to cover any expenses associated with their service on the committee and still earn some money. Paying the parents would have emphasized their importance as members of the committee. (Voyles, 2012, p. 57)

SCC's may want to consider how elements of their organization might inhibit parents' full participation and make adjustments accordingly.

What is the role of the School Community Council?

The primary purpose of the School Community Council (school-based team) is to build a school community, uniting the efforts of parents, teachers, and students so that all children establish a solid foundation of reading, studying, and responsible behavior. The Council is the steering committee for the school community, the coordinating body, the group that maintains a focus on children's learning.

The School Community Council looks at the connections between the school and the families it serves and makes recommendations for strengthening the School Improvement Plan's emphasis on family–school connections. They must enlist the support and assistance of the parent organization and faculty to carry out its activities. The council does not typically involve itself with fundraising. The council does not sponsor activities in its own name, but on behalf of the school as a whole. The council brings people together, unifies, and creates synergy and good will.

This council does not replace or duplicate the valuable services of existing parent teacher organizations. It is a coordinating team that helps to build a strong school community around goals established in the School Community Compact. The council works in cooperation with other groups and organizations in the school, and the work is typically behind the scenes, planning activities and maintaining a focus on the mutual roles of the family and the school in promoting reading, studying, and responsible behavior.

The School Community Council is most effective when it meets twice each month with agendas and minutes, operating with bylaws or a constitution that outlines its scope of responsibilities and the manner in which its members are selected and the term of their service. (ADI, 2010, p. 3)

References and other resources:
Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center. (2008). *Parent involvement: Keys to success* [podcasts and accompanying materials]. Retrieved from http://www.arcc.edvantia.org/page/ParentInvolvementPodcasts/
Arias, M. B., & Morillo-Campbell, M. (2008, January). *Promoting ELL parental involvement: Challenges in contested times.* East Lansing, MI: Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice. Retrieved from http://www.greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Arias_ELL.pdf

Academic Development Institute (ADI). (2010). *Shared leadership: The School Community Council.* Lincoln, IL: Author.

Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII). (2011). Engaging families in student learning. In C. L. Perlman & S. Redding (Eds.), *Handbook on effective implementation of School Improvement Grants* (pp. 185–186). Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.centerii.org/handbook/

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9), 701–712.

Hanes, S., Kerins, T., Perlman, C., Redding, S., & Ross, S. (2009). *Evaluating the statewide system of support.* Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement. Retrieved from http://www.centerii.org/survey/

Henderson, A., & Mapp. K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement.* Austin, TX: SEDL.

Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family–school partnerships.* New York, NY: New Press.

Henderson, A. T., & Redding, S. (2011). Parent leadership. In S. Redding, M. Murphy, & P. Sheley (Eds.), *Handbook on family and community engagement* (pp. 105–109). Charlotte, NC: Information Age. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/Default.aspx

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. (2005). *The social context of parental involvement: A path to enhanced achievement.* Report to the Institute of Educational Sciences, U. S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://www.vanderbilt.edu/Peabody/family-school/Reports.html

Jeynes, W. H. (2002). A meta-analysis. The effects of parental involvement on minority children's academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society, 35*(2), 202–219.

Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Moore, D. (1998). *What makes these schools stand out: Chicago elementary schools with a seven-year trend of improved reading achievement.* Chicago, IL: Designs for Change.

National High School Center. (2008). *Eight elements of high school improvement: A mapping framework.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://betterhighschools.org/pubs/documents/NHSCEightElements7-25-08.pdf

Parent Teacher Association. (n.d.). *National standards for family–school partnerships.* Retrieved from http://www.pta.org/national_standards.asp

Patrikakou, E. N., Weissberg, R. P., Redding, S., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.). (2005). *School–family partnerships for children's success.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Pharis, T., Bass, R. V., & Pate, J. L. (2005, Winter). School council member perceptions and actual practice of school councils in rural schools. *The Rural Educator*, 33–38. Retrieved from http://www.ruraleducator.net/archive/26-2/26-2_Pharis.pdf

Redding, S. (2000). *Parents and learning.* Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO. Retrieved from http://www.ibe.unesco.org/publications/practices.htm

Redding, S. (2006). *The mega system: Deciding. Learning. Connecting. A handbook for continuous improvement within a community of the school.* Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.centerii.org/survey/

Redding, S. (2007). Systems for Improved Teaching and Learning In H. J. Walberg (Ed.), *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement* (pp. 99–112). Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from http://www.centerii.org/survey/

Redding, S., Langdon, J., Meyer, J., & Sheley, P. (2004). *The effects of comprehensive parent engagement on student learning outcomes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/the-effects-of-comprehensive-parent-engagement-on-student-learning-outcomes

Redding, S., & Sheley, P. (2005). Grassroots from the top down: The state's role in family–school partnerships. In E. N. Patrikakou, R. P. Weissberg, S. Redding, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *School–family partnerships for children's success* (pp. 148–163). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Sheldon, S. B. (2011). A framework for partnerships. In S. Redding, M. Murphy, & P. Sheley (Eds.), *Handbook on family and community engagement* (pp. 99–104). Charlotte, NC: Information Age. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/Default.aspx

Swap, S. (1993). *Developing home–school partnerships: From concepts to practice.* New York, NY: Teachers' College Press.

Voyles, M. M. (2012). Perceived needs of at-risk families in a small town: Implications for full-service community schools. *School Community Journal, 22*(2), 31–64. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx

Walberg, H. J. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement.* Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement. Retrieved from http://www.centerii.org/survey/

Westmoreland, H., Lopez, M. E., & Rosenberg, H. (2009, November). *How to develop a logic model for districtwide family engagement strategies.* Cambridge: Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from

http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/how-to-develop-a-logic-model-for-districtwide-family-engagement-strategies