

Second Edition



SCHOOL, FAMILY,

AND

**COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS**

Preparing Educators and Improving Schools

JOYCE L. EPSTEIN

School, Family, and Community Partnerships



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AND
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*Preparing Educators and
Improving Schools*

SECOND EDITION

JOYCE L. EPSTEIN

*Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
Johns Hopkins University*



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This book is dedicated to the memory of Mollie C. and Edward P. Levy, whose love and support helped three sisters set and reach their goals, and to Paul Jerrold Epstein, who turned my research on school, family, and community partnerships into treasured real-life experiences.



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Preface and Acknowledgments

THIRTY YEARS SOUNDS LIKE A LONG TIME to work on a topic, but it is not very long to build a field of study on school, family, and community partnerships. My colleagues and I began our research on parental involvement in elementary schools in 1981. We followed with studies of involvement in the middle grades in 1987 and in high schools in 1990. Since that time, we conducted research and development activities with state and district leaders, and we continue this work with educators at all policy levels.

In 1996, with useful results from many studies, I established the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. NNPS guides schools, districts, states, and organizations to use research-based approaches to build goal-oriented partnership programs that contribute to student success. Members of NNPS not only develop programs and improve practices of family and community involvement, but also identify new questions and challenges that influence our research. These connections—research that improves practice and practices that extend research—are often discussed in academic circles but rarely accomplished. NNPS is showing how these connections can be organized and conducted to benefit all partners.

Funding and Collegial Support

My work at Johns Hopkins University has been funded over the years by various governmental agencies, including the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and its predecessor, the National Institute of Education (NIE) in the U.S. Department of Education, and by a recent five-year grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). At Johns Hopkins, my program on family and community involvement has been housed at the Center for Social Organization of Schools (CSOS) in centers that changed names with each new governmental grant, including the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (CREMS); Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students (CDS); Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning; and Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR). To give research on partnerships a permanent home, I established the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships within CSOS in 1995.

Grants from the Lilly Endowment, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Leon Lowenstein Foundation, National Endowment of the Arts, Disney Learning Partnership, Wallace–Reader's Digest Funds, and MetLife Foundation also supported my research and development projects. Over the years, many funders became colleagues

in helping me think about needed directions for school, family, and community partnerships. They included Oliver Moles and Ron Pedone at OERI; Joan Lipsitz, Gayle Dorman, and Kent McGuire at Lilly; John Van Gorder at Lowenstein; Hayes Mizell at the Clark Foundation; Jane Quinn and Catherine Pino at Wallace–Reader’s Digest Funds; Laurie Lang, Tony Jackson, and Pamela Rubin at Disney Learning Partnership; and Rick Love at MetLife Foundation. I value their ideas and support.

Special thanks are due to educational leaders in Baltimore who supported, assisted, and inspired me for many years. They included Jerry Baum, who directed the Fund for Educational Excellence and who was a partner in fieldwork for nearly 10 years; Lucretia Coates, the first facilitator for school, family, and community partnerships in the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), whose deep knowledge about schools and families continues to influence this work; and Vivian Jackson, who assisted middle schools for several years in implementing interactive homework. Other talented facilitators for school, family, and community partnerships worked with more than 160 elementary, middle, and high schools in Baltimore City to learn how leadership on partnerships could, in fact, be organized in a large, urban school district and how all schools in nine areas could organize teams of educators, family members, and community partners to plan and implement effective partnership programs. They included (by history of participation) Marsha Powell-Johnson, Paula Williams, Brenda G. Thomas, Joyce Bowyer, Marsha Greenfeld, Patricia Kidd-Ryce, Joann E. Brown, Sandra E. Morgan, and Anjali Patel. Their knowledge and talents helped many schools turn research into action and helped me learn about the real world of district leadership and school-based program development.

Other district leaders in Baltimore supported the work of their facilitators and schools in developing programs of partnership. They included (by history of participation) Gary L. Thrift, Clifton Ball, Cynthia Janssen, Christolyne Buie, Charlene Cooper Boston, Sandra L. Wighton, Ellen D. Gonzales, Anne Carusi, Jeffrey Grotzky, Barry Williams, Patricia E. Abernathy, Cecil Ramsey, Irby Miller, and Carole Seubert. These area superintendents and other administrators taught me valuable lessons about how different district leadership styles contributed to improving schools’ connections with families and communities.

Several local foundations in Baltimore also supported fieldwork conducted with my community-based partner, the Fund for Educational Excellence. I owe a great debt to the Fund and to BCPS for making it possible to systematically gather ideas and data from countless teachers, principals, parents, other family members, and students. Baltimore was a “learning laboratory” for school, family, and community partnerships for more than a decade and helped identify the challenges and possibilities for organizing district programs of school, family, and community partnerships in elementary, middle, and high schools. Knowledge gained in BCPS contributed to the development of NNPS and underlies many of the processes that are used, now, in districts and schools across the country.

At this writing, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University has grown to include about 1,200 schools and 150 school districts located in more than 35 states, as well as 21 state departments of education and over 50 organizations that work with schools and districts on partnerships. I

am grateful to thousands of teachers, administrators, parents, and students who have worked with me and my colleagues over the years. They showed that with skill and will it is possible to develop programs that engage all families in ways that help students succeed in school. Their trials, tribulations, and triumphs contributed to the practical approaches that are included in this volume.

Many colleagues and students at Johns Hopkins University worked with me on studies in this volume and on countless other publications that are referenced here. I am indebted to all of them, especially Henry Jay Becker, who met the challenge in 1981 to start our research program with a survey of educators and parents. His creative work and collaborative spirit helped generate many questions for the studies that followed. Other valued research partners at Hopkins included Susan L. Dauber, Susan C. Herrick, Seyong Lee, Lori Connors-Tadros, and many other helpful graduate and undergraduate students.

Colleagues who worked with me from 1990 to 1995 in the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning included codirector Don Davies and researchers Carole Ames, Josephine Bright, Melvin Delgado, Larry Dolan, Charles Glenn, Nitza Hidalgo, Vivian Johnson, Sharon Lynn Kagan, Colleen Morisset, Saundra Nettles, Diane Scott Jones, Sau-Fong Siu, and the late Susan M. Swap. These researchers conducted many studies that deepened an understanding of the scope of school, family, and community partnerships from birth through high school. Their work and that of many other researchers cited throughout this volume influenced my thinking about the content of courses to prepare teachers, administrators, social workers, school psychologists, sociologists of education, and other education professionals to understand and conduct school, family, and community partnerships.

Ongoing Research and Development

Special thanks are due to my colleagues at the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, currently including researchers Mavis G. Sanders, Steven B. Sheldon, and Frances Van Voorhis; facilitators Marsha Greenfeld, Darcy Hutchins, Brenda Thomas, and Jenn Ganss; and, in recent years, Claudia Galindo, Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn, Cecelia S. Martin, Mary G. Nesbitt, Karen Clark Salinas, Beth S. Simon, and Kenyatta Williams. The work we did together influenced the topics, discussions, and activities in chapters throughout this volume and new research underway.

Other longtime colleagues and valued friends at Johns Hopkins University supported and encouraged my work for many years, including James M. McPartland, Edward L. McDill, and the late John H. Hollifield. All of the researchers and facilitators at CSOS are working to show that social and educational research can help educators improve schools for all students and benefit families and communities.

I am convinced that researchers learn most about schools by collaborating with educators, parents, students, and others who implement programs, evaluate their efforts, and report their results. All that we know or ever will learn about school, family, and community partnerships depends on researchers, educators, families, students, and others sharing the role of expert. All of my projects, publications,

presentations, and collaborations with other researchers, educators, parents, and others have been a true delight, making thirty years seem like a very short time indeed.

My family's interest in my work has been most appreciated, including my late parents' unconditional support and my sisters' ongoing encouragement. My son Paul's experiences in school literally brought my theories and research to life. He showed how important it was for his mom and dad to be positively involved in his education and how crucial it is for every child—all students—to be the focus of school, family, and community partnerships. Now Paul and daughter-in-law Adrienn continue to support my work that is built on family history.

What Is New in the Second Edition?

A direction-shaping survey that Mavis Sanders and I conducted asked over 160 deans and other leaders in colleges of education across the country how well their institutions prepared future teachers and administrators to involve families and communities in children's education. Their responses revealed a dramatic gap between their belief that family and community involvement is a very important topic for future teachers and administrators to master and their honest reports that their graduates were unprepared to conduct effective programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Those data inspired the completion of the first edition of this book as one way to help new teachers and administrators begin their professional lives with a better understanding of useful approaches to family and community involvement.

Some progress has been made since the publication of the first edition of this book. Research on partnerships has improved each year, as more and better studies using ever more rigorous methods are completed. Inservice education has increased to help practicing educators improve their plans and partnership programs. And there are more preservice and advanced education courses on partnership program development—*but not enough*. Most new teachers and administrators are inadequately prepared to work effectively with all students' families in communities across the country.

At the end of the first edition of this book, published in 2001, I noted: "Today's students are tomorrow's parents. They are witnessing and experiencing how their schools treat their families and how their families treat the schools. They are learning by example how parents are involved at school and at home in their education."

Some who were middle and high school students in 2001 now are reading this book—preparing to be teachers! They need to know how to engage their future students' families and communities in productive ways. In this edition, some readings, comments, and activities were retained from the first edition to ensure that future teachers, administrators, and researchers of school, family, and community partnerships understand the history and development of this field of study. Other sections are "new and improved" to share the progress that has been made in research, policies, and practical programs of family and community involvement.

- New readings include a literature review that discusses new directions for partnership program development; a summary of research on homework; and new approaches to district-level leadership, state-level leadership, and policies on family and community involvement.
- Comments, discussion topics, activities, references, and projects were added and updated to enable future teachers and administrators to “think new” about and delve deeper into many aspects of school, family, and community partnerships.

The new edition of this book aims to encourage more professors of education, sociology, psychology, and related fields to incorporate topics covered across chapters in required courses that will prepare the next generation of education professionals to understand and implement programs and practices of family and community involvement to increase student success in school.

*Joyce Levy Epstein
Baltimore, October 2010*



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PART ONE

*Understanding
School, Family,
and Community
Partnerships*



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Introduction

WHOSE DREAMS ARE THESE? Children will like school; work hard; do the best they can; graduate from high school; continue their education; gain employment; and become good citizens, friends, and members of their families. Countless surveys and projects with thousands of educators, families, and students reveal that these are common goals and dreams. Too often, though, these ideals are unattained by this nation's children. How can more students be helped to meet these goals?

To answer questions about goals, we must ask questions about roles: What should families do, what should schools and communities do, and what should students do to reach their common objectives for children's success in school and in the future? These questions are the reasons for studying, implementing, and improving school, family, and community partnerships.

MATCHING RHETORIC WITH PRACTICE

No topic about school improvement has created more rhetoric than parental involvement. Everyone says that it is important. In study after study, teachers, parents, administrators, and even students from elementary through high school say that parental involvement benefits students, improves schools, assists teachers, and strengthens families. There are basic beliefs and agreements about the importance of families and the benefits of parental involvement.

There also are some clearly expressed hopes and wishes for parental involvement. Teachers would like families to assist, guide, and influence their children to do their schoolwork. Families want teachers to let them know how to help their children at home. Students wish their families were knowledgeable about their schools and helpful to them on school matters at home. These desires are expressed in numerous studies with diverse samples, in varied communities, and at all grade levels.

There is some confusion and disagreement, however, about *which* practices of involvement are important and *how* to obtain high participation from all families.

Some educators expect parents to become involved in their children's education on their own. If they do, they are "good" parents. If not, they are irresponsible, uninterested, or "bad" parents. Some educators and parents expect the school to "tell parents what to do" and that parents will simply respond. Neither of these approaches—waiting for involvement or dictating it—is effective for informing or involving all families.

Research shows that *partnership* is a better approach. In partnership, educators, families, and community members work together to share information, guide students, solve problems, and celebrate successes. Partnerships recognize the shared responsibilities of home, school, and community for children's learning and development. Students are central to successful partnerships. They are active learners in all three contexts—at home, at school, and in the community. They link members of these groups to each other. Students are not bystanders but contributors to and actors in the communications, activities, investments, decisions, and other connections that schools, families, and communities conduct to promote children's learning.

What should programs of partnership look like? How can they be developed and sustained? How could teachers, administrators, parents, other family members, and others in communities be prepared to initiate and maintain productive relationships in their work to benefit students? How would teachers, administrators, and others who work with children and families put the best knowledge and practices to work? How must practices change over time as students proceed through the grades? How can research address these questions to continue to increase knowledge and improve practices? These are the questions this book will address. Research, to date, informs the answers; new research will enrich, confirm, or redirect practice.

THE NEED

All teachers and administrators have one thing in common, whether they are in Maine or California; work with students in grade 1 or grade 12; teach Anglo, Latino, African American, Asian American, Native American, or other students; or have advanced or struggling students: All teachers' students have families.

Students' families, however, are not all the same. Some students live with two parents, and others have only one parent at home. Some parents are employed, and some are unemployed; some speak English, and some speak other languages at home. Students come from many different family structures. Indeed, there are important variations in the characteristics and situations of students, families, schools, and communities.

However configured, however constrained, families come with their children to school. Even when they do not come in person, families come in children's minds and hearts and in their hopes and dreams. They come with the children's problems and promise. Without exception, teachers and administrators have explicit or implicit contact with their students' families every day.

All students and their families live in communities, whether close to or distant from schools, that are diverse in geography and history and in economic and social char-

acteristics. Wherever they are located, all communities include individuals, groups, and organizations that care about children; share responsibility for children's futures; and are potentially valuable resources for children, families, and schools. Children, families, and schools also are valuable resources for their communities.

Educators need to understand the contexts in which students live, work, and play. Without that understanding, educators work alone, not in partnership with other important people in students' lives. Without partnerships, educators segment students into the school child and the home child, ignoring the whole child. This parceling reduces or eliminates guidance, support, and encouragement for children's learning from parents, relatives, neighbors, peers, business partners, religious leaders, and other adults in the community.

THE GAP

Teachers learn to teach reading, math, science, and other specialties. They learn to teach students in kindergarten and in all other grade levels. Administrators learn how to manage the school as an organization, create schedules, and supervise many tasks and many people. Most teachers and administrators, however, are presently unprepared to work positively and productively with one of the constants of life in school—their students' families.

Consequently, many educators enter schools without adequately understanding the backgrounds, languages, religions, cultures, histories, structures, races, social classes, and other characteristics and goals of their students and families. Without such information, it is impossible for educators to communicate effectively with the people who matter most to the children in their schools, classrooms, and communities (Bryk and Schneider, 2002).

Few educators enter their profession with an understanding of how they and their colleagues can develop and maintain partnership programs that inform and involve all families every year that children are in school. Without such programs, it is impossible for all families to remain active in their children's education and development.

Few educators are prepared to work with businesses, agencies, and institutions in their students' communities to promote student success in school and beyond. Without these connections, students are underserved and disconnected from opportunities that enrich their schoolwork and prepare them for the future.

An early survey conducted in the southwest region in 1980 found that only 4 to 15 percent of teacher educators taught a full course or part of a course on parent involvement, and only 37 percent of the teacher educators included even one class period on the topic. In the same region, just about all of the practicing teachers and administrators who were surveyed agreed that teachers needed to be better prepared to understand and work with families. And over 70 percent thought that there should be a *required* course on the topic in undergraduate education (Chavkin and Williams, 1988).

Another early study of elementary school teachers in Maryland indicated that few attributed their practices of partnership to their formal education. Most teachers

who had even one class on the topic of parental involvement specialized in early childhood or special education or took administrative or other courses as part of an advanced degree. Sometimes the topic was limited to families' legal rights and responsibilities to make specific decisions about children with special needs (Becker and Epstein, 1982; see Reading 3.1).

Little change occurred in the 1980s and 1990s in preparing educators to understand and work with families and communities to support their children's education, despite considerable progress in research, policy, and practice. An informal survey of six campuses of the University of California that prepared teachers found that few courses or even classes-within-courses were offered on family and school partnerships (Ammon, 1990). In Minnesota, more than half of the 27 colleges and universities with degree-granting undergraduate education programs offered no course related to parent involvement for prospective teachers of kindergarten through grade 12, and only one had a required course on the topic (Hinz, Clarke, and Nathan, 1992). Most courses that were offered were for future teachers in early childhood education or special education. Only 6 of 1,300 course listings focused on comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

A companion study of the 50 states indicated that no state required an entire course in family involvement for the certification or licensing of teachers. According to these reports, nine states required coverage of the topic in some course, with a few more specifying that requirement for teachers of early childhood (11 states) and special education (15 states). Approximately one-quarter of the states identified the need for elementary educators to show competence (however attained) in school, family, and community partnerships. Fewer states expected middle or high school educators to have competence in family involvement. Only seven states required principals or central office administrators to study parent involvement or demonstrate proficiency in promoting parent involvement in their schools. No state included this competency in recertification or renewal of certification, thereby reducing the likelihood that practicing educators will update their family and community involvement skills (Radcliffe, Malone, and Nathan, 1994).

A study of official certification materials from all states in 1992 found similar patterns and concluded that parental involvement was not a high priority in state certification (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, and Lopez, 1997). The researchers conducted follow-up inquiries with leaders of about 60 teacher education programs in 22 states that mentioned family involvement in their certification requirements. The results indicated that teacher education programs responded to state policies by teaching topics of parental involvement in some courses. Only nine of the universities in that sample reported having a required course on family involvement, usually for teachers of young children.

At the start of the new decade, a study of 161 deans and chairpersons in schools, colleges, and departments of education in the United States examined courses offered to prospective educators and leaders' perspectives of the need for change (Epstein and Sanders, 2006). About 70 percent of the leaders strongly agreed that future teachers, administrators, and counselors needed partnership skills, but only 7.2 percent strongly agreed that the new teachers who graduated from their programs were

prepared to work with all students' families and communities. Slightly higher percentages believed that future principals (19 percent) and counselors (27 percent) were prepared to work effectively with families. About 60 percent of the leaders of the sampled institutions—more than in past surveys—reported offering a full course on partnerships, mainly to graduate students or, as noted historically, to specialists in early childhood and special education. Most (92 percent) noted that courses at their colleges covered the topic of partnerships in at least *one class*. Even today—even with some progress—most colleges and universities are not adequately preparing new professional educators to work with students' families and communities.

The education leaders' reports were confirmed in a national survey of education school alumni in which 62 percent reported they were not well prepared for the realities of the classroom (Levine, 2006). This includes a lack of skills to work with diverse students and parents in ways that support student learning. Some might say this reflects poorly on the teacher candidates, but the statistic really reflects the poor quality of teacher education programs to help future teachers gain the skills they need—immediately and in every classroom—to work with all students and their families on students' attitudes, efforts, achievements, and progress.

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE

There is evidence that change is possible. In 1989, deans of education and other curriculum leaders at California campuses attended a conference on the need to add school, family, and community partnerships to teacher education. Some took action quickly. Within one year, five of the eight campuses represented at the conference reported making a few changes in the content of courses and assignments in required and elective courses for prospective teachers and administrators. The changes included adding readings about parent involvement to existing courses, professional development, or supervised teaching seminars. One campus added the topic of partnerships to an induction program for first-year teachers who had graduated from the university the prior year (Ammon, 1990). These examples showed that small changes, such as adding readings or discussions about school, family, and community partnerships to existing courses, could be made quickly.

Other changes take longer if they require formal university approval, such as creating a new required or elective course on school, family, and community partnerships for all future teachers or designing a certificate program to develop educational leaders on partnerships. One example of this is a certificate program at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University. This five-course, 15-credit certificate at the graduate student level, Leadership for School, Family, and Community Collaboration, developed by Dr. Mavis Sanders and her colleagues, required approval from the department and the school's academic review council (Graduate Division of Education, 2003).

In the past few years, more textbooks for various courses on teaching practice, classroom management, and administrative leadership added topics on family and community involvement (Cox-Peterson, 2011; Cunningham and Cordeiro, 2003; Weinstein, 2006; Weinstein and Mignano, 2006; Santrock, 2008; Woolfolk, 2004).

Positive actions also have been taken by individual professors at various colleges and universities who designed and taught courses on school, family, and community partnerships or added readings to existing courses in education, leadership and cultural foundations, sociology, psychology, and social work (Chavkin, 2005; deAcosta, 1996; Kaplan, 1992; Katz and Bauch, 1999; Kirschenbaum, 2001; Riehl, 2004; Van Wyk, 1998). For example, Bermudez and Padron (1988) designed a graduate-level course that included classwork and fieldwork to help educators learn to communicate better with families who spoke Spanish at home. Evans-Shilling (1996) initiated a responsive field-based course that provided educators with experiences in family-school relations. Alleksaht-Snyder and others designed a required course for educators preparing for early childhood education to increase understanding of family-school relations; it included fieldwork with families in school, at home, and in the community (Alleksaht-Snyder, Phtiaka, and Gonzalez, 1996). She and her colleagues at the University of Georgia also infused these topics into elementary education, field experiences, and other programs to prepare educators. For several years, Mapp (2009) offered future teachers and policy analysts a full-semester course on family and community involvement at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. And the Harvard Family Research Project's Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) conducts projects and maintains a website (www.finenetwork.org) to engage professors of education on topics of family and community involvement.

Over the past two decades, these and other professors have worked to help future educators understand the important roles that families and communities play in students' education. A few studies examined the impact of coursework about family and community involvement on future teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes about partnerships. Morris and her colleagues at the University of Memphis found positive effects of a four-semester school and community relations course on students' understanding of partnerships, attitudes toward parents, confidence about working with families, and feelings of comfort and competence in planning family involvement activities and programs (Morris and Taylor, 1998; Morris, Taylor, and Knight, 1998).

Studies also show that teachers who feel more competent about their own skills were more likely to implement activities to involve families, raising important questions about the need to improve coursework to increase teachers' efficacy on partnerships (Garcia, 2004). Other professors have reported that coursework increased their undergraduate and/or graduate students' understanding of partnerships as one of the essential components of school and classroom organization and as a major influence on student learning and development (Albert, 2008; deAcosta, 1996; Deslandes, Fournier, and Morin, 2008; Katz and Bauch, 1999; Shartrand et al., 1997; Shumow, 2004; Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, and Chatman-Nelson, 2010).

The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) partnered with MetLife Foundation to fund five innovative projects to increase attention to family and community involvement in their preservice programs for teachers (AACTE, 2002). These included field experiences for future teachers at the University of Texas at El Paso working with Latino parents in one school's community and

trials of Teachers as Faculty and Families as Faculty workshops to give future teachers at the University of South Florida and the University of North Florida, respectively, a chance to hear from local teachers and family members about desired collaborations. Northern Illinois University's project embedded partnership topics throughout the curriculum for preservice teachers, and the University of North Texas designed online components that professors in various courses could use to provide future teachers with new knowledge about family and community involvement. More support of this kind would greatly advance innovative attention to teacher training on aspects of school, family, and community partnerships. More research is needed to learn if and how courses with different designs and requirements affect teachers' and administrators' daily practice.

These examples and the results of the survey of deans suggest that leaders in colleges and universities may be more ready than in the past to add the topic of school, family, and community partnerships to their curricula. Readiness for change also has been influenced by federal policies (e.g., recently by No Child Left Behind [NCLB], with continued influence of Head Start, Even Start, and other programs that require family and community involvement; see Reading 4.3). More college and university professors have read research on school, family, and community partnerships that accumulated in the past two decades, and more professors have graduate students at the master's and doctoral degree levels who are choosing topics on family and community involvement for their dissertations (Epstein and Sanders, 2006).

POLICIES ENCOURAGE PREPARATION ON PARTNERSHIPS

States are beginning to include school, family, and community connections in their qualifications for the certification of teachers, administrators, counselors, and other educators. For example, California's Education Code and Commission on Teaching Credentialing, Ohio's Standards Revisions Teacher Education and Certification, Illinois's General Supervisory Endorsement, Minnesota's Higher Education Coordination Board, Virginia's student teaching requirements, and other legislation refer to the importance of school practices to involve families and communities.

Some states require teachers, administrators, counselors, and other educators to demonstrate knowledge and skills on partnerships to qualify for state certification and reflect the standards for licensure of collaborating organizations. The Education Commission of the States (2005) reported that of the 50 states, 17 directed all districts and schools to implement parental involvement policies while 15 others "urge" these programs. In the past few years, other states reported that, in addition to requiring schools and districts to comply with federal requirements for parental involvement policies and programs, state leaders provided professional development on partnerships, awarded grants for innovative partnership practices, and recommended (rather than required) schools conduct programs that involve all families in their children's education (Moles, 2008). Many states are reluctant to issue detailed mandates and requirements for all districts and all schools to take the same

actions, but most states have issued clear recommendations and other documents that support parental involvement as an essential organizational component for effective schools and successful students.

National organizations for college and university program accreditation—including the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2002), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, 1992), and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)—have standards for teacher and administrator education that explicitly include preparation and competence in working with families and communities (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). For example, NCATE specifies that teacher candidates should understand principles and strategies for school, family, and community partnerships to support students' learning. INTASC and ISLLC stipulate competencies that all teachers and administrators should master, including fostering relationships with families and community groups to support student learning and well-being. National teacher examinations for new teachers and national assessments for highly accomplished teachers include questions and require skills on parent and community involvement (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1994).

Still, all state and credentialing requirements about competencies on partnerships tend to be general and aspirational, rather than specific about course content and required credits. It takes time for state laws and accreditation standards to affect college and university courses for future teachers and administrators.

MORE IS NEEDED

Despite some progress in the past ten years, the picture is still bleak. Most teachers and administrators are not prepared to understand—much less design, implement, and evaluate—new approaches for developing programs of family and community involvement that increase the success of all students in school. Most administrators are not prepared with new strategies to guide and lead their staffs to develop strong school programs and classroom practices that inform and involve all families about their children's learning, development, and educational plans for the future. The problem is serious for all educators and is particularly urgent for educators teaching in public and charter schools that serve diverse families. It is still the case that rising teachers and administrators need a repertory of research-based approaches to work with all families, especially in economically distressed communities.

Even big changes that were made in the past few years have had limited impact. Relatively few new teachers or administrators graduate from any one college or university. The fact is that many more colleges and university programs need to improve their programs to enable all future teachers and administrators to gain basic knowledge and skills on partnership program development. It will be necessary to scale up the number of professors and programs of teacher education, educational administration, and other courses in order to prepare all educators to engage all families in positive ways in their children's education at all grade levels.

It is time to advance undergraduate and graduate education by ensuring that future teachers and administrators have the required courses with the newest content coverage on school, family, and community partnerships. Simultaneously, it is important to encourage state education leaders to improve certification standards for teachers, administrators, and counselors by specifying course requirements and competencies that educators must have to support general statements about the importance of family and community involvement.

THE GOALS

Just as teachers are prepared to teach subject matter and administrators are prepared to direct and manage schools and programs, all educators also must be prepared to draw on all of the resources that will help students succeed in school, including families and communities. This volume aims to:

- add an understanding of school, family, and community partnerships to the education and training of teachers, administrators, counselors, and professionals in related fields;
- include this knowledge in the definition of what it means to be professional;
- promote respect, trust, appreciation, and collaboration between and among all adults who influence children's lives and learning;
- enable educators to apply their knowledge to develop effective programs of partnership in their schools and classrooms;
- support the integration of school, family, and community partnerships in broader programs of school improvement, giving explicit attention to improving practices of involvement; and
- encourage research on the simultaneous influences of home, school, and community contexts on children's learning and development.

The professional preparation of educators must include the information they need to understand, conduct, and maintain school, family, and community partnerships. Without this information, teachers and administrators are restricted in the resources they have to help students do their best. Also, families are then limited in the influence they may have on their children's learning and development for at least 12 years of school life. In turn, many children miss the support, encouragement, and understanding they might have from their families and communities. In the end, if educators lack knowledge and skills in organizing and implementing effective partnerships with all students' families, fewer students succeed in school.

The research base of the first edition of this book has been strengthened by advances in research, policy, and practice over the past ten years. It is now possible to enable prospective and practicing educators to gain the knowledge, tools, and examples they need to mobilize families and communities to assist children's learning and development from preschool through high school.

ACHIEVING THE GOALS

To recognize the need, fill the gap, and achieve the goals stated above, we must change some of the requirements, options, and content of higher education courses. Courses must be revised and expanded to include a solid base of information to prepare teachers and administrators to understand and involve families in their children's education.

Ideally, there should be at least one comprehensive required course on school, family, and community partnerships in every preparatory program. Because every teacher and administrator works with children's families (in person or unseen) every day of their professional lives, this requirement is as important as a course in teaching reading, math, or another subject in the preparation of school teachers, and as important as any major required course in educational administration or other educational specialties.

A less meritorious policy decision that still improves most preparatory programs is to organize and offer elective courses on the topic of partnerships at the undergraduate and graduate levels. There also should be a formal plan for how readings on school, family, and community partnerships will be integrated in other required and elective courses to ensure that all who are preparing for professions in education have had substantial exposure to and experience with the theory, research, and implementation of these partnerships.

The call for required, elective, and/or integrated courses is offered with a mix of urgency and understanding. It is urgent that educators better understand families' roles in children's education and how to implement programs of school, family, and community partnerships. It is understood that change in higher education must be discussed and planned to alter long-standing practices in order to offer students these options. Leaders in higher education must be change agents and take steps to ensure that the educational professionals who are prepared in their courses, programs, departments, colleges, and universities are, in fact, well-qualified to teach children and work with families and communities as partners in education.

In colleges and universities, courses also should be enhanced to prepare researchers in sociology, psychology, education, and related disciplines to understand the questions, methods, and problems of studying multiple contexts—home, school, and community—and the interactions of individuals in these contexts. We must prepare the next generation of education researchers to study the overlapping spheres of influence on children's learning and development, just as we must prepare the next generation of teachers and administrators to work effectively with families and communities.

USING THIS VOLUME

This book is about school, family, and community partnerships: how to think about them, talk about them, study and understand them, act on them, and improve them. It includes selected readings and excerpts of readings on the theory,

research, policy, and practice of school, family, and community partnerships to provide a solid base of information on the development, directions, problems, and possibilities of these connections.

The readings and accompanying comments, discussions, and activities can be used as the basis for a full course or as supplementary materials in courses such as foundations of education, methods of teaching, contemporary issues in education, education policy studies, educational administration, counseling, sociology of education, sociology of family, educational psychology, school social work, and related courses. Following are suggestions for using this volume as a text for a full course or for supplementary readings.

A Comprehensive Required or Elective Course

A comprehensive course on partnerships must cover the major topics that educators need to study to proceed thoughtfully in their work with children, families, and communities. This includes theoretical perspectives; results of research on particular approaches; effective policies and practices that teachers and administrators should understand and be able to use to engage all families, involve the community, and best serve students; and organizational strategies to help educators and families work together to design and implement sustainable programs of partnership. Other texts or readings, activities, and projects may supplement this volume in a full course.

Supplementary Readings in Other Required or Elective Courses in Education and the Social Sciences

Readings on family, school, and community connections are important for fully understanding the sociology of education, sociology of the family, social foundations of education, school administration and management, political science, political action and organizations, social policy, school psychology, human development, social work, community services, group processes, urban policy, and related fields. Individual chapters, articles, and activities in this volume may be selected to bring the topic of partnerships to courses in these specialties.

Presently, many courses focus on families without paying attention to children's schools; focus on schools without attending to their connections with families and communities; or instruct about communities without considering the connections and investments of community groups and organizations with educators, families, and children. The readings in this volume will broaden the background and understanding of undergraduate and graduate students about the important connections among home, school, and community for the purposes of assisting students, strengthening families, and renewing communities.

Selections from this volume also may be woven into thematic courses. For example, a course in education, sociology of education, or related fields may take a

historical perspective, addressing the question: How have research, policy, and practice on school, family, and community connections changed over the past half century? Family and school connections have changed from rather superficial, peripheral activities to theory-driven and research-based frameworks that guide basic and applied research and school program development. Research on “community” has changed from using mainly demographic data that rank locations as high or low on social or economic variables to studying the people, processes, and resources in any community that can assist student learning. More and different themes would emerge in a course covering the organization and effects of connections among children, families, schools, and communities over the past two centuries.

Another elective course might address comparisons of school, family, and community connections across nations with comparative readings that explore common and distinct international themes, policies, and school-based programs of family and community involvement. A third thematic course might focus on social-psychological perspectives of the interconnections and interrelationships of individuals that influence student development. This might include research on social networks of educators, parents, parents-and-educators, and student-peers-and-parents, and the two-way, three-way, and many-way connections between and among schools, families, students, peer groups, and communities.

Linkages to Courses on the Methods of Teaching Specific School Subjects and Practice Teaching

Readings on school, family, and community connections should be included in methods of teaching courses that prepare educators to teach specific subjects. That is, teachers of every subject and grade level need to understand, design, select, conduct, and evaluate appropriate connections with their students’ families about the curriculum in specific subjects, homework policies, attendance and behavioral expectations, children’s grades, challenges, and progress, and about academic decisions such as course choices and the selection of enrichment programs. Teachers of all subjects and grade levels need to understand, design, select, conduct, and evaluate connections with individuals and groups in communities to maximize learning opportunities in reading, math, writing, science, computer skills, art, music, family life, physical education, and other subjects.

Important theoretical issues to study and discuss include whether and how sharing power with parents increases or decreases teachers’ power and professional standing. Also, teachers need to learn specific skills, such as how to design homework that enables children to share skills and ideas at home, how to inform families about what their children should know and do each year in each subject, and how to inform families about children’s progress and involve families in the assessment of students’ work. Teachers of all subjects also should understand the community near the school; the home communities of their students; and the connections with businesses, groups, and individuals in the surrounding community that may help enrich and extend their teaching and students’ learning.

Educators who are being prepared to teach, administer, or work in the schools of the twenty-first century should learn about the scope and expansion of research and practice in the field of school, family, and community partnerships. This information will help them develop their own perspectives, understand the pros and cons and the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches, and thoughtfully select or design strategies to communicate with and involve families and communities in children's education.

Other Information

Even if a required course covered all of the topics in this volume, undergraduate and graduate students still would need other information about families, schools, and communities to be prepared for their professions. For example, students need to read about the family as a social organization, the influence parents have on their children at various age levels, diversity in family backgrounds and cultures, and trends in family life. Similarly, professionals who work with families and children need to know about school and classroom organizations to understand basic school structures, functions, staffing, and alternative curricular and instructional approaches for educating students. Educators need to build their knowledge about community structures, processes, and services. The readings in this volume address these topics only as they affect the design and conduct of school, family, and community partnerships. The fields of parent education and parent leadership are also related to topics of family and community involvement (Bornstein, 2002).

No single course or class in higher education will provide all the information and examples that professionals need to make decisions about which practices to use in every school in which they work. Nevertheless, a basic, comprehensive, required course or substantial coverage in several courses should increase awareness and understanding of the topic, alert educators that collaborating with families is part of their professional responsibility, and provide many ideas and examples to help teachers and administrators “tailor” programs and practices of partnership to their particular school, family, and community settings.

Links to Inservice Education

The vast majority of practicing educators, social workers, school psychologists, and others who work with families and children have had no prior formal education in school, family, and community partnerships. Thus, there is and will continue to be a great need for inservice education for practitioners in preschools; in elementary, middle, and high schools; and at the district and state leadership levels to meet new laws and requirements for effective programs of family and community involvement linked to student achievement and success in school.

Most inservice programs, presently, are limited to a few hours' duration and may introduce teachers and administrators to one or two new practices of partnerships.

A companion volume—*School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (Epstein et al., 2009)—is a comprehensive inservice guidebook that enables educators and parent leaders in schools, districts, and states to organize, improve, and maintain effective programs of partnerships in their own locations.

SETTING A COURSE

This volume brings together a set of basic readings, with comments on new issues; topics for class discussions; questions and activities for classwork, homework, field experiences, and suggested projects; and other material for use in undergraduate and graduate courses in education, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines. The content, based on my work with colleagues, educators, and parents connects child development, socialization, and education with the institutions of school, family, and community and the individuals within them. The collection of readings and activities stresses the importance of developing and maintaining *programs* of partnerships at the school, district, and state levels—not only what one teacher or one principal or one parent might do on their own.

Some chapters should be particularly useful for improving the actions and activities of prospective teachers, administrators, and others who plan to work with schools and families. Other chapters aim to encourage research on new and needed questions to advance the field of school, family, and community partnerships. The readings include literature reviews, original research, policy issues, and activities for practice teaching and subject specialization. The final chapter serves as a bridge to the practical, inservice education and program development that must be customized for and conducted in all schools. The chapters cover the following topics:

Chapter 2: Theory and Overview. Two readings provide a broad perspective on school, family, and community partnerships to introduce a theory of *overlapping spheres of influence* and to provide an understanding of new directions for research, policy, and practice. Theories of authority and decision making and their applications at the school, district, and state levels are explored and may be expanded.

Chapter 3: Research. Several original research studies are presented with data collected from teachers, parents, and students on the nature and extent of involvement, relationships among partners in children's education, and effects of partnership practices. The readings help students examine research methods, interpret results, and consider implications for school practice or for new studies to extend the field. The involvement of parents in one- and two-parent homes is discussed to focus on what schools may do to involve all parents, not just those who usually become involved on their own. This chapter also introduces research on homework to study connections of the classroom curriculum, family involvement, and student attitudes and achievements.

Chapter 4: Policy. Several readings summarize issues and advances in state, district, school, and federal policies of partnership and the connections of policies to leadership actions. These include research on NCLB, guidelines for policy development, and examples of state and district policies on family and community involvement. The readings and activities show how research influences policy, how policy sparks improvements in practice, and, coming full circle, how new policies and practice open opportunities for more and better research. These topics and a discussion of funding partnership programs make this chapter of particular interest in educational administration courses.

Chapter 5: Practical Framework. This chapter connects research and policy with practice. The reading and activities focus on my *framework of six types of involvement*, sample practices of partnerships, the challenges that must be met in excellent programs, and results that can be expected if practices for each type of involvement are well designed and well implemented. By applying knowledge and information to real-world situations, future educators will gain an understanding of the basic components for building goal-linked, school-based partnership programs.

Chapter 6: Practical Applications. Particularly targeted to courses on methods of teaching specific subjects and practice teaching, this chapter summarizes research on a practical method for improving connections with families about students' homework. It discusses and illustrates how to organize and conduct feasible family and community connections connected to the curriculum at home and at school by (1) designing interactive homework for students to discuss with their families at home (Type 4 in the framework of six types of involvement) and (2) organizing volunteers who present interdisciplinary discussions of art and social studies (Type 3 in the framework). Both practical applications demonstrate ways to organize family and community involvement to increase student learning. These topics should be of interest in courses for curricular specialists, students in methods of teaching classes, and student teachers.

Chapter 7: Strategies for Action in Practice, Policy, and Research. This chapter describes an action-team approach for implementing comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships. *Teamwork* is key for organizing and sustaining programs and practices of partnerships. As a team, educators, parents, and community members can work together to plan and implement effective practices that involve all families and promote children's success in school. Essential program elements—leadership, teamwork, written plans, funding, internal and external collegial support, action to implement plans, evaluations, and continuous improvement—must be organized to sustain excellent partnership programs just as these factors are needed for effective reading, math, testing, and other school programs. This chapter also

summarizes the volume's central themes and major conclusions about school, family, and community partnerships.

FEATURED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Each chapter introduces provocative and useful terms that change the way we think about school, family, and community partnerships. For example, readings in Chapter 2 describe *school-like families* and *family-like schools* to contrast collaborative actions with previous narrow views of the different goals and missions of these institutions. This chapter also asks readers to consider how the *multiplication of labor* may describe how educators and families help students learn better than the *division of labor* that was emphasized in prior studies of organizations. Finally, the chapter discusses seven ways to “think new” about partnerships in research, policy, and practice.

Chapter 3 presents original research that provided a base on which studies of school, family, and community partnerships continue to build. The readings illustrate and emphasize the importance of multiple reporters and multiple measures of partnerships in research on partnerships. One reading identifies ten purposes of homework and discusses the need for improving the design of homework to ensure higher quality assignments before simply assigning more homework.

Chapter 4 emphasizes the need for *side-by-side* policies to balance top-down and bottom-up approaches in states, districts, and schools. Readings and discussions in this chapter also show how to translate legislated requirements for family involvement into measures to study how federal (and other) legislation is implemented. Comments in this chapter discuss *food-for-thought stamps* to support and expand extracurricular, after-school, and summer enrichment activities for economically distressed students and families.

Chapter 5 suggests *redefinitions* for each of the six types of involvement that will bring school, family, and community partnerships into alignment with family factors in the twenty-first century. For example, a new definition states that workshops for parents are not only meetings at school but also the content of those meetings disseminated to all who could not come, thereby enabling parents to attend workshops in different ways.

Chapter 6 shows that homework is not always completed by the student alone but can be purposely *interactive* with a parent or family partner. The chapter also demonstrates how volunteers in the middle grades can make real contributions to student learning.

Chapter 7 explains how concepts of trust and mutual respect are central to the success of all partnerships and how seemingly contradictory concepts of equity and diversity in partnerships must coexist. The chapter describes *goal-oriented* and *process-oriented* approaches that educators may use to plan, implement, and evaluate their programs of family and community involvement.

The readings and discussions in several chapters contrast *what is* versus *what might be* in school, family, and community partnerships to encourage fuller inter-

pretations of research results, new directions for research, and the application of research for school improvement.

ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES

Each chapter includes comments and key concepts that extend and update the readings, topics for informal classroom discussions, classroom activities, written assignments, and field activities that encourage students to reflect on the readings, debate ideas, describe related experiences, and conduct short-term and long-term projects. Activities include classroom discussions; written comments; interviews with parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and students; panel presentations; role plays; school visits; and other activities. Questions are provided for students to use in their interviews, and students are asked to compose some of their own questions. Some interviews with educators, parents, or others may be assigned to all students to be completed individually, or interviewees may be invited to the class for group interviews. Field activities and other tasks also may be assigned to individuals, pairs, or groups.

Selection of assignments. There are more questions and activities in each chapter than students in most classes can address in one semester. Professors are encouraged to select and balance assignments so that students engage in a mix of reflective writing, interviews, research, discussions, and other activities. The assignments should reflect course themes and meet the needs of undergraduate or graduate students in teaching, administration, research, and other fields.

Answers to questions. Most of the discussion topics and questions have many correct answers, not one right answer. Some questions first ask students to “identify a school level (preschool, elementary, middle, or high) or grade level that interests you.” Thus, students will select different settings on which to base their answers. Students should contribute ideas and written work using information from the readings as well as their own perspectives and experiences. They should be asked to justify their responses based on data or summaries provided in the chapter or refute ideas with specific examples. Professors need to encourage well-argued discussions and debates based on the content of the readings, other research, data collected by students for homework or projects, and students’ experiences.

Many students come into education, sociology, psychology, and other courses with stereotypic views of families from backgrounds that differ from their own (Graue and Brown, 2003). The discussion topics and activities in this volume are designed to challenge stereotypes and strengthen future teachers’ and administrators’ understanding of the *variations* that define students and families in all groups.

Follow-up. Some assignments may be followed up in class by sharing ideas, discussing issues, and pooling data to create larger and more representative samples for additional discussions. For example, if each student interviewed two parents for an assignment, a class of twenty students would produce a combined sample of 40 parents to better understand parents' ideas, goals, or problems. As another example, if each student in a class identifies an exemplary product, the collection of good ideas may be compiled as a computerized resource file for future reference.

Adaptation. Professors are encouraged to adapt or expand the exercises to match the emphases of particular courses and classes. For example, topics and questions about home-school connections at the school level can be adapted and redirected to focus on district, state, or community issues to meet the needs of students in educational administration or community studies. Professors may increase the difficulty or length of assignments by requiring students to complete more readings, conduct and report activities marked "optional," provide more examples, or complete other related activities. Similarly, professors may reduce the difficulty or length of assignments by assigning parts or sections of activities that are provided in each chapter.

Elaboration. The questions in each chapter may spark ideas for term papers, master's or doctoral theses, or other research projects.

SUMMARY

This book offers a clear perspective on the importance of theory-driven and research-based approaches to programs of school, family, and community partnerships. To think about, talk about, and take action to improve home, school, and community connections that support students' education and school improvement, educators must have a foundation on which to build. It is not acceptable to base ideas and future actions only on personal, limited, or selected experiences or outdated stereotypes. It is necessary to understand the basic and complex aspects of a field of study to decide whether, when, why, and how to apply research in practice or to select important questions for new research.

The volume supports six facts and one urgently needed action:

- **Fact:** All students have families. All students and families live in communities. Families and communities are important in children's lives and, along with schools, influence students' learning.
- **Fact:** Teachers and administrators have direct or indirect contact with students' families every day of their professional careers.
- **Fact:** Few teachers or administrators are prepared to work with families and communities as partners in children's education.
- **Fact:** There is widespread agreement and accumulating evidence that well-designed programs and practices of school, family, and community partnerships benefit students, families, and schools.

- **Fact:** Ever more rigorous research and evaluations are needed to continually improve knowledge about family and community involvement and the effectiveness of state, district, and school programs and practices.
- **Fact:** Although there is more to learn, we know enough now to implement research-based, goal-linked programs of school, family, and community partnerships that engage all families and help all students succeed to their full potential.
- **Action Needed:** There must be immediate and dramatic changes in the preservice and advanced education of teachers, administrators, counselors, and others who work with schools, families, and students. Changes are needed in coursework and field experiences to prepare professionals to understand, respect, and collaborate with parents, other family members, and individuals, groups, and organizations in communities that can help students succeed.

This book will help. The readings and references provide a history of the field and a window on how research and programs of school, family, and community partnerships developed over time and must continue to develop. The comments, questions, and activities in each chapter introduce topics that should be discussed, debated, and studied. Whether used to organize a full course or to supplement other courses in education and social science, this volume introduces new directions for improving school, family, and community partnerships and will generate new ideas for research, policy, and practice.

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Policy Implications

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