ADDITIONAL STUDY SUMMARIES

This section contains expanded summaries of selected studies highlighted in Chapters 1–4 of *Everyone Wins*!

Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement

Anthony S. Bryk & Barbara Schneider • 2002

SUMMARY: This rigorous, long-term, mixed methods study of elementary schools in Chicago found that the presence of relational trust significantly increased the likelihood of improved student achievement. Schools are social enterprises, and their success depends on a high level of cooperation among teachers, parents, and educators. Trust is the connective tissue that binds them together in a common purpose of advancing the well-being of children.

BACKGROUND: Large-scale social changes have bred fear and distrust in many urban schools. Too often, teachers see parents' values as undermining their children's learning, while parents believe that teachers look down on them. This lack of trust, often aggravated by differences of race and class, makes genuine dialogue almost impossible. The misunderstandings that result tend to reinforce existing biases. Instead of working together to foster children's academic and social progress, teachers and parents feel isolated and opposed. This study explores whether and how trust is a key factor in improving the academic success of very disadvantaged urban schools.

DESIGN OF STUDY: Using research on social trust and its impact on workplaces, the authors developed a concept they call "relational trust." Formed through sustained social exchanges, relational trust can directly influence the effectiveness of an organization, making it easier to communicate and correct misunderstandings. In a social setting like a school, the quality of social exchanges has enormous significance. Based on this research and their observations in schools, Bryk and Schneider identify four "considerations" that underlie trust.

1. **Respect**. Recognizing and honoring the important role each person plays in a child's education. This involves listening to what others have to say and valuing their ideas.
2. **Competence**. Feeling that others are working hard, doing their best, and have the skills to play their role well builds confidence and stability. Gross incompetence is corrosive.
3. **Personal regard for others.** When people feel that others are willing to extend themselves "above and beyond the call of duty," they are tapping into a vital lifeline. Taking action to reduce another's vulnerability deepens trust.
4. **Integrity**. Being consistent about what we say and do builds confidence that we will keep our word. It also implies that an ethical perspective guides our work (pp. 25-26).

This mixed methods study is based on data from long-term case studies and field observations of 12 Chicago elementary schools, as well as rigorous statistical analysis of data from the Consortium on Chicago School Research on over 400 elementary schools. In addition, the researchers conducted two citywide teacher surveys three years apart, using three scales to measure relational trust.

1. **Teacher-parent trust**. Do teachers feel mutual respect in their relationships with parents? Do they get support from parents? Do staff work hard to build trust with parents?
2. **Teacher-teacher trust**. Do teachers trust and respect each other? Do they go out of their way to help each other? Do teachers respect faculty who lead school improvement efforts?
3. **Teacher-principal trust.** Do teachers feel the principal respects and supports them, looks out for their welfare, and trusts their expertise? Do they trust the principal's word?

The analysis examines how relational trust varies, comparing levels of trust among the 100 top achieving schools with those in the bottom 100. In addition, the study includes case studies of three elementary schools, two with lower levels of trust and one with a high level.

FINDINGS: In general, higher levels of trust in schools predict higher student performance, and lower levels predict lower student performance. In high-performing schools (the top quartile):

- About 75 percent of teachers report strong or very strong trust relationships with colleagues. They describe a climate of general respect and honor for those who take on leadership roles. They also trust, confide in, and care about one another.
- Nearly 90 percent of teachers rate their trust of principals as strong or very strong. Typically, they describe the principal as an effective manager who looks out for their interests and puts students first.
- About 57 percent of teachers rate trust of parents as strong or very strong (pp. 93-97).

For schools in the bottom quartile, the results are just the opposite. The majority of teachers have little or no trust of their principal, each other, or the parents. In both quartile groups, trust of parents ranks the lowest.

When the researchers compared schools' productivity, another interesting pattern emerged: Schools with higher levels of trust were much more likely to improve over time. Ranking schools at the top and bottom of an improvement trend scale over seven years showed that conditions that predict improvement (e.g., commitment, orientation to innovation, outreach to parents, and professional community) are 25 percent more prevalent in schools with improving relational trust (p. 120).

The theory of change, which the research supports, is that the base level of trust affects school capacity to undertake reform initiatives. Complex reforms take time and require a level of mutual support and teamwork that trust lubricates. Small wins expand trust, which then increases the capacity to take on new challenges. The changes made then improve student learning (p. 121).

Although trust forms through interrelationships, certain structural features can help or inhibit its development. These include school size (smaller is better, 350 students or less) and a stable school community with lower student and staff mobility. Trust also more readily grows when both staff and students feel the school is a place where they want to be. A final factor is the ability to attract good teachers and remove incompetent ones.

CONCLUSIONS: Relational trust cannot be achieved simply through a workshop, retreat, or sensitivity training, although all can be helpful. Rather, relational trust is forged in daily social exchanges. Through their actions, members of a school community demonstrate commitment to each other and to the purpose of the school. Trust grows when the expectations we hold of others are validated by their actions. Simple actions accumulate and allow more complex changes to take hold. Increasing trust and deepening organizational change reinforce each other (pp. 136-7).

Principals are key to the process of developing a culture of trusting collaboration. Because resources are scarce in urban schools, meeting the needs of staff can conflict with responding to the multiple needs of children in poverty. School leaders must constantly balance showing personal regard for

faculty while also steadfastly advancing the school's primary mission—children's healthy social and academic development (p. 136).

Elementary teachers receive little training in how to work with parents and other adults in the community. This is complicated by differences in race and class between teachers and low-income parents. Effective urban schools need to recruit and retain teachers who:

- Know their students well
- Have empathy and understanding of the parents' situations
- Have interpersonal skills needed to engage their students' families.

For example, staff at the high-trust elementary school profiled encouraged parents to visit their classrooms. Then teachers took the opportunity to model how parents could better support their children's learning (p. 85). These capacities should be explicitly included in teachers' job descriptions and annual evaluations. In addition, professional development, both preservice and continuing education, is essential so that teachers can develop these essential skills and mindsets (pp. 138-9).

Crushing poverty and limited education among families created an enormous power imbalance among teachers. As a result, parents depended on the school staff to know what education is best for their children. In the case study of the school with high trust levels, teachers stressed the importance of respecting parents, no matter their background. A parent at that school put it this way: "(Teachers) come to talk to me to see if I have any suggestions to make. They'll listen to what I have to say. It's not like they look down on me or something like that" (p. 85).

> "In short, we view relational trust as creating the fertile social ground for core technical resources (such as standards, assessments, and new curricula) to take root and develop into something of value. Without this, individual staff may excel at their work, certain school functions may be well executed, but the school as a social system will continue to fail many of its members" (p. 135).

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: Parents must be able to talk with teachers and have a say in how their children are treated. Teachers need to voice their concerns to administrators and feel they will be considered. Administrators need to feel that faculty cares about the functioning of the school. As John Dewey famously said, a school should be more like a family than a factory.

Several other studies in this report have found that trust is foundational to the healthy effective functioning of a school (Humphrey & Squires, Geller et al., Ginwright, Rangel, Barbour, et al., Sheldon & Jung). Without it, other initiatives tend to fizzle. It is the soil in which everything else can take root and flourish. This study explains why this is true and gives examples of what practices cultivate relational trust.

Bryk, A., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Organizing Schools for Improvement

Anthony S. Byrk, Penny B. Sebring, Elaine Allensworth, Stuart Luppescu, & John Q. Easton • 2010

SUMMARY: Why do some schools make substantial gains while others stagnate or decline? This landmark study compared schools in Chicago that had made substantial improvement with similar schools that had stagnated or declined. The authors found five "essential supports" that were highly related to school improvement. Schools that had "strong ties to families and the community" were four times more likely to make significant gains in reading and math. In those schools, teachers and staff were familiar with community issues and families' home cultures, invited families to observe in the classroom, used community resources, worked as partners with families to improve learning, and responded to families' concerns about their children.

BACKGROUND: In 1990, the Consortium on Chicago School Research began a longitudinal study of the internal workings and community conditions that distinguished improving elementary schools from those that failed to improve. The researchers used that deep database to develop, test, and validate a framework of essential supports for school improvement. The essential supports were identified by examining what supports were strong in schools that had made substantial gains in reading and math, and whether those supports were weak in schools that had stagnated or declined.

DESIGN OF STUDY: This quantitative study used sophisticated statistical modeling to analyze data from 395 public elementary schools (K-8) that had been collected over 15 years via surveys, field studies, school reports, and student test scores by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. First, the authors identified five essential supports that were highly correlated with improved student outcomes. Then they studied how these supports interacted to reinforce each other, improving the odds that student performance would advance. Their framework emerged from data collected over a six-year period (1990-1996) and then was confirmed using data from a later seven-year period (1997-2005).

FINDINGS: Student learning depends on how the school, as a social context, supports teaching and sustains student engagement. The study examined organizational features that interact with life inside classrooms and discovered five that were "essential supports" for school improvement. Then the authors examined how these five features interact to create pathways for advancing student achievement:

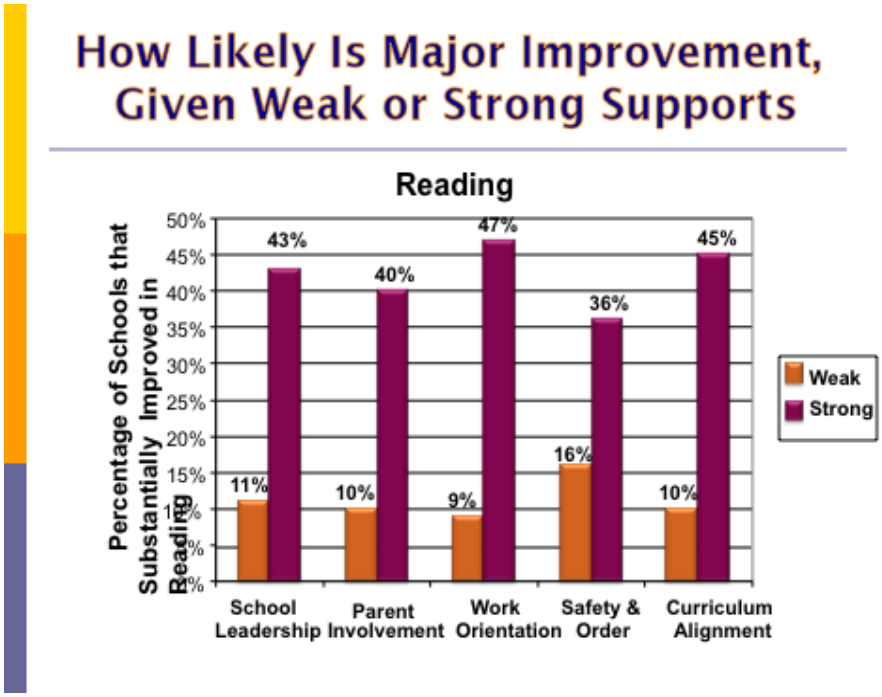
A. The five "essential supports" along with the indicators used to measure them:

1. **Coherent instructional guidance system**. This includes curriculum, learning materials, support for quality instruction, emphasis on critical thinking, and a local community of practice.
2. **Professional capacity**. This includes the quality of faculty (experience and educational background), professional development rated highly by teachers, being willing to try out new ideas, and ability of faculty to work together to improve instruction and help colleagues do their best.
3. **Strong parent-community-school ties**. This includes teachers' knowledge of the community

and use of local community resources; outreach to parents; inviting parents into the classroom; and embracing parents as partners in improving learning.

4. **Student-centered learning climate**. This includes a safe and orderly environment focused on learning; high expectations for students; rigorous academic work combined with extra support for struggling students; and student support of each other.
5. **Leadership as the driver of change**. As an instructional leader, the principal organizes resources to support quality instruction and cultivates a growing cadre of leaders (teachers, parents, and community members) who can help expand the reach of this work.

The bar chart below shows the relative impact of each essential support. The tall purple bars show the likelihood of improvement if the school was strong in that area. (The supports shown at the bottom are indicators used to measure the five "essential supports" listed above. "Parent Involvement" is a marker for strong ties to families and community; "work orientation" is a marker for professional capacity.) The short orange bars show prospects for improvement when the school is weak in that area. It's significant that the supports are almost equally important.



The indicators for strong parent-school-community ties are detailed and instructive:

- **Teachers' ties to the community**. Knowledgeable about issues in the school community; time actually spent in the community, whether they use community resources and concerns from the community in their instruction.
- **Parent involvement**. Teacher outreach (proactive efforts to invite parents into their classroom, understand parents' concerns, and embrace parents as partners in their children's education); and parent involvement in the school (extent to which parents reciprocate by

being involved in school activity and responding to specific concerns that teachers raise about their child's schoolwork).
- **Relational trust**. How many teachers feel good about parents' support for their work; do staff respect students' parents?

The indicators for leadership as the driver for change also include several markers for parent and community engagement:

- **Inclusive**. Commitment to shared decision-making; promotes parent/community involvement; teachers influence decisions about textbooks and budget; local school council is strong and works to improve family engagement (by law, local school councils must have a majority of parents).
- **Focused on instructional leadership**. Tracks student progress; presses teachers to implement lessons from professional development; program coherence through careful adoption; school improvement plan is developed with and implemented by teachers and the school council.

Schools with strong indicators on most supports were 10 times more likely to improve than schools with weak supports. Half the schools strong on most supports improved substantially in reading. Not a single school weak on most supports improved in mathematics. Sustained weakness in any one support undermined improvement; those schools rarely improved.

B. How do these five essential supports function together to change the prospects for enhancing student engagement and academic learning?

Here is one example: Schools that improved student attendance over time strengthened their ties to parents and community and used these ties as a core resource to establish safety and order across the school. This growing sense of routine and security combined with a better-aligned curriculum that continually exposed students to new tasks and ideas. Interesting and engaging teaching that gave students active learning roles in the classroom and motivated them to learn. High-quality professional development built teachers' capacity to orchestrate such activity and engage parents under the trying circumstances that most confront daily. When this combination of conditions existed, the basic recipe for improving student attendance was activated.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. School improvement can be compared to baking a cake. All the ingredients—flour, sugar, eggs, oil, baking powder, and flavoring—are needed to produce a light, delicious cake. Some impart flavor, others substance and texture, others make it light and fluffy. If even one ingredient is absent, you get a chewy mess that is just not a cake.
2. Local school leadership is the catalyst for change. Principals organize and allocate the resources needed to nurture the conditions in which improvement can grow.
3. Trusting relationships are the soil in which everything else takes root. As Bryk puts it, "Some of the most powerful relationships found in our data are associated with relational trust and how

it operates as both a lubricant for organizational change and a moral resource for sustaining the hard work of local school improvement" (p. 207). Without trust, schools find it nearly impossible to strengthen parent-community ties, build professional capacity, and enable a student-centered learning climate.

4. Truly disadvantaged school communities present unique challenges. Improving schools could be found in all kinds of neighborhoods, but stagnating schools piled up in very poor, racially isolated African American neighborhoods.
5. The social capital of a neighborhood is a significant resource for improving its local school. Extensive social networks were more likely in neighborhoods where residents had a history of working together. In contrast, the absence of such collective efficacy in the community made it more likely that a troubled school would continue to stagnate.
6. Correspondingly, communities with strong institutions, especially religious institutions, were more supportive contexts for school improvement. These institutions foster a network of social ties that can be adopted for other purposes, such as improving schools. They also create connections that can bring new outside resources into isolated neighborhoods.
7. School reform advocates often focus intently on instruction and leadership, devaluing social and personal connections with local families and community organizations. This study strongly challenges that view and offers convincing evidence that all five supports, including parent-school-community ties, are critical to school improvement.

However, "we have seen…that the essential supports must be very strong for significant improvement in student learning to occur in truly disadvantaged communities where social capital is scarce. This finding raises troublesome questions about our society's capacity to improve schools in its most neglected communities. For these school communities, it is a 'three-strike' problem. Not only are the schools highly stressed…but they exist in weak communities and confront an extraordinary density of human needs that walk through the front door every day." Family-school-community ties, especially, are "much harder to initiate and sustain." Few reform efforts have adequately acknowledged the full array of problems that must be confronted (pp. 209-210).

The authors recommend a "promising alternative approach for transforming schools:" a "comprehensive and integrated set of community, school, and related social program initiatives, aimed at cultivating local leadership and more productive working relationships among school staff, parents, and local neighborhood services and officials.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: This study offers some of the most convincing evidence we have that engaging families in deep and meaningful ways is a core strategy for school improvement. It is not something that can be done later or in isolation from other efforts to advance student learning. It is NOT optional.

The indicators of "close ties with parents and communities" deserve our attention. They are both deeper and broader than indicators traditionally used in our field. They probe to see if teachers are truly familiar with the community. Do they use community resources? Do they visit and shop in the community? Do they integrate community issues into their classrooms and lessons? They also examine trust. Do teachers invite parents to observe in the classroom? Do they find out what parents' concerns are, and then respond to them? Do they feel that parents support their work? Do they respect their students' parents? Do teachers embrace parents as partners? Finally, they test to see if

parents have responded with increased engagement at home and school, a reassuring measure of internal validity. If teachers say they are doing these things, and parents have not responded, are those things really happening?

These are the questions we should be asking in our work. If the answers are affirmative, we are significantly more likely to see improvements in school culture, safety, attendance, relational trust, and academic achievement.

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Bryk, A., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement.* University of Chicago Press.

Hope and Healing in Urban Education: How Urban Activists and Teachers Are Reclaiming Matters of the Heart

Shawn Ginwright • 2016

SUMMARY: Rooted in five case studies, this ethnographic study examined how "radical healing" can change distressed urban communities. Bringing young people together to heal from past trauma, identify what they want their schools and communities to be like, and taking action to implement their vision, leads to collective well-being. Ginwright distinguishes this approach from programs such as trauma-informed care, character development, and social-emotional learning. It is critical, he contends, to address what is causing the trauma in the first place—racism, structural inequity, and unconscious bias—rather than to treat its symptoms.

BACKGROUND: The purpose of the book is to illustrate how community leaders are changing their communities "from the inside out" through a process of "radical healing." Radical healing builds peoples' capacity to act on their environment in ways that contribute to the common good. Developing individual well-being, community health, and broader social justice creates a setting where people can act on behalf of others with hope, joy, and a sense of possibility (p.8).

Ginwright first examines how community activists are using healing strategies to support young people, both in classrooms and in community-based programs. Then through observation and analysis, he shows how a focus on healing can advance civic engagement strategies, prompting disconnected young people to take action.

DESIGN OF STUDY: The research was guided by the following questions, posed throughout five case studies done by Ginwright and his research team in urban communities across California.

1. How do teachers and activists respond to hopelessness in ways that restore human dignity, meaning, and possibility?
2. Where do healing activities fit into a progressive social change process?
3. To what extent does healing lead to increased participation of at-risk African American and Latino youth in social change or community organizing work?
4. How can this work inform broader structural changes in civic life, education, and public safety?

The three-year study was divided into three phases:

1. **Ethnographic research**. After identifying 31 schools and community organizations using healing and organizing practices, Ginwright's team developed detailed profiles of the neighborhoods where the schools and organizations were located.
2. **Interviews**. The research team conducted observations and in-depth interviews of 24 teachers, community organizers, and directors of organizations to "unpack" insights and themes from observations.
3. **Analysis**. The team analyzed the qualitative data and refined the working model to explain the relationship between healing and organizing in these neighborhood settings.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: Collective hope—the root of efforts to transform schools, change social policy, and create opportunities for young people—has three features.

1. **Shared experiences**. First, young people share common everyday experiences such as run-ins with police and exposure to violence. Then they develop a collective view about school and neighborhood conditions.
2. **Shared radical imagination**. After coming to a collective agreement about why injustice has occurred, they can develop a shared vision about how things should be. This collective dreaming can become a motivating force for collective action.
3. **Critical action**. Realizing that it is possible to change the unjust traumas of daily life has a powerful impact on hope. By acting to achieve a specific goal to reach their vision, community members foster a sense of control over their future.

FINDINGS: The five case studies are set in California cities. They tell the stories of several initiatives to bring young people together to heal from past trauma, locate their inner strength, and chart a vision for moving forward, not just with their own lives, but as agents improving the entire community. The chart below lays out the trajectory of young people's inner experience as they move from suffering under injustice to thriving in a setting of collective well-being.

Collective Well-Being in Response to Conditions of Justice

Suffering	Surviving	Challenging	Thriving
• Powerlessness • Loss of hope • Internalized oppression	• Adapting • Navigating • Accepting status quo	• Critical consciousness • Collective action • Sense of collective power • Hope	• Control of life • Collective power • Pursuit of dreams • Collective responsibility • Sense of collective peace
Permanent conditions of injustice	Persistent injustice	Promising conditions of justice	Optimal conditions of justice

(Adapted from Prilleltensky, I. (2008). "The Role of Power in Wellness, Oppression and Liberation: The Promise of Psychopolitical Validity." *Journal of Community Psychology* (36(2):116-136.)

Because the study was qualitative, the research team presents many stories of positive outcomes, but little numerical data. They do, however, cite data gleaned from other sources that affirms the narratives of success in the case studies. Here are two examples:

1. "Healing with Street Love" describes an intensive effort to reduce handgun homicides among young Black men in Richmond, California, a working-class city west of San Francisco. Using a "more carrot, less stick" approach, the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) recruited 50 young Black men to become outreach workers. Their goal: to bring people from the warring neighborhoods together and establish healthy relationships. They took trips together to conferences and trainings, met in healing circles, offered fellowships to help them get their lives on track, and built a network of supportive connections. The ONS strategy, combined with other citywide anticrime efforts, produced impressive results. According to the State Department of Justice crime statistics, handgun homicides have

declined steadily since the program began in 2007. By 2013, Richmond had its lowest number of homicides in 33 years, and its homicide rate fell to 15 per 100,000, a drop of nearly 50 percent (p. 127).

2. "Radically Healing Schools and Communities," describes efforts in several high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area to cool tensions, develop a vision for what could be better, and bring students, parents, teachers, and administrators together to discuss how to make it happen. In 2007, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY) began supporting about 30 schools to reduce suspension rates and increase academic achievement. By 2014, RJOY schools had achieved a dramatic 87 percent reduction in suspensions (p. 99).

Ginwright found that a key strategy for success in schools is forming a self-selected "critical inquiry group" of five to ten teachers and administrators interested in learning about healing, race, and culturally responsive teaching. Facilitated by teachers, the process of critical inquiry allowed the group to reflect on the impact of racism and unconscious bias on student performance, and to discuss how to improve their teaching and healing practices.

The critical inquiry group in the Chapter Five case study worked toward seven goals (pp. 102-3):

1. More collaborative relationships between and among parents, teachers, and students.
2. More ownership of diversity practices at the schools.
3. Morning "community circles" to check in with students and set the tone for the day/week.
4. Developing a student handbook that articulates school values, practices, and curriculum strategies that facilitate healing and improve school climate.
5. Documenting school values that are reflected in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and rules.
6. Increasing student involvement via student council.
7. Establishing more collaborative relationships between parents, teachers, and students.

Once teachers established relationships of trust and respect with students, the culture in their classrooms began to change. Integrating healing opportunities into class lessons, such as by connecting learning to students' daily experiences, can transform how students and teachers relate to one another. Acts of sharing, listening, and feeling affirmed, establish relationships that do not flourish if teaching focuses mainly on mastering content. Some teachers built trust, honesty, and vulnerability into class lessons, sharing with students their own experiences and challenges. Others nurtured relationships outside the classroom with students' extended family.

Emerging from the five case studies is a framework of practices that successfully promoted healing, activism, self-improvement, and increased well-being among the young people involved. Ginwright calls this CARMA, an acronym for the five elements that make up the framework: Culture, Agency, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement.

CARMA: Revised Radical Healing Framework

CARMA Elements	Radical Healing Practices	Radical Healing Outcomes
CULTURE: Anchor that connects young people to	• Affirm and celebrate local cultural practice	• Cultural awareness • Sense of belonging

their historical and current identity	• Integrate practice into school and organization rituals	• Collective identity • Ethnic pride
AGENCY: Ability to create desired outcomes and change impeding conditions	• Create space for youth voice • Encourage reflection on root causes of issues • Identify ways to act on community issues	• Community power • Civic action
RELATIONSHIPS: Capacity to create and sustain healthy connections with others	• Create opportunities to learn about others • Encourage young people to share their stories • Create healing circles to share interests, fears, and hopes	• Community well-being • Collective consciousness • Trust and social capital
MEANING: Discovering our purpose and role in advancing justice	• Talk about what gives life meaning • Create discissions that foster self-discovery	• Healing • Hope and optimism • Sense of purpose
ACHIEVEMENT: Illuminating possibilities and progress toward explicit goals	• Celebrate small and large victories • Build knowledge and skills about assets and aspirations	• Sense of accomplishment

CONCLUSIONS: Radical healing encourages teachers, activists, and young people to consider that the results that we seek depend on the quality of our relationships and the clarity of our consciousness. Successful policy change and interventions that create healing, improve school climate, and advance learning, depend on the interior condition of both adults and young people in the communities and schools we seek to transform.

This idea is supported by Paolo Freire's notion that relational teaching is established by building caring relationships, placing emotion, love, and care at the center of teaching. "It is not possible to be a teacher without loving one's students" (p. 15). The qualities necessary to build relational strategies are not just skills and knowledge; they are human qualities, or virtues: humility, courage, tolerance, forgiveness, and lovingness (Freire, 1998).

Although the main focus of his research is the impact on students and communities, much is implied about benefits for teachers. In particular, teachers seemed to feel they become more effective as teachers, in engaging their students, enriching the content of instruction, and integrating students' experiences into classroom lessons. In a follow-up conversation with Anne Henderson (5/4/21), Ginwright confirmed that teachers were influenced across five domains:

1. Teachers formed deeper, more trusting relationships with students.
2. Teachers began to see themselves as part of a community, not just a school.

3. Teachers take on a more familial role, often being called “auntie” or “bro.”
4. When the school culture is open enough, teachers become leaders as they share their practices of healing with colleagues and become active in improving school culture.
5. Teachers develop a deeper sense of purpose and clarity about themselves and become more introspective about their work as a teacher.

If we focus only on the external aspects of our lives, we overlook the important fact that young people’s capacity to hope, imagine, and dream holds incredible power to act. Therefore, urban educators and organizers have an additional challenge, to attend to matters of the heart. Story after story in the case studies show that this work takes time, honesty, risk, and constant reflection and discussion. The book is loaded with detailed examples of practices used to do this.

The title of Ginwright’s final chapter is “Ubuntuism: Concluding Notes on Self, Society and Change.” A word from South Africa, Ubuntu describes an essential condition, or constellation of qualities that create collective well-being. The essence of the lessons carried out in these case studies and in Ginwright’s analysis, is that our society needs to cultivate much more Ubuntu if we are to become whole.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: How can radical healing inform policy and practices in our schools and community organizations? These case studies provide several key ideas for how to incorporate healing-centered approaches to school and community change.

1. **Recognize Signs of Collective and Individual Harm**. Most strategies to improve schools, transform communities, and enhance the quality of life, neglect one crucial reality—the need to heal individual and collective harm. This is the path to restore well-being. We do this by paying attention to our own and others’ social-emotional states. Healing circles that bring young people together with teachers and parents to have honest conversations are a good way to start, as several case studies illustrate.
2. **Define What Well-Being Looks Like.** Rather than focusing on trauma and the harm it causes, engage in imaginative action. What does well-being look like in a school? How might well-being shape violence-reduction strategies and promote peaceful resolution of conflict? Push for bold possibilities—what can exist rather than what does exist. Visiting inspiring schools and community organizations is a good place to start.
3. **Implement Practices That Facilitate Healing**. Acknowledging harm and developing a vision for well-being is necessary, but healing happens only with implementation. Into our daily practices we must infuse a worldview of well-being, healing, and joy. It is not possible to create vibrant, thriving classrooms, schools, and community programs for young people with adults who also are wounded. We may need to start with healing ourselves; only then will we experience “successful” implementation.

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Ginwright, S. (2015). *Hope and healing in urban education: How urban activists and teachers are reclaiming matters of the heart*. Routledge.

Natural Allies: Hope and Possibility in Teacher-Family Partnerships

Soo Hong • 2019

SUMMARY: This ethnographic study by Soo Hong examines the motivations and experiences of five teachers in Boston and Washington D.C. who, through initiative and commitment, create meaningful and productive relationships and partnerships with students' families. The in-depth ethnographic portraits of teachers and their experiences with students' families demonstrate how a commitment to cultivating and maintaining meaningful relationships with families and community should be a central part of educators' practice. The study provides insights into how the dynamics of race, class, culture, and family history with schools shape the interactions and potential for relationships between families and educators. Hong argues that the study of family engagement must be included in the study of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies. The findings challenge the longstanding depiction of families and educators as "natural enemies," showing how through intentional practice grounded "in trust, ongoing communication, and a belief in the best in each other," families and educators can become natural allies instead.

BACKGROUND: The purpose of this study is to explore the ways that families and educators can work together in collaboration and to identify the practice and supports necessary to create authentic partnerships. Rather than focus on the "problem" of family-school relationships, the study aims to explore the "goodness and humanity" of these relationships between educators and families. Hong examined the motivations and experiences of five urban teachers: Ilene Carver, Megan Lucas, Cinthia Colón, Annie Shah, and Julia Finkelstein—educators committed to partnership with and the cultural sustenance of families. Hong examined the teachers' relationships with families focusing on these questions: How could these relationships be shaped by school/community context and how are teacher practices with families shaped by their beliefs about families and communities? Moving away from an analysis of school programs and activities for engaging families, Hong takes a relational approach to understand the interactions between teachers and families and seeks to understand what teachers must do and believe to cultivate those relationships with trust, care, and respect.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY: Hong used the methodology of portraiture, developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, to conduct her ethnographic study of the five teachers. Key to her study was the selection of teachers who had developed and strengthened their ability to work with parents through years of experience. The teachers selected for the study reflected: 1) a long-term commitment and proven track record of success in engaging families and communities; 2) engagement with low-income urban communities typically viewed as "hard to reach"; and 3) diversity of age, years of experience, and race/ethnicity. Teachers also represented a range of pathways into the profession (graduate teacher training, teacher residency, and Teach for America). Teachers taught in elementary and middle school classrooms, working with both native speakers and emergent bilinguals.

The project spanned three years. The first year focused on building relationships with the five teachers and shaped Hong's data collection strategy for each teacher. During the second year, Hong conducted in-depth interviews with each teacher and spent time in their classrooms. Classroom observations allowed Hong to learn how teachers interacted with students and the ways they

integrated family engagement into their practice. Hong also attended every formal event teachers had with families: open houses, parent-teacher conferences, family presentations, and schoolwide events. As Hong came to know the students and their families, she and the teachers identified families whom she communicated with throughout the year and interviewed about their engagement at the school and with the teacher. Hong used the third year of the study to continue to get to know families, make observations on the various school environments, and continue to interview teachers to reflect on emerging observations.

FINDINGS: The teacher portraits in "Natural Allies'' provide insight into how and why these five teachers view their partnership with families as such a central and guiding force in their practice. Teachers in the study are guided by anti-racist, anti-oppressive beliefs about families yet acknowledge the distrust that can exist in schools between teachers and families. Three White teachers in the book describe the challenges BIPOC families have faced in urban schools and underscore their desire to reach out to families with respect, patience, and understanding as a commitment to anti-racist teaching. Two BIPOC teachers draw from their own experiences as immigrant children to cultivate relationships with families that acknowledge the richness and beauty of their communities. As the portraits of parents and teachers illustrate, teacher-family partnerships are built one relationship at a time but cannot be divorced from the experiences that families bring with them.

Hong argues that, in serving every student well, educators must learn how to engage their families with trust, dignity, and an ethos of partnership. Schools have historically been what Hong calls "marginalizing institutions"—places that generate traumatic experiences, keep parents at a distance, enact decision-making that is devoid of parent voice and input, prioritize professional knowledge and expertise, and fail to reflect the diversity of families and communities. These practices of marginalization lead families to feel disrespected and underappreciated. Instead, Hong argues that schools should become "grounded institutions"—"schools that are rooted in and reflect the full lives and experiences of students' families and communities" (p.160). These schools demand success in engaging families, because it is seen as an issue of educational equity, and they invite meaningful two-way conversations with families. Most importantly, these approaches to engaging families with respect and dignity support the efforts of schools to become places where the cultural experiences of BIPOC students are sustained and preserved. As such, Hong argues that efforts to engage families should be a central part of every school's efforts to build equity and justice and to develop culturally responsive and culturally sustaining practices.

Together, these three conceptualizations of teachers' commitments to families challenge educators to move beyond the traditional activity-based and school-centered understandings of teacher-parent relationships in schools. When teacher-parent interactions exist primarily in support of events and activities that are formal in nature, they remain at a superficial level that does not address the conflicts or tensions that may exist below the surface. To move beyond these superficial interactions into deeper, more meaningful commitments to families, this study found that teachers must develop a sense of trust and shared purpose that is often difficult to establish in routine school interactions.

The study also found that, across the narratives, teachers describe several key facets of professional learning and development that result from their partnerships with families and communities:

- **Combating the isolation of classroom teaching**. Engaging with parents provides an important source of collaboration and shared purpose that is often missing in classroom teaching.
- **Reinvigorating a professional pathway**. Breathing new life into a professional journey that often lacks new opportunities for leadership or new roles for teachers. Data suggests that this has kept teachers in the classroom longer than they would anticipate otherwise.
- **Offering opportunities for teacher leadership**—in some cases, alongside parent leaders.
- **Stronger commitments and greater success with students through close collaboration with families**. Seeing classroom dilemmas as problem-solving opportunities with parents.
- **Developing greater collective multicultural awareness**. Teachers challenge personal biases and assumptions about families and communities while also offering new insight about themselves as individuals.
- **Opportunities to focus on schoolwide practices and school climate.** Understanding the need for greater continuity of practice re: family engagement beyond an individual teacher's classroom.

CONCLUSIONS: This study illuminates the importance of teacher competency in family and community engagement as a fundamental element of high-quality teaching. "Natural Allies" addresses an area in which many educators feel ill-equipped and unprepared. The study offers new ideas on family engagement that are grounded in an analysis of the deep contours of the parent-teacher relationship. The study provides a resource that engages theory and practice and creates needed scaffolding for teacher education programs to support professional development and learning in this area. The study also offers families insights into effective family and community engagement strategies and policies and teacher narratives that allow families a more intimate and holistic view of teachers for whom family and community engagement is a deep commitment.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: This study offers a practice-based model that can guide the essential conversations and reforms that are necessary for family and community engagement. The study could be a part of any teacher preparation program, particularly in the current moment where family and community engagement are drawing more attention. As school systems grapple with policies to drive and shape effective family and community engagement, this study illuminates common issues many schools face as well as the complex narratives that drive meaningful change. For schools and districts interested in addressing family and community engagement strategies, the study is an effective guide in establishing a strategic vision and plan.

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Hong, S. (2019). *Natural allies: Hope and possibility in teacher-family partnerships*. Harvard Education Press.

A Cord of Three Strands: A New Approach to Parent Engagement in Schools

Soo Hong • 2011

SUMMARY: This two-year ethnographic study offers a rich analysis of the evolution of one model of parent engagement developed by the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), a community organization with deep ties to Latino immigrant families on Chicago's Northwest Side. The study offers a three-part ecology of parent engagement to conceptualize and design successful parent engagement strategies, practices, and initiatives. The study presents a rich array of parent voices and narratives that illuminate the struggles and achievements of parent engagement and addresses some of the unique challenges schools face in adapting to the increasingly multiracial and multiethnic nature of U.S. schools.

BACKGROUND: Beyond the acknowledgement that parent engagement is an essential part of understanding educational success, knowing how to build parent engagement is critical. This understanding of the "how" is particularly important in communities where parents are seen as "hard to reach" and where differences in race, class, and ethnicity create challenges with communication and trust. Additionally, many techniques used by schools to engage parents are rooted in traditional notions of parent involvement where schools design activities and parents are asked to endorse and fall in line with the programs. Whether these activities involve classroom volunteering, fundraising activities, parent conferences, or open houses, in schools that have strained or distant relationships with families, attendance or participation is often low, leaving educators to often develop problematic and deficit-based reasons about the lack of involvement within the community.

This study seeks to address the challenges schools face in the building of family engagement. It provides an in-depth account and analysis of the work of LSNA, a community organization viewed as an exemplary model in driving educational change at the community and state level. Central to the work of LSNA is its Parent Mentor Program, which has trained over thirteen hundred parents to work in classrooms with teachers and to support student learning and development. Using a model for leadership development, the Parent Mentor program serves as an initial step for not only parent participation in schools, but also for long-term engagement as parent leaders.

Through a focus on the LSNA and its work in one school, this study was designed to provide a rich, in-depth discussion that joins theoretical concepts with the process necessary for change. The book, Hong states. "is a call to action for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers alike—to recast a new vision for parent and community engagement in schools" (p. xvi).

DESIGN OF THE STUDY: Hong structured the study as a multiyear ethnography, and over a four-year period, developed relationships with community organizers, parents, and school staff in the Logan Square neighborhood. Hong conducted interviews with parents, attended training sessions and leadership workshops, visited classrooms, met with organizers, and spent time "walking school hallways with parent mentors" (p. 8).

In addition to learning about the many aspects of LSNA's work, Hong also chose one school, the Funston Elementary School, and a group of its parents as a focal point of the study. Hong states "this allowed me to explore the experiences of one group of parents as they began their involvement in schools, became connected to others in the school community, and understood the impact of their participation" (p.8).

Hong developed a qualitative methodology for this project called layered ethnography. Hong states, "with an emphasis on the multiple contexts and settings (e.g., community organization, school, parent cohorts) that shape parent engagement as well as the multiple factors that shape the dynamic research process and relationship between researcher and participants, the layered ethnography methodology incorporates elements of ethnography and portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), combining research product with process and scientific rigor with aesthetics."

FINDINGS: From LSNA's family- and community-based model as well as the literature on parent and community engagement, Hong designed a framework called the ecology of parent engagement. This three-part ecological model considers the multiple contexts, interactions, and experiences that shape parent engagement:

1. **Parent engagement as induction**. Developing engagement and participation opportunities that are designed to introduce parents to school environments and practices. These strategies acknowledge the personal and institutional barriers that parents may face in becoming involved in schools as well as the linguistic and cultural experiences that make them seemingly "hard to reach."

> "Parents here really understand what it's like to be in the school all day—what it's like for the kids, what it's like for the teachers. That opens doors for both the kids and the teachers, because if parents see things that they think aren't fair for the kids, they're the first to speak up. If they see things that aren't fair for the teachers, they're also speaking up."
>
> —Nancy Aardema, LSNA executive director (p. 127)

2. **Parent engagement as integration**. Highlighting the ways engagement strategies can connect parents to other individuals in the school. These strategies emphasize the role that relationships—with other parents, families, students, and school staff—play in sustaining parent involvement over time.

3. **Parent engagement as investment**. Envisioning parent engagement in ways that build parents as leaders and active decision-makers within schools. Viewing parents as individuals with valuable skills, resources, and assets, these strategies move parents from serving as passive participants to active contributors in schools.

> "From the beginning, we always had this concept of parent-teacher mentoring—the teacher mentoring the parent, but the parent was also helping the teacher understand about the culture of the community."

—Nancy Aardema, LSNA executive director (p. 123)

This ecology of parent engagement challenges us to move beyond the traditional activity-based understandings of parent participation in schools. This ecological model illustrates not only the elements of parent engagement but showcases its developmental and interactive nature. Hong warns readers not to view the elements of induction, integration, and investment as independent or sequential processes, but to see the power of the model in its recognition that the three processes are interactive, connected, and developmental. Hong states, "By moving beyond the parent involvement typologies that may include classroom volunteering, supporting student learning at home, and parenting strategies, the ecology of parent engagement pushes us to consider the contextual and dynamic aspects of parent engagement—a world where cultural and institutional barriers, as well as power imbalances and misunderstandings between schools and families, shape the delicate and constantly-evolving terrain of parent-school interactions."

What does all this look like in practice? "Through this program, families' lives have changed: families support their children academically and build a sense of community within schools. Children have role models who are from their communities and are personally invested in their children's well-being and success. What's more, these improved relationships between school staff and families can dismantle misunderstandings and mistrust, and schools come alive with the presence of parents" (p. 203).

Although measuring student success was not the focus of the book, evidence strongly suggests that the performance of students and schools improved after meaningful parent engagement was introduced. Between 1999 and 2006, LSNA reported that student test scores more than doubled, from 20 percent achieving at national norms, to nearly 50 percent. Principals and administrators readily attribute these gains to the consistent and intense involvement of parents.

> "There is a lot that has changed in the past few years, but I see the difference it makes to our kids when the parents are in the classrooms, in the school, and truly invested in their success in the school…I would have to say that the parents—their involvement with their own children and the others they meet—has completely changed the way (we) are reaching students in this school."

—David Pino, Principal, McAuliffe Elementary School (pp. 203-4)

CONCLUSION: This book seeks to support educators at all levels of school systems, as well as the community partners that work with them, to develop more effective and meaningful forms of family and community engagement. The book offers a practical model that readers can use to rethink current strategies and guide the essential conversations that are necessary for promoting change.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: Coming at a critical time when policymakers and practitioners alike are promoting greater family engagement and exploring the existence of promising practices, this book presents an analysis of the issues that many schools face as well as some of the practices that are effective in promoting meaningful change. Consequently, as teacher and school leadership programs—both preservice and in-service—become increasingly committed to offering meaningful coursework and experiences to leaners about effective family and community engagement practices,

this book can serve as a resource that offers current and future practitioners concrete ideas in working with families and communities.

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Hong, S. (2011). *A cord of three strands: A new approach to parent engagement in schools*. Harvard Education Press.

Achievement for All National Evaluation: Final Report

Neil Humphrey & Garry Squires • 2011

SUMMARY: This mixed-method study assesses the effectiveness of the Achievement for All (AfA) program in the United Kingdom. Developed by the UK Department for Education, the initiative supports schools and school districts to improve opportunities for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Over a two-year period, 454 schools piloted the program, which included "structured conversations with parents" as a core component. The study found significant improvement in academic outcomes, positive relationships, focus on special needs, and parent engagement. The findings led to a national roll-out of the AfA program.

BACKGROUND: The Department for Education developed Achievement for All to support schools and local districts "to provide better opportunities for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to fulfill their potential" (p. 12). In the UK, "Special educational needs" is defined more broadly than in the U.S. In addition to students with disabilities, it also includes students who have a "learning difficulty" that is "significantly greater than the majority of others of the same age." This would include students from vulnerable groups, such as those whose first language is not English, are in foster care, or are eligible for free school meals. The Department called on 10 local districts to select schools to pilot the program. The 454 chosen to participate received funding for a two-year implementation period (2009-2011).

The AfA pilot program consisted of three main strands:

1. **Assessment, tracking, and intervention.** Using the Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) tool to track student progress, set curriculum targets, and implement interventions to support children and young people to make progress in their learning.

2. **Structured conversations with parents**. Developing an open, ongoing dialogue between teachers and parents about children's learning. Training in how to conduct a "structured conversation" was provided for key teachers (staff members who knew the student well and had regular contact). AfA guidance recommended that schools hold three conversations a year with parents of each SEND student, using a four-step model:
    i. explore (active listening)—to develop a collaborative relationship
    ii. focus (identify priorities)—to support developing critical skills
    iii. plan (agree on targets)—to co-develop a plan for collaborating
    iv. review (clarify next steps)—to move forward together

3. **Developing wider outcomes**. Creating whole-school strategies to support students with SEND to make progress in at least two of these areas: attendance, behavior, bullying, developing positive relationships with peers and teachers, and participation in extended services. Although AfA suggested activities for each area, schools were encouraged to tailor implementation to meet local and individual needs.

DESIGN OF STUDY: Humphrey and Squires posed two overarching research questions:

1) What is the impact of AfA on outcomes for students with SEND?

- In English and Math achievement?
- In wider outcomes such as behavior, attendance, and positive relationships?
- In parent engagement and confidence?
- How is this impact influenced by variation in district-, school-, and student-level factors?

2) What processes and practices are most effective in improving these outcomes?

- In activity at district, school, and classroom levels?
- What context and student factors influence the success of these processes and practices?
- How sustainable and transferable are these processes and practices?

The first question was addressed through quantitative analysis of change in AfA and comparison schools. Teacher and parent surveys gauged program effects on student relationships and behavior. Parent surveys measured student participation and confidence, as well as parent engagement. Analysis of attendance and academic progress data in AfA and comparison schools tracked changes over three years, from the year before implementation through pilot completion. Online school-level surveys were twice completed by AfA leads in participating schools to measure the impact of AfA processes and practices on outcomes.

For the second question, researchers used qualitative methods. Analysis of interviews with local and regional lead professionals gauged strategic support for program implementation. Twenty AfA schools took part in long-term case studies, conducted through about five visits per school. Data collection methods included interviews and/or focus groups, observations, and analyses of school documentation. In addition, researchers compiled 87 case files for individual learners.

FINDINGS: Over the course of this pilot, Achievement for All schools achieved significant success. The program narrowed the achievement gap between students with and without SEND. AfA schools saw marked improvements in English and Math scores compared to the national average for SEND students and for all non-SEND students. "Wider outcomes" in non-academic areas such as confidence, behavior, and social relations, also significantly improved.

1. **Gains in student achievement**. As shown in the charts below, SEND students in the AfA pilot made greater progress than SEND students nationally. In addition, AfA students, in all grades except 7th, made greater gains than the national average for all non-SEND students.

ELA Mean Progress Gains of SEND Students in the AfA program compared to national Averages (2009-2011)

Grade levels	AfA students	All SEND students	All non-SEND students
Primary			
Year 1	4.43	4.11	4.20
Year 5	6.85	4.88	4.99
Secondary			
Year 7	5.01	4.70	5.94
Year 10	6.66	4.70	5.94

MATH Mean Progress Gains of SEND Students in the AfA program compared to national Averages (2009-2011)

Grade levels	AfA students	All SEND students	All non-SEND students
Primary			
Year 1	5.03	3.81	4.02
Year 5	6.49	4.52	4.77
Secondary			
Year 7	4.73	4.07	5.55
Year 10	6.01	4.07	5.55

2. **Gains in family engagement**. AfA schools implemented two or three structured conversations with a large share of SEND families, and their completion rate increased in the second year. Efforts to engage "hard to reach" parents met with success. One school recruited parents who had a positive experience with structured conversations to persuade parents who not yet participated to sign up. Other successful strategies included giving parents a ride to school; conducting the conversations during home visits; and holding meetings in the evening or at other times most convenient for parents. By the second year, the number of schools unable to complete a single structured conversation with at least one parent declined by one-third (p. 54).

3. **Gains in teacher and parent understanding**. Listening to parents during the structured conversations led teachers to became more aware and understanding of their students' needs and potential. This resulted in a greater sense of professional responsibility and ownership for meeting the needs of SEND children in their classroom. Parents developed a greater understanding of SEND and related school processes, which enabled them to work with teachers to set more focused, achievable targets. This increased shared goals and cooperation between school and home, allowing students' skills to be reinforced in both settings (p. 56).

The structured conversations offered school staff a new and unique opportunity to get to know about their pupils' needs, aspirations, and lives beyond school in much more depth, contributing to a more "holistic" view. They also provided schools with "a really valuable way of thinking about children's progress, which has had an impact on their practices and provision" (AfA Lead). Some schools saw having three conversations per year as a chance to formulate a joint working agreement with parents in which they could map progress throughout the year. (p. 56)

4. **Gains in wider outcomes**. The study also found several wider benefits of AfA in areas not assessed by outcome measures.

- For teachers, an increased awareness and focus on students with special needs, a closer link with students' families, as well as a more active role in assessment and monitoring.
- For students, higher confidence levels both inside and outside the classroom, academically and socially. In many cases, students showed a more positive attitude about being engaged in school and felt happier and less anxious about school.
- For parents, more confidence contacting the school after having met a key teacher who was supportive, interested in the child's progress, and was a "named contact."

Issues or ideas raised by parents during structured conversations led to a number of actions. For example, schools revised Individual Educations Plans (IEPs) to include jointly negotiated targets. A family care worker visited the family of a child with severe disabilities to provide advice on support issues. Drum lessons helped a student with problems of coordination and anger management. One school developed evening classes for parents, as many parents suggested during structured conversations (p. 57).

5. **Sustainability**. The vast majority of schools (93.4 percent) indicated their intention to continue the structured conversations (p. 61). Several adopted a "sustainability mentality" from the outset. In many instances, schools strategically invested funding to carry out initiatives over the long term, as well as focused on bolstering practices not dependent on funding, such as a school culture of awareness and focus on SEND.

6. **Reinforcing relationships among the strands**. Schools quickly drew links within and between each of the three strands. For example, structured conversations were used to discuss wider outcomes such as attendance. Students' positive relationships with teachers contributed to their academic progress. School processes and practices relating to assessment, tracking, and intervention, as well as structured conversations with parents, were associated with changes in wider outcomes such as behavior (p. 112).

7. **Secrets to Success**. Schools that made the greatest improvement implemented the program rigorously, particularly in the following ways (note that four of the six engage parents):

1. The AfA Lead was the head teacher or a member of the senior leadership team.
2. A greater range of professionals had access to student information.
3. Teachers and parents were more frequently involved in reviewing individual student targets.
4. A greater range of methods was used to communicate with parents about students' progress.
5. Two or three structured conversations were completed for a larger proportion of students.
6. The school implemented the structured conversation model with greater fidelity.

The authors also emphasize that AfA achieved the greatest outcomes when built on existing best practices rather than adopted as a "bolt-on" program.

CONCLUSIONS: The findings of this evaluation—that Achievement for All was successful in improving opportunities and outcomes for students with SEND—vindicate the decision to scale the program for national roll-out. Anticipating that aspects of the program will be modified, adapted, or diluted depending on school context going forward, Humphrey and Squires strongly recommend paying close attention to the necessary conditions for success. These include effective strategic support beyond the school level, strong and high-level leadership at the school, emphasis on holistic implementation, structured interactions with parents, and attentive use of data on assessment, tracking, and intervention (p. 114).

In particular, they emphasize:

1. Leadership in participating schools should ensure that the more human resource-intensive elements of AfA (for example, structured conversations with parents) are fully supported,

particularly in the early stages of implementation before processes and practices become fully embedded.
2. The implementation of structured conversations with parents should be faithful to the original guidance. Schools should aim to conduct at least two conversations per year with parents where this is feasible and appropriate to individual needs and circumstances (p. 114).
3. Schools should ensure that provisions are made so that groups of potentially vulnerable learners have the support they need to achieve their potential.
4. The "key teacher"—a pupil's class teacher in primary schools, or personal tutor or head of year in secondary schools—should act as a main point of contact with parents (p. 115).

Schools used the model of structured conversations with parents as a vehicle for changing home-school relationships. Success resulted when a collaborative relationship developed through a two-way exchange of information, ideas, aspirations, and concerns (p. 112). They also strongly emphasize the role of parents in generating positive outcomes for SEND students, and "the need to view 'education' as encapsulating school and home, and the relationship between them" (p. 115).

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: This assessment gives ample evidence that close parent-teacher collaboration is a critical component of success in a program to improve outcomes for all students. Especially for students with special needs, positive relationships and school culture are integral to success. Humphrey and Squires note how a base culture of buy-in and partnership is necessary to achieve the greatest outcomes—rather than Achievement for All providing a turnaround model or "bolt-on" measures, the program was most effective when used to improve on existing best practices.

The case studies included in this report give detailed and interesting examples of how schools adapted the program and incorporated it into their core practice. Individual student profiles illustrate how students responded when teachers collaborated closely with their parents and used the information gained to meet their needs.

A key issue the authors raise is that certain groups of students may be considered "vulnerable" or "at-risk," even in the context of a highly successful intervention such as AfA. Schools may wish to focus additional provisions and resources on these students, in particular when continuing their implementation of the program (p. 112).

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Humphrey, N., & Squires, G. (2011). Achievement for all national evaluation: Final report. Department for Education.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/193254/DFE-RR176.pdf

Just Schools: Building Equitable Collaborations with Families and Communities

Ann M. Ishimaru • 2020

SUMMARY: In Just Schools, Ann Ishimaru brings together research, theory, and practice to construct a road map to equitable collaboration with families and communities for educational justice. The book analyzes evidence and practices gathered from several studies (including critical participatory action research) in institutions and communities across the country. Ishimaru explores how systemic racial inequities play out through individual and institutional actions in schools, often in spite of good intentions, and provides guidelines for educators and community members to approach their work critically, shift power imbalances between schools and communities, and build solidarity for sustainable, systemic change.

BACKGROUND: Just Schools digs deeper into the now widely accepted importance of family engagement rather than involvement. The book examines the complex intersecting dynamics that feed into common policies and best practices, particularly along lines of race, class, language, power, and privilege. Family engagement strategies often approach nondominant (historically marginalized) families as the recipients of interventions, the party that needs changing in order to improve student success, placing the inherent blame on them for their children's challenges in school. Despite good intentions to keep parents in the loop and remove barriers to engagement, many best practices still do little to disrupt the racialized narratives that parents need "fixing" or to truly engage families for their unique funds of knowledge or cultural perspectives in shaping educational agendas.

Inequities rooted deep in the foundations of institutions play out in the everyday interactions of individuals, particularly between educators and low-income families and/or families of color. These limit possibilities for solidarity and collaboration. Ishimaru approaches this entanglement through a lens of equitable collaboration, which builds on critical race theory, community organizing, and sociocultural learning theories.

DESIGN OF STUDY: This book shares methods and evidence from empirical studies over the past decade, including qualitative, mixed method, and critical participatory action research. Studies take place in diverse urban school districts and communities in cities across the U.S. These works build on a long line of scholarship that examines family-school relationships through broader cultural and intersectional lenses, particularly in shifting the focus away from the school and onto families and communities. By prioritizing the lived experiences of individuals, backed by evidence-based conceptual theory, Just Schools builds a praxis for equitable family-school partnerships.

FINDINGS: Throughout the chapters, the book analyzes how dynamics between non-dominant communities and educational institutions play out at three overlapping levels:

1) **Systemic**—the intersection of multiple institutions
2) **Organizational**—within schools and districts
3) **Individual**—moment-to-moment interactions

Dr. Ishimaru lays out her framework for navigating these interactions equitably through four inquiry-driven and ongoing principles:

1) Begin with family and community priorities, interests, concerns, knowledge, and resources.
2) Transform power.
3) Build reciprocity and agency.
4) Undertake change as collective inquiry.

Rather than one-time goals to achieve or check off for completion, these guidelines are "starting places, strands of DNA for growing our practices and expanding our collective capacity" (p. 162). Just Schools includes several case studies that illustrate the ways in which these guidelines play out in different contexts, including the imperfections and mistakes that come with the territory. In particular, the study through which these guiding supports were developed examines the Salem-Keizer collaboration (Ishimaru, 2014) by walking through this process in detail. The cases highlight how truly equitable collaboration needs to be a continuous process of inquiry and growth for families and educators alike.

Begin with family and community priorities. This book centers the voices and experiences of nondominant families and communities, situating family engagement squarely in the historical context of systemic racism in the U.S. Through the narratives of participants, Ishimaru analyzes how inequities that play out between individuals have been historically and systemically shaped, as well as how those dynamics are institutionalized at the systems level and affect possibilities for equitable collaboration from there. The road to educational justice begins with actively listening to nondominant families' and students' experiences of injustice in school systems.

Even with the best intentions at heart, educators can often fall into deficit-based, symbolic gestures that fail to welcome families as equal agents in their children's learning, but rather regard them as subjects for "best practices" to be acted upon. Equitable family engagement moves past the remediation mindset that places blame on parents, critiquing best practices in order to make "next" practices. This begins with shifting to an asset-based mindset—viewing families and students by their strengths, rather than their perceived shortcomings, then beginning equitable collaborations by centering community priorities and knowledge. The skills and experiences of nondominant families are critical resources in disrupting inequities along lines of race, power, and privilege.

However, shifting to an asset-based mindset is not enough to enact change. Educators must not only listen to families' ideas and concerns, but actively work with them to level the uneven power dynamics between schools and communities.

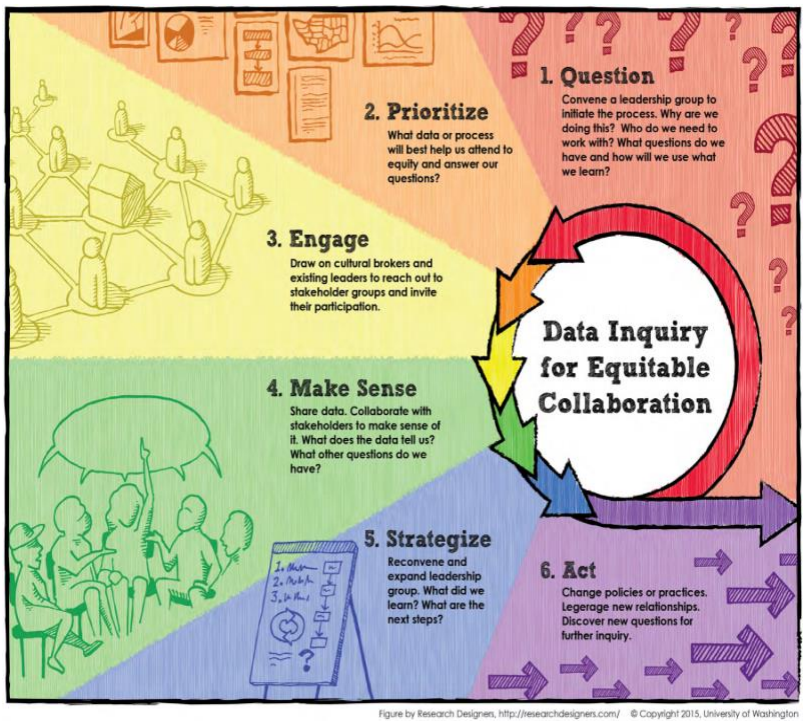
Transform power. An asset-based mindset is not enough to realize equity, as well-intentioned efforts to engage families can still resort to reinforcing racial inequities. This includes system-level efforts to work across multiple institutions to address resource and racial disparities in education. Dr. Ishimaru explores organizational relationships and cultural brokering strategies through district-community partnerships and cross-sector collaborations. While the cases highlight how these structures often fall back into perpetuating inequities that constrain opportunities for true collaboration with families, they show promise for relational strategies that balance the focus and power from schools to families (see Ishimaru 2019).

Transforming power means shifting away from a school-centric focus across all levels, from systems down to individuals. This means enacting policies that foster power-sharing between schools, communities, and families, as well as personal work that goes beyond just listening to the experiences of nondominant families to acting on them and inviting parents in as equal agents. For example, one administrator "recognize[d] how efficiency-oriented decisions can constrain parental agency and the potential for collaborating for systemic change" (p. 71). Well-intentioned, but top-down, reform efforts between organizations can lose sight of what makes collaborations equitable: transforming power dynamics to utilize the experiences and goals of those impacted.

Build reciprocity and agency. Some of the promising strategies that arose from the cross-sector collaboration case were more effective and reciprocal ways for cultural brokering. While cultural brokering typically took the form of socializing/assimilating families into school-centric norms and agendas, there were encouraging glimpses of more reciprocal practices that had the potential to foster collective goals toward systemic change.

When cultural brokering was delegated to an individual role within an organization, the role often resorted to tokenism, with brokers struggling to facilitate lasting change as the sole bridges between communities and institutions. Instead, a more sustainable, reciprocal approach to building equitable relationships with families and communities involves incorporating cultural brokering as strategies and practices systemwide.

Undertake change as collective inquiry. To demonstrate the continuous cycle of collective inquiry, a process that requires the openness to consistently name and disrupt inequities from the system down to the personal level, Just Schools provides a "data carousel" model for gathering and interpreting data for transformative change:



(https://education.uw.edu/sites/default/files/Data%20Carousel%20Brief_Web.pdf)

This method of collective inquiry and capacity-building outlines steps for "moving from data about students and families or families as a source of data to family agency and leadership in joint inquiry for improving and transforming organizations" (p. 119). Data moves from acting as a stagnant, cut-and-dry operation that can other and diagnose nondominant families to "a vehicle for repairing and building politicized trust and fostering transformative agency, these approaches open the door to exploring, defining, and pursuing more ambitious aims of holistic human flourishing, community-determined well-being, and educational justice" (p. 119).

Collective inquiry is also present through successful co-design efforts. Solidarity-driven co-design can include the practices for building collective capacity and leadership of families and educators—it takes the leveraged power of all involved to enact change. While not a panacea, cases in the book demonstrate how co-design can create a ripple effect of change—individuals who build leadership capacity can go on to use those tools in efforts for change beyond schools that strengthen the community ecosystem as a whole.

CONCLUSION: Equitable collaboration with families and communities is not about checking boxes for completion or making it to a predetermined destination. It's about continuous work and inquiry to build an educational experience that is in and of its community—every effort is unique and escapes the constraints of scalability. Dr. Ishimaru encourages solidarity and creation in these efforts by reminding readers to reject the binaries of an either/or mentality. Instead, embrace both/and. She illustrates this binary-breaking through a living systems model versus factory model analogy: "Working from a model of a living ecosystem helps us to escape the 'rut' of thinking in singular, linear ways about systemic change and forcing us into a false binary of either top-down or bottom-up" (p. 163). This continuous process of building solidarity with nondominant families and communities is essential to not only imagine systems and practices of true educational justice, but to build the collective capacity to make it real.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: By synthesizing lived experiences and theory, Just Schools describes the hard work necessary to begin to decolonize our schools. Dr. Ishimaru lays out the guidelines for equitable collaboration that tap into the uncertainty and opportunity of creation when enacting systemic change—each effort must begin with and be unique to its families and communities, which means that no successful, sustainable process is truly scalable. This book captures what is needed to balance power between institutions and nondominant families from the systems level down to the interactions between individuals. Equitable collaboration is a systemwide effort that requires educators to bring their whole selves to the table and interrogate their own discomforts, to be conscious of how their actions (while well-meaning) can be influenced by institutional norms that perpetuate racism and other oppressive gestures of power. Just Schools ushers in the next evolution of the family and community engagement field by pushing past school-centric best practices and opening the imagination for collaborative, transformative change that reaches beyond education.

Ishimaru, A. M. (2020). *Just schools: Building equitable collaborations with families and communities*. Teachers College Press.

The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn From Each Other

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot • 2003

SUMMARY: In this book, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot takes a deep look into the parent-teacher interactions that happen during parent-teacher conferences. Specifically, she uses the method of portraiture to weave together the stories and experiences of 10 female teachers and several parents—predominantly mothers—in schools across the United States. Through in-depth interviews with parents and teachers and hundreds of hours of participant observation, Lawrence-Lightfoot finds that both parents and teachers are often unprepared, nervous, and anxious during the semi-annual meetings. Both sets of adults dread interacting with one another: teachers feel vulnerable and exposed and parents feel protective of their children. As a result, these meetings, or "ritual events" as Lawrence-Lightfoot calls them, are often sources of stress and their potential for meaningful connections is lost. This book looks deeply into these dynamics, investigating how parents and teachers can better interact with one another. Amongst several recommendations, Lawrence-Lightfoot proposes: (1) that the first parent-teacher conference should be a "listening meeting" where teachers learn from parents about their children; (2) teachers should present stories and anecdotes to give parents insight into their children as students; and (3) the best conferences are ones that invite the child/student to participate.

BACKGROUND: This book explores the underlying narratives, expectations, and assumptions that shape parent-teacher conferences, and consequently other parent-teacher interactions and relationships. Lawrence-Lightfoot notes that researchers and practitioners often focus on the importance of positive relationships between families and schools. Yet, there is very little attention drawn to the parent-teacher conference. Lawrence-Lightfoot notes that parent-teacher communication is often framed by relaying negative information about the child: teachers call home or request a meeting when a student is misbehaving or not doing well in school. An exception to this norm, Lawrence-Lightfoot notes, are parent-teacher conferences. These semi-annual, often mandatory, rituals are meetings in which both teachers and parents, who may be complete strangers, are forced to awkwardly interact with one another. But, as Lawrence-Lightfoot notes:

> In this dialogue where the conversation appears to be focused on the child, adults often play out their own childhood histories, their own insecurities, and their own primal fears. In this encounter, where the content seems to be defined by individual stories, there is embedded a broader cultural narrative (p. xxii).

It is this cultural narrative—consisting of parental and teacher expectations, lived histories, social context, to name a few—that Lawrence-Lightfoot explores.

The book is predominantly influenced by three premises. First, Lawrence-Lightfoot notes that demographical and social changes—including shifts in family structures, rise in the number of women employed, increase of immigrant families, increased income inequality and segregation, technology changes, and the power of teacher unions, just to name a few—have changed the context of education, or what she calls the "ecology of education." In other words, parent-teacher relationships

are shaped by their social context and how parents and teachers adapt to these changes. Second, with this book, Lawrence-Lightfoot seeks to provide a more detailed and deep understanding of intimate and personal interactions between parents and teachers. She centers the voices and perspectives of parents and teachers to understand how their own personal histories, experiences, and temperaments shape their interactions with one another. As she notes, the book "searches below the polite surface of adult encounters to document the often rancorous and treacherous underbelly of real feelings" and "examines what gets both revealed and masked in the highly ritualized meetings between parents and teachers" (p. xxv). Third, the book serves as a form of self-exploration for Lawrence-Lightfoot. In framing the study, she discusses how her identity as a mother has influenced how she comes to understand parent-teacher relationships. Advocating for her own children has given her insight into "how hot and passionate" interactions between parents and teachers can be. With such perspective, Lawrence-Lightfoot offers a more empathetic and human perspective to parent-teacher interactions. In other words, her positionality is an asset to family-school relationships research.

The book is based on the experiences and perspectives of ten female teachers and some of the parents of the children in their classrooms. Lawrence-Lightfoot chose to intentionally focus on female teachers because the teaching force is predominantly female. And, as she notes, it is women—female teachers and mothers—who are often the ones navigating parent-teacher relationships. Additionally, she notes that mothers and female teachers face a similar paradox: while society claims to value children as the future, their primary caretakers and educators are often undervalued and mistreated. Thus, she wanted to understand how negative cultural views shaped how parents and teachers related to one another.

Lawrence-Lightfoot also focused on teachers who were known as not only good at their pedagogical practice, but who demonstrated skills, empathy, and care when interacting with parents. These teachers were identified by colleagues, their principals, and parents. Following the methodology of portraiture, to Lawrence-Lightfoot, it was important to focus on the "good but imperfect work" of those teachers because there is more that can be learned from examples of "goodness" than from focusing on pathology. Lawrence-Lightfoot conducted one-on-one interviews with teachers and parents and sat in and observed parent-teacher conferences. During interviews, she pushed participants to share detailed stories to get understand the interplay between past and present.

FINDINGS: Throughout her conversations with teachers and parents and observations of parent-teachers conferences, Lawrence-Lightfoot narrows down her findings to three "central domains" that impact parent-teacher interactions (each of these domains, or major themes are further detailed in the book with vignettes and participant quotes):

1) **Autobiographical and psychological scripts.** Broader historical and personal narratives influence parent-teacher encounters. Lawrence-Lightfoot calls these narratives "ghosts in the classroom." These ghosts are present without either party knowing—when adults meet in the classroom, their own autobiographical experiences unknowingly influence how they can or cannot relate to one another. In other words, teachers' and parents' identities, values, and sense of place in the world all intersect to create the context in which they meet. Parent-teacher dialogues are imprinted with ancient psychological themes, or "generational voices," that are often hidden from the consciousness These voices and ghosts may serve as both guidance and distraction, as insight or bias in parent-teacher interactions. For example, when parents are asked

to sit in small chairs, those meant for elementary-aged children, they may be reminded of when they were children. This may make them feel small and powerless. At the same time, teachers may also be drawn to their own pasts, remembering how their own parents or grandparents were treated during their childhood. Consequently, Lawrence-Lightfoot notes that it is important for both teachers and parents to be aware of their "ghosts."

2) **Double-edge nature of conferences**. Parent-teacher conferences are highly ritualized events where content can either be shallow or enlightening. Lawrence-Lightfoot states that this "double-edge nature" of parent-teacher conferences can either create a welcoming environment or be limiting in its ability to genuinely connect parents and teachers. Unfortunately, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot, it is often the latter. Further, she explains that this "double-edged nature" is magnified because there is so much at stake during the relatively brief interactions. Parents attend the meetings eager to hear good news, dreading negative news and masking these fears. Teachers, on the other hand, worry about being seen as incompetent in their job. Additionally, as Lawrence-Lightfoot uncovered in her conversations with teachers, teachers often feared engaging in conversations with parents because they felt they did not know how to. Teachers felt that their professional training did not prepare them to have conversations and relationships with parents—their graduate programs lacked classes on the topic and professional development trainings often did not go into depth on the topic of parent relationship development. As a result, when they had to interact with parents, teachers felt "the most raw and vulnerable" and often felt the need to overcompensate by strictly discussing academic standards with parents. Thus, parent-teacher conferences become ritualized, generic meetings that do not cover the authentic feelings of participants to avoid conflict; ritual can tilt parent-teacher conferences in the direction of rhetoric over truth-telling. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot, both parents and teachers are left unsatisfied and a cycle of "chronic disappointment" develops and the potential to learn what each has to offer in support of the child is missed.
3) **Variation in relationships**. There is a wide variation in parent-teacher interactions depending on matters such as race, class, educational backgrounds, and immigration status. Nevertheless, all parents have educational expectations for their children. All parents have dreams and aspirations for their children and see school as a link for upward social mobility, regardless of socioeconomic position. Thus, when planning parent-teacher conferences, teachers must take these contexts and information into consideration. Conferences and other interactions with parents need to address the specific context of families. Lawrence-Lightfoot notes that it is important for teachers to think about what parents and their children need. Additionally, she notes that the most important ingredient for successful interactions and relationships with parents, regardless of context, is respect. Mutual respect between both parties leads to understanding, empathy, and community, elements that all ultimately benefit the child at the center of the relationship.

CONCLUSIONS: Parent-teacher conferences are embedded with hidden messages, narratives, and unconscious expectations. By deeply studying these conferences, Lawrence-Lightfoot reveals the dynamics that emerge from them: the "ghosts" that shape how parents and teachers understand each other, the inclination of ritual, and the importance of considering context. Becoming aware of these dynamics, Lawrence-Lightfoot notes, is essential to maximize the potential of parent-teacher conferences. In addition to explicitly noting the existence of these dynamics, Lawrence-Lightfoot offers other recommendations to importance of parent-teacher conferences and thus the relationships between these two parties. Teachers and parents must remember that parent-teacher conferences should be about the child and not about them. Thus, conferences should not be generic

or scripted rituals. Teachers should cater conferences to each individual child, using specific and descriptive evidence of learning and development. Lawrence-Lightfoot suggests that teachers should notice, and record select anecdotes that will illustrate to parents how their child behaves as a student. To accomplish this, Lawrence-Lightfoot concludes that teachers need the following skills: (1) be trained in the art of observation; (2) trained in record-keeping or journaling; and (3) learn to listen to parents and be open and receptive to parental insights. Finally, she also highly recommends inviting the child to the conference, giving them an active role in recounting their educational progress.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: One of the most important lessons from *The Essential Conversation* is that both teachers and parents may feel vulnerable during parent-teacher conferences. In essence, both parents and teachers need to learn how to better work with one another. Yet, as Lawrence-Lightfoot notes in the book (a fact that is also supported by other parent/family engagement literature), teachers, due to their position of power and authority, bear the responsibility of easing tensions and welcoming parents into their classrooms. In other words, teachers can acknowledge their "ghosts" and interrogate them to understand how they may be unconsciously shaping their interactions with parents. This is reflective work that can and should happen in teacher training programs and professional development sessions. Relatedly, teachers are also in positions to improve communication with parents and to plan more efficient parent-teacher conferences. Developing authentic relationships and trust with parents begins with open lines of communication. This book notes that parent-teacher conferences are a place to begin this communication and these relationships. Yet, as Lawrence-Lightfoot notes, parent-teacher interactions should not be limited to these biannual events. Instead, parent-teacher communication and interactions should be ongoing and constant.

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Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2003). *The essential conversation: What parents and teachers can learn from each other.* Ballantine Books.

The Way We Do School: The Making of Oakland's Full-Service Community School District

Milbrey McLaughlin, Kendra Fehrer, & Jacob Leos-Urbel • 2020

SUMMARY: This mixed-methods study examines how the Oakland Unified School District developed an enduring system of full-service community schools (FSCS) from 2011–2019. Findings include how the system used the FSCS "whole child" model as a system change strategy and how the approach changed structure and practice at both district and school levels. Student outcomes have slowly but steadily improved, most notably the high school graduation rate, which rose over 14 points, from 59.3 percent in 2011 to 73.5 percent in 2019.

BACKGROUND: This book covers nine years of the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) effort, begun in 2011, to reorganize the district into a system of full-service community schools (FSCS). Rather than developing a school-by-school model, OUSD sought to transform the entire system using a whole-child approach to serve its students.

Oakland leaders focused on system change at two levels, central office and local school to "disrupt inequities" in the opportunities available to students. Their goal was to establish a comprehensive, whole-child model as "a way of doing school." Rather than co-locate community services in school buildings, this model integrates community resources into the school's academic program. As the authors put it, "Oakland operates as a community school district, not as a district with some community schools" (p. vii).

Community schools operate in a public-school building, in partnership with community agencies. Acting as a community center, they welcome students and their families before and after school, often seven days a week. All community schools employ three broad approaches:

- Provide expanded learning opportunities that are motivating and engaging during the school day, after school, and in the summer.
- Offer essential health and social supports and services.
- Engage families and communities as assets in the lives of their children.

The full-service community schools model contrasts sharply with the "no excuses" view that has dominated recent school improvement efforts such as standards-based accountability. These models hold that schools should be expected to attain academic success, regardless of their students' background or life context.

This study explores two key questions: What does system change look like in an urban school district? What factors enable or constrain it? The authors attempt to answer these questions by exploring whether the FSCS model can produce system change, and if so, how.

DESIGN OF STUDY: The book is divided into four parts:

1. **The initiative's social, economic, and political context**. The challenges faced by new Superintendent Tony Smith to create a system focused on the whole child; the 18-month comprehensive planning process that created the 2011 strategic plan.
2. **Central office implementation**. The tools used to bring about district system change; examples of system changes; sources of the strategic plan's remarkable stability over the course of leadership changes, fiscal crises, and staff turnover.
3. **School-level implementation and outcomes**. School-level responses to the strategic plan; the elements most critical to positive implementation.
4. **Recap of Oakland's nine-year implementation of the FSCS initiative**. Outcomes associated with it; and Oakland's lessons for the field.

The study covers two related research projects. The system-level study, by Milbrey McLaughlin, began in 2011 as OUSD rolled out its FSCS plan, Community Schools, Thriving Students. Focusing on understanding how the district organized and implemented the initiative, her team conducted over 90 interviews with OUSD educators, administrators, community partners, and civic leaders several times annually. These data created a detailed, long-term account of implementation issues, decisions, and outcomes.

The site-level evaluation study, by Kendra Fehrer and Jacob Leos-Urbel, began in 2014, as a collaboration between OUSD and the Gardner Center at Stanford University. Its focus was to support efforts to assess, enhance, and scale their community schools' work. The research included interviews with district leaders, site visits, conversations with a range of school stakeholders, and statistical analysis of longitudinal district data. The authors conducted their site-level interviews and observations in nine schools—three elementary schools, four middle schools, one high school, and one "span" school serving both middle and high school students.

FINDINGS: Since the launch of Community Schools, Thriving Students in 2011, Oakland has created an effective and expanding FSCS initiative, despite five leadership turnovers and repeated budget crises. By the 2019–2020 school year, 42 of the 86 district schools operate with a full-time community school manager. During that year, students made 36,000 visits to OUSD'S 16 school-based health centers. The district's 75 afterschool programs attracted 8,000 participants every day. Partnerships with 215 community organizations have enriched the school day with a diverse array of learning opportunities. Furthermore, all the district's schools include core elements of an FSCS model such as social-emotional learning strategies and Coordination of Services Teams (COST).

Several components of Oakland's full-service community schools have been recognized as national best practice models: Tools for working with community-based partners; youth leadership and family-engagement policies; restorative justice programs; social-emotional learning trainings for educators and integration of SEL into academic work; and the African American Male Achievement (AAMA) program.

Impact on Student Achievement: Oakland data indicate that the FSCS initiative has contributed to many benefits for students:

- Reduced suspensions and high-risk behaviors
- Improved school climate and culture
- Increased family and youth involvement in site-based decisions

- Positive student health outcomes associated with community schools' mental and physical health resources
- High levels of participation in afterschool programs (73 percent)
- Increased high school graduation rate

The most notable impact on students is the rise in high school graduation rates, which have steadily grown by over 14 points, from 59.3 percent in 2011 to 73.5 percent in 2019. The rates for students most at risk are encouraging. For Black students, rates rose from 53.5 percent to 70.8 percent. For Latinx students, from 52.7 percent to 64.0 percent. And for ELL students, from 45.6 percent to 64.0 percent. As measured by standardized tests, academic achievement continues to lag, although scores are rising. Reading at grade level has increased, from 22.4 percent in 2011, to 37 percent in 2019.

What does a full-service community school look like? Coliseum College Prep Academy (CCPA) is a grade 6-12 school in Havenscourt. Its 500 students are 96 percent low-income, 83 percent Latinx, and 30 percent English-language learners. Opened in 2006, CCPA is part of a community organizing effort to break up overcrowded, low-performing schools and create smaller schools designed by teachers, families, and community members. In 2018, 97 percent of all students graduated, and 95 percent were considered "college and career-ready."

Major components of the CCPA design:

- Home-school partnerships develop close collaboration between teachers and parents. Parents often visit classrooms to observe instruction and take part in learning opportunities. Social connections are fostered through potluck dinners, regular meetings with the principal, and workshops.
- The Health Center provides medical and dental services for students, and staff lead parenting support groups.
- The Family and College Resource Center (FRC) is the hub for many programs and activities. It offers ESL classes four days a week for parents with free childcare. Parents also can obtain individual support on how to navigate the information system, and how to get connected to services such as tax or legal help, counseling, or food assistance.
- Home visits help teachers understand how to support and motivate their students and signal the school's commitment to partnership.

Parent leadership and advocacy have played a critical role in the school's success, such as petitioning the district to expand CCPA from a middle school to a 6-12 secondary school. Parents also persuaded the district to retain the adult education program on campus and monitored district budgeting to ensure adequate resources. During campaigns for local and state ballot measures, parent advocacy for increasing the OUSD budget led to successful passage.

CONCLUSIONS: This book explores how OUSD successfully built an FSCS district within an extremely challenging economic, political, and social context, and through five Superintendents. The accumulated evidence documenting Oakland's nine years of system- and site-level implementation shows how a community school model can be a framework for whole-district system change. It also explores how integrated academic and social services can enable a whole-child approach, and how a "community school mindset" can be infused throughout an entire school district.

System change calls for careful diagnosis, rather than identifying a symptom such as gaps in student achievement as "the problem to fix." Yet few community school initiatives approach their mission as changing the system, instead focusing on improving individual schools. But without transformation in the underlying structures that reinforce the inequities students experience, the long-term prospects of local schools rise and fall with the level of individual leadership and commitment. While a community schools approach that is centered only on schools may successfully promote better outcomes for its students, students facing similar challenges elsewhere in the district miss out. (p.viii)

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: Community schools offer an "expanded vision of schooling" and operate outside traditional school structures. They see physical and mental health, safety, positive adult connections, expanded learning time, and social supports, as integral to children's learning and development. Family engagement is a foundational strategy. This does not mean, however, that rigorous academic instruction is not a core value. It is essential, of course, but can be enriched when community partners provide interesting additions to the curriculum and a network of contacts for other opportunities to students and families.

Disparities in resources and opportunities available to young people growing up in concentrated poverty represent structural problems. Food insecurity, homelessness, insufficient social supports and medical care, for example, are not amenable to quick-fix, adopt-a-program responses (p. vii). Furthermore, these social and economic disparities explain much of the so-called "achievement gaps" in student outcomes. In short, students can't learn if their basic needs are unmet.

Recognizing that schools need to serve the whole child must also acknowledge that schools need partners in providing comprehensive supports for students' personal and academic development (p. vii). Taking the time to develop a comprehensive plan, in collaboration with families, community members, and local partners, was critical to the success and sustainability of Oakland's FSCS initiative.

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McLaughlin, M., Fehrer, K., & Leos-Urbel, J. (2020). *The way we do school: The making of Oakland's full-service community school district.* Harvard Education Press.

Building Partnerships to Reinvent School Culture: Austin Interfaith

Kavitha Mediratta, Seema Shah, & Sara McAlister • 2009

SUMMARY: Austin Interfaith conducted a decade-long Alliance Schools parent and community organizing effort that yielded new resources for high-poverty, low-performing schools, as well as new skills and relationships among parents, teachers, and administrators. These in turn contributed to substantial gains in student learning. In schools with high-level involvement in the Alliance Schools initiative, students gained from 15 and 19 percentage points on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), compared to a four percent gain in schools with minimal involvement.

BACKGROUND: Affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a national organizing network, Austin Interfaith builds local networks of faith-based institutions and community members to improve local neighborhoods. Aiming to improve low-performing schools in East Austin, Austin Interfaith created a network of "Alliance Schools" in low-income neighborhoods. Using community organizing tactics, Austin Interfaith provided leadership training to parents, teachers, and administrators, and developed a strong relationship with the superintendent.

The IAF organizing model is based on individual meetings ("one-on-ones") that identify residents with leadership potential who could mobilize others. These meetings are supplemented with small-group or "house meetings" that allow attendees to develop relationships with one another and identify similar issues of concern around which to organize.

> Through the house meetings, stories, and one-on-ones, we try to understand what needs to be changed. What are the problems that people face in their lives? How do we break those problems into issues that can be tackled? We… may hear an example, like our kids are unsupervised after school. You start studying that problem and the issue around after-school care. You develop an action team, you start teaching people how to politically address an issue, and you develop a strategy.
>
> —Regina Rogoff, Austin Interfaith leader (p. 12)

In addition to supporting local schools, Austin Interfaith also organized at the district level, engaging with the superintendent, school board, and municipal leaders. For example, the organization hosted regular "accountability sessions" where parent leaders asked public officials and school leaders to respond to reform proposals in front of an audience of their constituents. Austin Interfaith also met with school board members and district staff to recruit them as allies. Through these meetings, Austin Interfaith built better understanding among public officials and school leaders about the organization's goals and established support for its reform proposals.

> When you're going to accountability sessions, it's not because there's fear Austin Interfaith is going to turn out 10,000 people to vote against you; it's because this is a big group that you can work with. We care about their values, we care about who they're serving, and they've got a track record of accomplishments. They've been more successful than any other group I know, or than we as a district [have been], in getting parents from often-disenfranchised

communities involved in their kids' education.

—John Fitzpatrick, former member, Austin school board (p. 23)

DESIGN OF STUDY: The authors of this report focused on the following research questions:

1. To what extent has Austin Interfaith influenced district policy in terms of supporting low-performing schools?
2. In what ways has the involvement of Austin Interfaith in schools influenced their capacity to educate students successfully? How do schools that are more actively engaged with Austin Interfaith compare relative to schools that are less involved? How do teachers and administrators perceive this impact?
3. Have the efforts of Austin Interfaith produced measurable gains in student outcomes as measured by standardized test scores?

To answer these questions, the authors analyzed 46 interviews with school and district-level leaders and local education experts, along with interviews with Austin Interfaith staff and members. They also analyzed Austin Interfaith documents and media coverage about the organization's work with the Alliance Schools. For quantitative data, the authors analyzed a Teachers Perception Survey (n=144), a Teacher Attribution Questionnaire (n=65), and demographic data and student outcome data for all schools in the district. Analyses included influence on district capacity, influence on school capacity, and student outcomes.

FINDINGS:

Influence on District Capacity

- District leaders became more aware of the needs of low-income African American and Latino communities. These leaders readily acknowledged that this awareness developed through their participation in the IAF training sessions and regional conferences.

> They've been a guide into a community that I do not belong to and that I do not come from. It's been extremely helpful to have them show me what's going on for over half our kids and families and to expose me to a very different world than the one I grew up in (p. 23).
>
> —John Fitzpatrick, former Austin school board member

- Austin Interfaith assisted schools to win state Investment Capital Fund grants, bringing an additional $1.9 million to district schools between 1998 and 2008. Using these resources, Austin Interfaith worked with district and municipal leaders to create:
    - A new teacher pipeline program to address shortages in bilingual and special education teachers
    - A new parent support specialist position for high-poverty schools
    - Afterschool and summer school programs and adult ESL programs
    - Professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators
    - Increased resources for low-performing, high-poverty schools

Influence on School Capacity

Schools that had higher levels of involvement with Austin Interfaith built significantly greater capacity

than schools with lower levels of involvement. In schools that were highly involved with Austin Interfaith:

- Teachers rated their school's climate more highly. Significant differences occurred in:
    - teacher-parent trust
    - sense of school community and safety
    - achievement-oriented culture
    - teacher outreach to parents
    - parent influence in school decision making
    - parent involvement in the school
- Teachers rated their school's professional culture more highly on measures related to teacher collegiality, morale, and joint problem-solving.
- Teachers credited Austin Interfaith with a high degree of influence on the quality of school leadership.
- Parents reported greater access to important information, opportunities for communication, and respect from school staff.

Influence on Student Outcomes

- School administrative data showed a significant positive relationship between the level of a school's involvement with Alliance Schools activities and student performance on standardized tests.
- Intensity of involvement in Alliance Schools activities predicted increases in TAAS scores, ranging from 4 percentage points in schools with minimal involvement to between 15 and 19 percentage points in schools with high involvement (p. 29).

This case study uses statistical analysis; it is not an experimental study. The correlation between developing school capacity and improved student outcomes appears to be strong, but other reforms occurring in the schools could have influenced the findings. The inferences presented here, however, are based on consistent evidence across multiple data sources, as well as their agreement with the theory underlying Austin Interfaith's reform strategy.

Particularly persuasive are the eyewitness testimonials to the impact of the Austin Interfaith approach. Teachers in high-involvement schools credited Austin Interfaith with:

- "Some" to "very much" influence on six of 10 school climate items related to parent involvement, trust and collaboration, and school–community relations.
- Improvement in the school's professional culture on six measures most directly related to teacher collegiality, morale, and joint problem solving.

Interviews with administrators further attribute the strong professional culture in highly involved schools to the relational strategies that Austin Interfaith teaches school staff.

> All the teachers in our school practice Alliance Schools principles because we incorporate them into our day-to-day routine, into the staff development and faculty development that we do. We do individual meetings; we do house meetings; and that's how it works (p. 26).
>
> —Joachin Gloria, AISD Principal

CONCLUSIONS: Through the Alliance Schools network, Austin Interfaith engaged in a long-term effort to recruit and train parents and teachers to work together as leaders in a participatory, action-oriented, problem-solving process. Organizers helped to build a collaborative culture in schools that energized the school community with a sense of shared purpose and power. In schools where the efforts were sustained at a high level, this organizing contributed to notable gains in student learning.

This work confronts many challenges. Frequent changes in school leadership threaten labor-intensive relationship-building practices. When leaders move on, staff tends to turn over as well. New principals may not place priority on "soft fuzzy stuff" like community walks and collaborative planning. Pressure to improve test scores may preempt all other efforts, especially in an environment where educators fear being fired if reading and math scores don't go up.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD:

1. In districts with chronically underperforming schools in distressed neighborhoods, a higher level of intervention is required to improve the situation.

2. Working with community organizers can help create cohesion and a sense of being a school community with shared purpose and strength. Creating such a feeling of common purpose in a school can be very difficult to accomplish strictly from within. District support and partnerships with community organizations are essential if the work is to be sustained over the long term. Alliance Schools organizers viewed educators as an essential constituency that needed to be brought into a trusting and collaborative relationship with parents and community members.

3. "Reinventing" the culture of failing schools was a useful lens for introducing community organizing strategies to parents, teachers, and administrators. Starting from that premise allowed the school community to avoid laying blame and share a common purpose.

4. Building community starts with listening. To create consensus about what needed to happen, teachers and parents together embarked on a listening campaign through neighborhood walks and house meetings. The understandings gained transformed the way they saw each other, moving away from stereotypes and bias. This, in turn, profoundly altered the way that parents, teachers, and principals understood their respective roles in school improvement and, consequently, how they worked together as a school community. To achieve shared goals, they learned to share power.

> Reinventing the culture of schools was a radical idea. Before becoming involved in Austin Interfaith, the idea of neighbors changing schools did not make sense. The word power was not in my vocabulary (p. 11).
>
> —Lourdes Zamarron, parent leader

Mediratta, K., Shah, S., & McAlister, S. (2009). *Building partnerships to reinvent school culture: Austin Interfaith—The case of Texas.* Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University.

Parental Involvement and Children's School Success

Arthur Reynolds and Melissa Clements • 2005

SUMMARY: This long-term, quantitative study of the Chicago Parent Centers documents a significant, even dramatic, positive relationship between parent engagement and social and academic outcomes for children. The longer parents took part in the program, and the more they were involved at school, the more likely their children were to complete high school, and the less likely they were to repeat a grade, be arrested, or require special education.

BACKGROUND: Chicago Parent Centers (CPC) is a center-based, early intervention program that provides comprehensive education and family support services to low-income children and parents from preschool to early elementary school (ages 3-9). CPC operates through 23 centers across the city. CPC has five features:

1. Early intervention
2. Parent involvement
3. Structured language/basic skills learning
4. Health and social services
5. Program continuity between preschool and elementary school

The researchers define parent engagement broadly, and along three dimensions:

- Behavior with or on behalf of children, at home or in school
- Attitudes and beliefs about parenting or education
- Expectations for children's future

The Chicago Longitudinal Study provides the data for this study. It consists of 1,539 low-income children, 93 percent African American, who took part in Chicago Child-Parent Center program (beginning in 1983-84) and a matched comparison group enrolled in an alternative kindergarten intervention. The study continued for 17 years.

DESIGN OF STUDY: The theory of change that underlies the study is that children's readiness for school can be enriched through family support and language learning activities. Direct parent involvement in the CPC program is designed to enhance parent-child interactions, parent and child attachment to school, social support among parents, and children's school readiness and social adjustment.

This study presents three categories of evidence on how parent engagement influences children's success:

1. Interventions with a family support component positively affect student outcomes.
2. Parent involvement is a mechanism through which long-term effects of intervention are achieved.
3. Indicators of parent involvement are associated with higher levels of school performance.

The program requires that parents take part for a minimum of one-half day per week. They may choose among diverse opportunities, offered through a parent resource room that is staffed by parent resource teachers. The resource room features parent educational activities, interactions among parents, and parent-child interactions. It also offers materials, supplies, speakers, and training. Additional options are GED classes, the School Advisory Council, classroom volunteering, and participation in school activities such as field trips.

FINDINGS:

1. **Effects of the Intervention on Student Outcomes**

Preschool participation at ages 3 or 4 is associated with educational and social outcomes that span ages 5 to 22, continuing up to 18 years after the end of intervention. The longer the parents participated, the greater the results for children. Compared with children who participated for 1-4 years, children who participated from 4-6 years had higher reading and math achievement, and lower rates of special education, grade retention, and child maltreatment.

Proportion of CPC Preschool and Comparison Children Achieving School and Social Competence (Participation 1-6 years)

Child Outcomes	Age	Program Group	Comparison Group	Difference	Pct. Change
At/Above national norm on readiness	5	46.7	25.1	21.6	+ 86
Child maltreatment	4-17	5.0	10.3	5.3	- 51
Repeated grade	6-15	23.0	38.4	15.4	- 40
Special education	6-18	14.4	24.6	10.2	- 41
Juvenile arrest	10-18	16.9	25.1	8.2	- 33
Completed HS	18-22	65.7	54.5	11.2	+ 21

The pattern of findings from this and other studies (e.g., Schweinhart and Weikart) is that early childhood programs with family support components are more likely to provide long-term benefits for children than programs without such components.

2. **Parent Involvement as a Mechanism of Long-Term Effects**

According to the study analysis, parent involvement is an intervening influence on children's outcomes. Reynolds and Clemens constructed an analytical model to measure the "value added" of parent involvement, as a proportion of the sum of all paths of influence on social competence behaviors. Participation in the CPC program contributed to children's motivation, cognitive ability, social adjustment, family support (e.g., parent involvement), and school support. These in turn

contributed to social competence behaviors, such as school achievement, grade retention, special education, delinquency, participation in social services, and educational attainment (e.g., graduation rate).

The researchers estimate that the cost-benefit of the CPC program would yield seven dollars in savings for every dollar invested in the preschool component, through reductions in remedial education and criminal justice costs. About $2 out of the $7 can be attributed to the family support program. This estimate, they feel, is conservative, because parent involvement has synergistic effects with other program components. In other words, the whole program is more likely to be effective because of family support.

3. Indicators of Parent Involvement Predict Children's Learning and Development

A third measure in this study is the number of years between grades 1-6 that teachers rate parents' involvement in school as average or better. This provides a cumulative index of involvement that can be correlated to student outcomes. Both high school completion and juvenile arrest rates varied directly with teacher ratings of parent involvement. A one-year change in parent involvement was associated with a 16 percent increase in the odds of high school completion and a four-year change with increased odds of 48 percent.

Juvenile Delinquency and High School Completion Rates (by Parent Involvement Rating)

Years Parent Involvement Rated average or above	Delinquency	High School Completion
0	22.6%	37.3%
2	16.1	66.2
4	13.9	70.6
6	8.7	82.6

CONCLUSIONS: Reynolds and Clemons find that programs that provide child education and intensive resources for parent engagement yield greater and longer-lasting benefits than many efforts that consume a larger share of public spending, such as small class size, afterschool programs, and dropout prevention. It is important, however, that early education programs be high quality.

Four elements are critical to the success of such programs:

1. A coordinated system of early care and education should span at least the first five years of life.
2. Preschool teachers should be trained and compensated well.
3. Educational content should respond to all children's learning needs, especially literacy.
4. Family services and parent involvement activities should be intensive and comprehensive.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: The striking results of this study have deep implications for how districts and schools use their federal Title I funds, at least one percent of which must be used to

engage families. The Chicago Parent-Child Centers program is funded largely from this source. It is important to ask how a school district is using its Title I money, and what impact on children's learning and development is the current strategy having.

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Reynolds, A. J., & Clements, M. A. (2005). *Parent involvement and children's school success.* In E. Patrikakou & R. P. Weissberg (Eds.), *School-family partnerships for children's success* (pp. 109–130). essay, Teachers College Press.

Principal Leadership for School, Family, and Community Partnerships: The Role of a Systems Approach to Reform Implementation

Mavis G. Sanders • 2014

SUMMARY: This longitudinal, multiple-site study article depicts how two school districts (one urban, one suburban) engaged in a systems approach to family-school-community engagement reform developed by the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). Specifically, the author describes how district-level expectations, policies, and practices affected principals' leadership and action around family and community engagement. Findings suggest that, under the guidance of the NNPS personnel and district leaders, who were invested in family and community partnerships, school principals were able to successfully implement the NNPS reform, improving their family and community engagement practices. District leaders created clear expectations for partnership, established coherent contexts for the need of such partnerships, and provided tangible supports and rewards to their principals. Over time, these strategies led to increased buy-in from school leaders and improved family and community engagement relationships. Findings confirm the importance of a systems-level approach to education reform, where the investment in school-family-community partnerships begins with leadership.

BACKGROUND: In this article, Sanders describes how two large school districts implemented a family-school-community engagement reform developed by the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). NNPS was established in 1996 to "assist schools, districts, and states in developing partnership programs that acknowledge the importance of and facilitate family and community engagement in the learning process" (p. 234). Existing research has documented the importance of district leadership and school principals in successfully implementing education reform (Fullan, 2004; Sheppard, et al., 2009). Thus, the study draws from a systems-level perspective to understand the relationship between district and principal leadership in the implementation and scaling of an external reform developed by NNPS.

Buy-in from leadership at the school, district, and state levels are essential to achieve any form of meaningful and lasting educational reform (Fullan, 2010; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2003; Spillane and Thompson, 1997; Wallace Foundation, 2012). This body of literature has focused on the importance of the relationship between district leaders and principals, as they are often in close proximity and have more direct and consistent interactions. Furthermore, studies have also found that district leaders can develop individual and organizational capacity for reform at the school level when they specify a cohesive message about and direction for change, provide the resources necessary for reform, and create opportunities for staff to learn more about the mechanisms and principles around the reform (Honig, 2008; Johnson and Chrispeels, 2010; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2003; Stein and Coburn, 2008).

To understand how district leaders implemented and scaled the NNPS approach to family-school-community partnerships, Sanders designed a five-year qualitative study on four districts across the United States. The focus of this article are District 3, an urban district, and District 4, a suburban district. These districts were selected because they were the ones where the NNPS reform was the

most extensive at the time of the study. Additionally, these "demographically different districts accomplished, to varying degrees, what is unusual in education. They implemented and scaled up a district-wide reform for a decade or more" (p. 242). District 3 is in the northeastern U.S., and has about 60 schools serving 38, 000 students. The racial makeup of the city was about 54 percent white, 37 percent African American, 1 percent Asian, 8 percent from other races or from two or more races, and 8 percent Latino of any race. District 3 joined NNPS in 1999 and hired three NNPS district coordinators to support the development, implementation, and sustaining of family-school-community engagement initiatives. Due to their accomplishments in this area, District 3 received an NNPS award of excellence. District 4 is in the Midwestern part of the U.S. It has about 20 schools, serving about 19,000 students. The population was predominantly white (85.2 percent), followed by Asian (9.6 percent), African American (3 percent), and Latino (3 percent). While the school district could be described as affluent, family-school-community partnerships were not strong. This district joined NNPS in 1998. With the support of NNPS coordinators, District 4 has also won NNPS district leadership awards.

Following qualitative case study methodology, Sanders engaged in multiple data sources and methods. Data collection included phenomenological, semi-structured, focus group, and informal interviews; observations of workshops, meetings, presentations, and other work-related activities of district-level participants; district and NNPS document collection and review; and site visits to schools participating in the NNPS programming. All formal interviews were audio recorded and transcribed; notes from site observations were typed. Deductive and inductive coding strategies were used and reviewed for accuracy and validity.

FINDINGS: Sanders found that superintendents and school board members in District 3 and District 4 supported system-wide implementation of the NNPS reform in multiple ways, including attending NNPS district events and activities, using NNPS language and principles in district-wider communications and policies, and allocating funding for NNPS coordinators. This active support for family-school-community engagement created a climate of accountability and high expectations for partnerships.

While the messaging of active support from superintendents and school board members was important, Sanders also found that the role of the NNPS coordinators was essential for the success of partnership program development. Coordinators were the ones doing professional development sessions with school personnel, were the ones developing relationships with parents, local businesses, and community organizations, modeling collaborative behaviors. They were also the ones explicitly linking the language of partnerships to principals' goals for school improvement and student learning.

Sanders found that school principals responded to NNPS coordinators in two primary ways: (1) resistance and (2) buy-in.

- **Resistance**. Some principals did not believe that school-family-community partnerships were essential for school success. In both districts, NNPS coordinators reported that one of the biggest challenges was working with principals who adopted a "authoritarian" leadership approach. These were leaders who were more likely to see a separation between school and home and were determined to implement school-family communication on their terms.

Additionally, Sanders also notes that the lack of accountability may also cause principal resistance: when family-school-community engagement is not part of principals' evaluations, there is less buy-in.

- **Buy-in**. Principals who valued family-school-community partnerships were more likely to engage in activities that welcomed families and communities. "These activities included creating welcoming school environments, collaborating with community-based organizations to engage ethnically and linguistically diverse family populations; allocating funds for and attending family and community partnership activities, and acknowledging parent and teacher leadership for family and community engagement" (p. 247). Teachers and parents working with these principals reported a clear understanding of where the principals' values were. Additionally, principals who embraced the NNPS reform did so to improve their schools around school climate, student grades, and student attendance. Sanders notes that this buy-in did not occur overnight. Instead, they were facilitated by district coordinators, with the support of superintendents and school board members, and their in-depth professional development sessions, where they informed principals about the different elements of the NNPS reform. Buy-in was also sustained by publicly celebrating efforts and achievements.

CONCLUSIONS: This study underlines the importance of a systems-level approach to educational reform: the investment of district leadership in the work of the NNPS led to improved family-school-community partnerships. Additionally, the essential role of NNPS coordinators in this reform highlights the importance of having individuals at the district level focus on partnership work. Their work modeling collaborations with families and community members, doing professional development sessions, and holding principals accountable to school goals led to positive outcomes. This is how, according to Sanders, external reforms can be established and scaled up. In regard to the role of principals, within a systems approach, principal resistance can be reduced and buy-in increased by establishing systems of support and setting accountability measures.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: This study illustrates the importance of leadership in the implementation of school reforms: it shows that when school-family-community is valued at the district level and it is invested in, positive outcomes emerge.

Sanders, M. (2014). Principal leadership for school, family, and community partnerships: The role of a systems approach to reform implementation. *American Journal of Education*, 120(2), 233–255. https://doi.org/10.1086/674374

A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform

Mark R. Warren and Karen L. Mapp • 2011

SUMMARY: This multi-case qualitative study provides an understanding of the methods, processes, and capacities through which community organizing works to create and support equity- and justice-oriented school reform. The research team studied six community organizing groups that had a significant impact on building parent and community participation and fostering school reform in low-income communities in New York City, Chicago, Denver, San Jose, Los Angeles, and the Mississippi Delta. The study reveals how organizing groups build the participation and leadership of parents and students to become powerful actors in school improvement efforts and how community organizing builds powerful relationships that lead to the transformational change necessary to advance educational equity and a robust democracy.

BACKGROUND: A 2009 study by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform showed that community organizing, when pursued in a district over time with intensity and at sufficient scale, is positively related to improvements in student outcomes. The study found that schools engaged with community organizing groups had higher student educational outcomes, including higher attendance, test score performance, high school completion, and college-going aspirations. They also documented the effects of community organizing on creating equity-oriented change in school district policy, practices, and resource distribution. At the level of individual schools, the Annenberg study also showed how organizing strengthened school-community relationships, parent involvement and engagement, and cultivated trust.

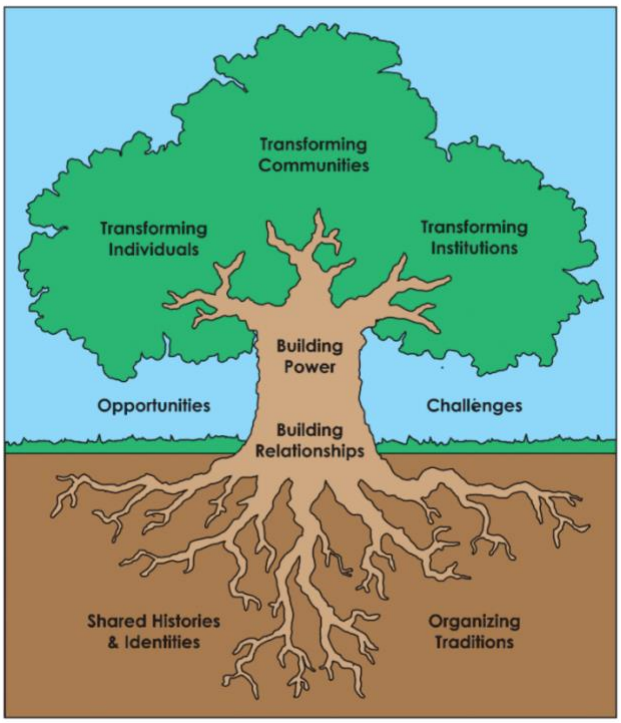
The Match on Dry Grass study was designed to build on and add to the Annenberg research by identifying and examining the key processes through which organizing groups worked to bring parents, young people, community residents and educators together to build the capacity for change. The purpose of the study was to dig deeply into the "how" of organizing to clarify and gain a deeper understanding of the definition, traditions, processes, and strategies of education organizing.

DESIGN OF STUDY: The study was undertaken as a unique, collaborative qualitative effort among faculty members and graduate students at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Professor Mark Warren and Senior Lecturer Karen Mapp provided overall leadership for the study and 16 graduate students participated in all phases of the project, from initial design to analysis and writing. All project decisions were made as a collective, as the research team sought to imbue the methodology with some of the principles of community organizing.

Teams of students formed six case study research teams and were empowered to enter the field and shape a research process authentic to each locality. Teams spent a year traveling to the research sites, interviewing participants, observing activities in schools and communities, and collecting relevant documents. On average, each team conducted about 50 formal, one-hour in-depth interviews with participants at the research sites. Teams also spoke informally with individuals and conducted a small number of focus groups.

The teams analyzed their data and wrote the case chapters for the book. Every step of the process occurred in dialogue with the entire research team. Findings and analysis were shared across the entire project team to stimulate deeper analysis of each case and of the project as a whole.

FINDINGS: Using a broad research and theoretical base combined with an analysis of the data from the six organizations, the book offers a framework to help understand how strong forms of community organizing work. The researchers chose the metaphor of a tree to represent aspects of community organizing, for example, that organizing is a phenomenon that grows and develops and that organizing efforts take time to mature through intentional cultivation and nurturing.



The roots of the tree reflect the deep connections that strong organizing efforts have to a variety of historical organizing traditions and movements (e.g., labor, civil rights, and women's movements), as well as the connections to the shared histories and identities of the local communities.

The environment represents the community context. This context holds the opportunities, challenges, and constraints shaped by factors such as local politics and policy dynamics.

The trunk of the tree holds the key processes, the "how to" of strong organizing. These core processes are the building of relationships and power. "Organizing starts with relationships" (p. 24), and these relationships start with conversations among community members as they share stories and identify common concerns. As organizing groups build relationships, they also focus on building "relational power"—power "with" versus power "over" others" (p. 27).

The branches and leaves of the tree represent the desired transformations that occur as a result of the organizing effort. The study found that organizing groups pursued education organizing not just as a way to achieve reform goals, but as part of a broader effort to build capacity and power for low-income communities and to transform power relations. As such, the study makes the distinction between transactional change, "the achievement of specific goals or objectives," versus transformation change, which "involves an internal change in how people or institutions act (p. 228).

The study found that strong forms of organizing achieve transformation at three levels:

1. **Individual Transformation**
   Parents, young people, and community members develop into leaders through their participation in various components of organizing: conducting research, building relationships, organizing meetings, and designing reform initiatives. Through organizing, these leaders develop the skills and knowledge to become meaningful actors in the process of educational change. "At its core, this transformation involves the movement from being a private person to a public actor as a community leader" (p. 236).

2. **Community Transformation**
   The organizing process weaves new connections within and across communities, creates a broader sense of shared fate by helping to develop a sense of "we" through the process of people listening to each other's values and sharing stories, and develops a shared community vision.

3. **Institutional Transformation**
   The transformation of individuals and communities leads to institutional change in public education by building new kinds of relationships between education institutions and empowered communities. Through engagement, institutions are more responsive to community concerns, are inclusive of community participation, and are accountable to community members.

CONCLUSIONS: The study argues that community organizing offers a powerful alternative to the top-down, expert-driven approach to typical educational reform efforts. Contrary to some of the stereotypical views of community organizing efforts, organizing begins with listening and conversation at the ground level, and builds broad participation among parents, young people, and community residents, as well as teachers and educators who often feel voiceless during reform initiatives. This approach appreciates the local knowledge held by all the actors in a community and creates the space for people to work together on multiple levels. Through the process of organizing, all members of a school community have an opportunity to have "ownership of the process of change" (p. 252), resulting in change efforts that are deep and lasting.

"Community organizing groups do not engage in school reform solely for the purpose of improving public education. They work to improve public education as a part of a larger process of developing leaders and building power for communities to address the full range of structural imbalances that combine to create poverty and marginalization. From this perspective, no reform goal will matter in the long run if parents, young people, and other residents of low-income communities do not develop the capacity to influence the social and political processes that determine their fate" (p. 32).

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIELD: Organizing provides the "how" of connecting reform to the process of achieving social justice. This analysis of the six community organizing groups in this study offers important lessons and strategy examples for those serious about co-design, inclusivity, and how to engage and include families, young people, and community members in the process of educational reform meaningfully and equitably.

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Warren, M. R., & Mapp, K. L. (2011). *A match on dry grass: Community organizing as a catalyst for school reform.* Oxford University Press.