REL Northwest Ask-A-REL Response

Parent/Family Involvement

April 2017

Question:

What research-based articles are available about strategies for parent/family involvement in high-poverty elementary schools, including strategies for principal, teacher, or parent leadership for increasing parent/family involvement?

Response:

Following an established REL Northwest research protocol, we conducted a search for research and articles from the last 15 years. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines (for details, please see the methods section at the end of this memo).

We have not evaluated the quality of the references and resources provided in this response, and we offer them only for your consideration. In addition, we conducted this search using the most common methods and sources—it is not comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. Finally, we provide only publicly available resources, unless there is a lack of such resources or a particular article is considered seminal in the topic area.

References

Baker, T. L., Wise, J., Kelley, G., & Skiba, R. J. (2016). Identifying barriers: Creating solutions to improve family engagement. S*chool Community Journal, 26*(2), 161–184. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1124003

From the abstract: "Reframing notions of parent involvement (being present in the school building) to parent engagement (viewing multiple constructs of how parents are involved) is the purpose of this paper. The authors highlight the knowledge gained from data collected from a series of family and staff focus groups regarding parent and staff perceptions of barriers to family involvement and from families' suggestions as to what could be done differently to increase engagement. Using applied thematic analysis, five themes common to both families and staff are discussed: providing opportunities for

involvement, improving communication, welcoming families into the building, making time, and moving from involvement to engagement. Findings show that, generally, parents and school staff agree on barriers to parent involvement but offer contrasting solutions. While parent solutions directly address the barriers identified and support parent engagement, staff frequently offered disconnected solutions, reiterating parent involvement—the necessity of parents being present in the building, rather than parent engagement …"

Barr, J., & Saltmarsh, S. (2014). "It all comes down to the leadership": The role of the school principal in fostering parent-school engagement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *42*(4), 491–505. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270634982_It_all_comes_down_to_the_leadership_The_role_of_the_school_principal_in_fostering_parent-school_engagement

From the abstract: "Parent-school engagement is widely understood to be an important factor in children's school experience and educational outcomes. However, there is considerable variation in the ways that schools manage their relationships with parents, as well as variation in what parents themselves view as important for engagement with their children's schooling. In a qualitative study conducted with parents in urban, outer metropolitan, regional and rural areas of the Australian state of New South Wales, we found that parents considered the attitudes, communication and leadership practices of school principals to play a crucial role in fostering and maintaining relationships between parents and schools. These findings suggest that despite policy rhetorics positioning schools and parents as 'partners' in the educational equation, parents are more likely to be engaged with schools where the principal is perceived as welcoming and supportive of their involvement, and less likely to be engaged where the principal is perceived as inaccessible, dismissive or disinterested in supporting their involvement."

Berg, A. C., Melaville, A., & Blank, M. J. (2006). *Community & family engagement: Principals share what works*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, Coalition for Community Schools. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED494521

From the abstract: "This paper explores ways in which principals of community schools—and other principals who, though they may not yet identify their schools as community schools, are responding in a very similar manner—work successfully with community partners, families, and other key stakeholders to improve student outcomes. By reflecting on the topic from the perspective of principals, the text offers insights about why they engage community, why doing so is hard, and what strategies and approaches they find most effective. This information could be valuable to principals who devote their energy and passion to the education of America's children. It also will inform the work of school systems, which must support their principals in this work, and of those involved in developing the next generation of principals."

Boston Children's Hospital. (2013). *Families as advocates & leaders*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families.

Retrieved from https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/advocates-pfce-rtp.pdf

From the summary: "The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE) has created a Research to Practice Series on the Family Engagement Outcomes of the Office of Head Start (OHS) Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. One in the series, this resource addresses the Families as Advocates and Leaders outcome: *Parents and families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or in community and state organizing activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.* This resource presents a summary of selected research, promising practices, proven interventions, and program strategies intended to be useful for Head Start (HS), Early Head Start (EHS), and other early childhood programs."

Garcia, M. E., Frunzi, K., Dean, C. B., Flores, N., & Miller, K. B. (2016). *Toolkit of resources for engaging families and the community as partners in education* (Parts 1–4). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=4509

From the description: "The Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and Community as Partners in Education provides resources for school staff to build relationships with families and community members and to support family well-being, strong parent-child relationships, and students' ongoing learning and development. Originally developed for the Guam Alliance for Family and Community Engagement in Education, the Toolkit is based on information from a variety of sources that address engagement in diverse communities. As a result, the Toolkit is applicable in a variety of contexts—and wherever school staff are interested in enhancing engagement of families and community members. The Toolkit is divided into four parts, and each includes a series of activities that can be used with family and community members, as well as other diverse cross-stakeholder groups. The Toolkit offers an integrated approach that helps school staff understand how their own cultural experiences and backgrounds influence their beliefs and assumptions about families and community members, and consequently influences their efforts to engage others in support of student learning. It also addresses how to build a cultural bridge through cross-cultural communication and how to use strategies that build trust between families, community members, and schools. In addition, the Toolkit helps school staff understand how to use two-way communication with families to gather and share data about student interests, progress, and outcomes.

The four parts of the Toolkit are:

Part 1: Building an understanding of family and community engagement
Part 2: Building a cultural bridge
Part 3: Building trusting relationships with families and community through effective

communication
Part 4: Engaging families and community members in data conversations"

Geller, J. D. (Ed.). (2016). Bringing transformative family engagement to scale: Implementation lessons from federal i3 grants [Special issue]. *Voices in Urban Education, 44*. http://vue.annenberginstitute.org/issues/44

From the abstract: "What lessons can we learn from i3 grants about how to build the right conditions for family engagement initiatives to flourish? The authors in this issue – program directors and coordinators, district administrators, evaluators, and youth leaders, representing rural and urban communities across the country – draw on their own experiences to reveal the critical elements of successful, sustainable, and scalable family engagement programs."

George Lucas Educational Foundation. (2011). *Home-to-school connections guide: Tips, tech tools, and strategies for improving family-to-school communication*. San Rafael, CA: Author. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED539387

From the abstract: "Communication between home and school is good for kids. Keeping families up-to-date about upcoming events is important, but it's not enough to fully engage parents as partners. When schools and families really work together, that sets the stage for all kinds of benefits. The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education reports that family-school partnerships lead to gains for just about everyone involved in education. What's more, students with involved parents tend to do better regardless of family background. From better social skills to more regular attendance to increased graduation rates, kids of all socioeconomic levels show gains across a variety of indicators when their families connect with school, according to research by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. This practical guide shares tips, tools, and strategies to strengthen the bonds between schools, families, and communities. Many suggestions have come from Edutopia community members who have contributed a host of good ideas in blogs and online discussion groups (edutopia.org/groups). Technology tools offer great potential for connecting home and school. Several tips focus on ways to use these tools to bring parents closer to the classroom. This guide includes suggestions for using popular social-media tools such as Facebook as well as technology platforms designed specifically for school settings. This guide offers ten tips: (1) Go where your parents are; (2) Welcome everyone; (3) Being there, virtually; (4) Smart phones, smart schools; (5) Seize the media moment; (6) Make reading a family affair; (7) Bring the conversation home; (8) Student-led parent conferences; (9) Get families moving; and (10) Build parent partnerships."

Parrett, W., & Budge, K. (2016). How can high-poverty schools engage families and the community? [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://www.edutopia.org/blog/high-poverty-schools-engage-families-community-william-parrett-kathleen-budge

From the article: "Families living in poverty often work multiple jobs, may have limited English language skills, and in some cases may have had few positive experiences with

their children's teachers or schools. These factors frequently work against a school's attempts to form relationships with families living in poverty and authentically engage them in their children's education. Even in high-performing schools, this problem is an ongoing concern. Leaders in high-performing, high-poverty (HP/HP) schools continually look for ways to provide opportunities for involvement and to gain back their trust."

Redding, S., Murphy, M., & Sheley, P. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook on family and community engagement.* Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED565697

From the abstract: "This handbook offers a broad definition of family and community engagement, seen through the lens of scholars and practitioners with a wide-ranging set of perspectives on why and how families, communities, and schools collaborate with one another. Taken together, the chapters in this handbook sketch out the components of a theory of change for the family and community engagement field. What is family and community engagement ultimately in service of? What do families know and do differently when this work is successful? What educational policies and practices will help us realize these changes?"

Sanders, M. G. (2008). How parent liaisons can help bridge the home-school gap. *Journal of Educational Research, 101*(5), 287–298. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241739468_How_Parent_Liaisons_Can_Help_Bridge_the_HomeSchool_Gap

From the abstract: "In this qualitative case study, the author describes (a) how parent liaisons in a diverse suburban district have supported school, family, and community partnerships and (b) the role played by the district family and community involvement specialist. On the basis of analyses of interview, observation, survey, and document data, the author identifies 4 roles played by liaisons that enhanced home–school partnerships. The liaisons provided (a) direct services to families at risk, (b) support for teacher outreach, (c) support for school-based partnership teams, and (d) data for partnership program improvement. On the basis of these findings, the author offers practical recommendations for districts seeking to establish or improve liaison programs to build stronger ties between schools and the families of all students."

Semke, C. A., & Sheridan, S. M. (2012). Family-school connections in rural educational settings: A systematic review of the empirical literature. *School Community Journal*, *22*(1), 21–47. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ974684

From the abstract: "Parental participation and cooperation in children's educational experiences is positively related to important student outcomes. It is becoming increasingly evident that context is a significant factor in understanding academic achievement, and the setting in which a child, family, and school is situated is among the salient contexts influencing performance. Although the family-school partnership research literature has increased over recent decades, it has been conducted primarily in urban and suburban settings. The goals of this paper are to (a) review the empirical

literature on family involvement and family-school partnerships in rural schools, (b) provide a synthesis of the state of the science, and (c) point to a research agenda in this area. Eighteen studies were identified that met the criteria for this review. A critique of the research methods and analytical approaches is provided, along with a call for more research on the topic of family-school partnerships in rural settings, including rigorous and systematic studies pertaining to the effects of family-school involvement and partnerships in rural schools."

Weiss, H., Lopez, M. E., & Caspe, M. (2017). *Transition toolkit.* Boston, MA: Third Sector New England, Global Family Research Project. Retrieved from https://globalfrp.org/Articles/Transition-Toolkit

From the website: "The transition to kindergarten is not a one-time event, nor does it involve just the child and teachers. It is an ongoing process that gives children and their families the tools they need for early and subsequent school success. The transition is also a major leverage point for communities to come together to prioritize and operationalize ongoing family engagement as a shared responsibility and as an essential element for supporting children's developmental pathways in and out of school.

We are creating our transition toolkit to assist local leaders as they build bridges and relationships across homes and families, early childhood providers, schools, afterschool, and other community programs—especially for families without prior connections to school or limited information about the importance of early learning. It distills research on how and why the transition matters and the benefits of creating strong community-based transition practices and policies.

The toolkit contains tailored tools, including transition cases for discussion and examples of design thinking exercises and from innovative communities, to bring out and benefit from the perspectives of multiple and diverse players and engage them in generating new transition approaches and ideas. These and other tools also support professional, family, and community development. The creativity spurring community examples illustrate ways communities have opened the transition circle to include untapped resources including libraries, afterschool programs, beauticians and barber shops, subways and buses, and others."

Organizations to Consult
U.S. Department of Education
https://www.ed.gov/parent-and-family-engagement

From the website: "Raising the next generation is a shared responsibility. When families, communities and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits. Check out the resources supporting the framework for building greater support and capacity in schools, homes and communities, so ALL students have the chance to succeed. Get ideas for how to bring your passion, talents, and energy to help students and to make your neighborhood schools stronger. YOU can make a

difference. You can help young people in your neighborhood have a strong start and prepare for college and for their careers."

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. Head Start, Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Resources - https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/school-readiness

From the website: "Strong partnerships with families are key to children's school readiness and healthy development. Use the following resources in your work to engage families in their children's learning. Head Start, Early Head Start, and early care and education programs will find them useful."

Edutopia, Parent Partnership in Education: Resource Roundup - https://www.edutopia.org/parent-leadership-education-resources

From the website: "Experts agree that parent involvement in education is one of the biggest predictors of student success. So where can parents begin? We've compiled a list of articles, videos, and other resources to help you engage productively with your kids' teachers and school."

Kansas Reading Roadmap **-** http://www.readingroadmap.org/

From the website: "The Kansas Reading Roadmap works with over fifty schools and is a whole school solution for increasing reading proficiency as measured by school tests. The Roadmap merges a Kansas-version Multi-Tier Systems of Supports (MTSS) model with aligned supplemental afterschool, summer and family engagement programs and interventions. Through the Roadmap, schools increase children testing at benchmark and dramatically reduce the number of struggling students."

Literacy Integrated Family Engagement (LIFE Program) - http://www.readingroadmap.org/life/

From the website: "Kansas Reading Roadmap's Literacy Integrated Family Engagement program, or LIFE, is a key component of our overall strategy for improving early literacy for children grades PK–3. LIFE facilitates emotional and academic experiences aimed at deepening children's relationships with their parents, increasing their reading skills, and supporting a culture of literacy at home.

Meeting one night a week for eight weeks, parents and children engage in activities that bring families closer together while connecting them to their school community. LIFE includes a meal, parenting skills training, child-led playtime, parent-led read aloud, and a parent support group. The activities are consistent over the eight weeks in order to build comfort and familiarity throughout the program. In each session parents practice the skills they are learning with their children and receive coaching and feedback from the facilitators. LIFE models positive parenting behaviors and facilitates family interactions."

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings
The following keywords and search strings were used to search reference databases and other sources:

Parent OR Family

Involvement OR Partnership OR Collaboration OR Leader

Elementary school

High poverty OR low income

Databases and Resources
We searched ERIC for relevant resources. ERIC is a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences. Additionally, we searched Google Scholar and EBSCO databases (Academic Search Premier, Education Research Complete, and Professional Development Collection).

Reference Search and Selection Criteria
When we were searching and reviewing resources, we considered the following criteria:

Date of publications: This search and review included only references and resources published in the last 15 years (2002 to present).

Search priorities of reference sources: Search priority is given to study reports, briefs, and other documents that are published and/or reviewed by IES and other federal or federally funded organizations, as well as academic databases, including ERIC, EBSCO databases, and Google Scholar.

Methodology: The following methodological priorities/considerations were given in the review and selection of the references:
- Study types: randomized control trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, and policy briefs, generally in this order
- Target population and samples: representativeness of the target population, sample size, and whether participants volunteered or were randomly selected
- Study duration
- Limitations and generalizability of the findings and conclusions