

Reorganizing Theory through a New Lens: Discovering a Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Executive Summary

This summary is based upon excerpts from groundbreaking new research by Joanne D. Martin, PhD, MSBA, titled: *How school practices to promote parental involvement influence student success.*

2009



STERLINGTON CONSULTING

The Sterlington Consulting Group Incorporated
9298 Hector Avenue, San Diego, CA 92123
info@sterlingtonconsulting.com
www.sterlingtonconsulting.com

Introduction

In the interest of providing practitioners with clearer evidence and better guidance on how to build school, family, and community partnerships to increase student success, this study establishes a precise and reliable methodological approach to testing school, family, and community partnerships.

This research offers new insight into how school efforts to promote parental involvement directly influence student success. This research provides practitioners with concrete strategies they can use to promote successful partnerships, build sustainable comprehensive involvement, and achieve institutionalized system-wide change in schools. It further provides parents/guardians, community members, and students with clearer guidance they may use to promote their success as a partner in education.

An adaptation of Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence of School, Family, and Community on Children's Learning (External Structure) served as the basis of this research (See Figure A). This figure shows the existence of separate school, family, and community spheres that affect the lives of children, where each has the independent ability to move closer or further apart from the other spheres. The greater the overlap among spheres represents the greater the partnership and student success. While Epstein's framework focuses on the areas of overlap, this research required a different focus (See Figure B). The model applied in this study focused on the independent roles of each sphere, where each was clearly and precisely defined and categorized into discrete, mutually exclusive frameworks enabling measurement in a reliable and manageable way. This was prerequisite to statistical testing.

This groundbreaking research was the first to successfully test influences of sphere movement on student success. This study contributes fresh frameworks, parent and teacher survey instruments, an inventory of school-initiated practices protocol, clear definitions, and a newly focused Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships. This insightful approach has broad implications for the field.

Research Questions

- ▣ How does parental involvement influence student success?
- ▣ How do school-based practices to promote parental involvement influence parental involvement?
- ▣ How do school-based practices to promote parental involvement influence student success?
- ▣ How do school-based practices and parental involvement practices combine to influence student success?

Breakthrough Results

- ▣ Insightful research findings about the inherent nature of partnerships.
- ▣ Separate sphere frameworks to measure school, family, and community partnerships.
- ▣ Mutually exclusive constructs within frameworks of high reliability, measurability, and testability.
- ▣ Precise and tested vocabulary and improved instrumentation.
- ▣ Groundbreaking mixed-methods research methodology linking student success to practices.
- ▣ New Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships.

Apply Research Findings, Frameworks and the Supporting Model for Gains

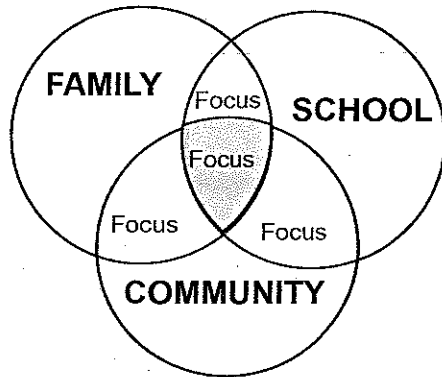
- ▣ Increase student success and partnerships.
- ▣ Improve training and educational programs.
- ▣ Advance the research base using tested concepts and clearer definitions.
- ▣ Improve research precision, accuracy, and connectedness.
- ▣ Improve policy-making and leadership.
- ▣ Guide communities with improved clarity and coordination.
- ▣ Help everyone do his or her part.



Model Summaries

Figure A

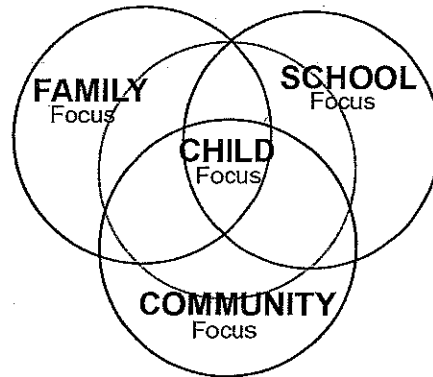
Overlapping Spheres of Influence of School, Family, and Community on Children's Learning



Source: J. L. Epstein (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships.*

Figure B

Model of School, Family, and Community Partnerships



Source: J. D. Martin (2009). *How school practices to promote parental involvement influence student success.*



Partnerships Lead to Higher Performing Schools

- A clear and shared vision that applies universally to everyone and garners commitment;
- High standards and clear expectations for all;
- Effective leadership and representative governance;
- High levels of involvement, collaboration, and partnership;
- Open channels of communication and expression;
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment designed to inspire learning and respect;
- Safe, nurturing, and supportive learning environments;
- A community of learners who monitor and evaluate their practices and outcomes in the interest of greater understanding and advancement; and
- Adaptive systems and processes that embrace continuous improvement.



How school practices to promote parental involvement influence student success



Findings Synthesis

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- Practices to promote involvement have a statistically significant and direct influence on student success. Practices include outreach, programs and operations, engagement, community building, and support services.
- When practitioners work in isolation from their students' families, parental involvement declines to the detriment of student success.
- Highest performing schools and practitioners invest more time and resources, and are more skilled in building school, family, and community partnerships. They also demonstrate a superior organizational capacity, enabling them to mobilize the community on a regular basis.
- Highest performing schools and practitioners value partnerships as an asset, encouraging community-wide contributions and thereby resulting in increased involvement, higher student success, and ultimately better schools.
- When practitioners work to include parents as equal partners in education, investing time and resources to develop their involvement strategically in ways that intend clear impacts for learning and development, parents increase involvement in ways that benefit children.
- By facilitating and supporting involvement, highest performing schools and teachers are better at engaging in direct person-to-person interactions with parents.
- Partnership practices commonly and consistently applied in a concerted manner become culturally engrained in the school community, optimizing involvement in the interest of helping students thrive.

About the Author

Joanne D. Martin, PhD, MSBA is an expert in the field of school, family, and community partnerships. Based in San Diego, CA, she is a researcher, educator, and former PIRC Director who has worked with communities and districts throughout California and the country. She has compiled over 60 reports and articles covering the field of education. For training support and materials, presentations, instrumentation, articles, research support, or questions, contact Dr. Martin, President, Sterlington Consulting, at 619.252.9989 or by e-mail at jmartin@sterlingtonconsulting.com. Sterlington Consulting, Inc. is an educational consulting firm. Copyright © 2009 by Joanne D. Martin, PhD, MSBA. All Rights Reserved. Photos in this document are of family members.

