

Partnerships in Education

by

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Bachelor of Arts with Distinction, University of Victoria, 2009
Bachelor of Education, University of Victoria, 2010

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Abstract

Partnerships between schools, families, and communities are increasingly being acknowledged as key in a child's learning and growth - socially, emotionally, and academically. Research has shown the benefits of partnerships, and studies are providing more examples of successful relationship-building and partnering strategies. In this paper, I review current literature on partnerships in education and I look at transformations in the British Columbia Ministry of Education curriculum documents relating to partnerships. The overarching question that guides this research project and the literature review is: How can educational partnerships between parents, teachers, and the community help support student learning and development? To help seek understanding and clarification, I ask other questions including: i) What supports are necessary to help parents become more engaged with their child's education?; and, ii) How can home, school, and community spaces be bridged? To encourage the further development of partnerships and partnership programs in School District #64, I developed a teacher workshop and two presentations; one for parents and one for district staff. I also initiated the development of a Welcome Area at my school. I assert that partnerships in education must become a priority in education so that children can be better supported academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Chapter One

It is critical that teachers and parents understand the importance of partnerships, where all stakeholders value and recognize that a child's education and development is a shared responsibility (Epstein, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997; Lazar & Slostad, 2010; Phádraig, 2006; Sheldon, 2011; Witmer, 2005). A partnership-focused construct involves parents and schools working collaboratively (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997). With a great deal of research and literature pointing to the considerable benefits that are associated with school-family partnerships (e.g., Billman, Geddes, & Hedges, 2005; Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Epstein, 2005; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Forlin & Hopewell, 2006; Henderson, 1988; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002; Murray, Curran & Zellers, 2008; Pinkus, 2005; Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005; Witmer, 2005), this perspective is increasingly becoming recognized, promoted, and adopted within education as important for children's success in school and for their holistic development (BC Ministry of Education, 2015a; Epstein, 2013; Keyes, 2002; Sheldon, 2011).

The overarching question that guides this research project and the literature review is: How can educational partnerships between parents, teachers, and the community help support student learning and development? To help seek understanding and clarification, I ask other questions including: i) What supports are necessary to help parents become more engaged with their child's education?; and, ii) How can home, school, and community spaces be bridged?

Through a literature review, research will be shared that discusses educational partnerships and examines how partnerships can support learning. I also include research that outlines partnership roles and describes various ways that partnerships can develop between the

school, family, and community environments. In addition, I will show how the newly revised British Columbia curriculum focuses on relevant and meaningful partnerships between schools, families and communities.

Rationale

Over the course of my five years of teaching, communicating with parents has been one of my most significant challenges. For example, parents have varying preferences about how they want to communicate and they also have specific ideas about how often home-school communication should occur. I have also noticed that parents have very different ideas about how involved they want to be, or should be, in their child's education. I have tried to adequately communicate and meet the needs of parents over the years, but I continue to struggle with the varying perspectives, values, and interests of my students' parents.

This past year, I was involved in a pilot program in our district involving three new multi-age nature programs. A requirement within the nature programs is parent participation. Vaguely defined by the district or the school, I sought to understand what 'parent participation' really meant. Without training and with little guidance, I tried to discover how parent participation could be achieved while taking into account the district's criminal record check requirements and considering each parent's schedule, needs, and desires. As a relatively new teacher, and with no training or education on parent participation, involvement, or partnership, I struggled to understand and implement parent participation. In asking my professional colleagues for thoughts and advice, they all seemed to have different strategies, opinions, and ideas.

Over this past year, I also became involved in a K-12 district innovation partnership, focusing on communicating students' learning to parents. At the primary level, district staff

agreed that all three voices should be heard in the assessment process: the teacher's voice; the student's voice; and, the parent's voice(s). Through taking part in this innovative partnership project and by having the ability to adjust my reporting methods, I realized how disengaged many of the parents were with regards to assessment and goal-setting. I was somewhat saddened by the experience; however, involvement in this initiative helped me better understand the various perspectives that parents have regarding roles and expectations that are placed on teachers and schools. The experience also motivated me to investigate partnerships further.

The lack of parent-teacher partnerships, or even participation and involvement, has become very evident to me. This realization is not only based on my personal teaching experiences but also in the literature I have read, and through my conversations with teachers and graduate program peers. I am troubled by the lack of education, training, and support that is offered in the area of partnership. I am worried about the negative consequences that can result when school and home are viewed as separate entities. I wish for the parent-teacher interface to be a space of opportunity and I hope that my teaching is responsive to the interests and needs of children and parents. I am also hopeful that the standardized, levelled reporting system continues to change and that the lines of communication open so that goal-setting and learning support can be collaborative, and more positive outcomes can be achieved.

As a teacher who strives to ensure my students are respected, cared for, and supported in their social, emotional, physical, and academic well-being, I am continually asking questions about how I can improve my practice. Even though parent participation is still undefined by the school or district, I feel like the commitment to parent participation is a solid step towards developing partnerships. I am excited about the possibilities that might emerge from gaining a more solid understanding of partnerships.

Brief Introduction to Theories

This project will be guided by three theories: sociocultural theory (Bruner, 1966, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978); ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998); and, the theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1987, 1995, 2001).

Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) embraces a positive view on the diversity of knowledge systems and experiences that families' and individuals' possess (Bruner, 1991; Edwards, 2006; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). It recognizes that out-of-school experiences impact learning at school and must be considered to ensure quality and meaningful education. Sociocultural theory takes into account language skills, cultural experiences, family practices, and personal interests. Edwards (2006) drew upon the work of such experts as Vygotsky and Rogoff and posited that the teacher's role, from a sociocultural perspective involves promoting the active participation of students, parents, and the community throughout the learning process, including the construction of socially valued goals.

Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) stresses the various contexts that both influence and are influenced by a child. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) more current work emphasized the relations between process, person, context, and time. Bronfenbrenner described 'context' as a place where a child spends time, engaging in activities, interactions, and learning. He acknowledged that a developing person spends time in more than one place and acknowledged the interrelations between different places, such as home and school. Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem concept encompasses group contexts and shared belief and value systems.

Epstein's (1987, 1995, 2001) theory of overlapping spheres of influence asserts that education and developmental benefits are attained when the ties between the school, home, and community become stronger. To stimulate the theory of overlapping spheres of influence and bring the spheres of community, family, and school together, Epstein (1995) identifies 6 involvement practices: i) parenting; ii) communicating; iii) volunteering; iv) learning at home; v) decision making; and, vi) collaborating with the community. Epstein based these involvement activities on previous research that related to partnerships and productive, positive engagement practices (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002).

Significance

British Columbia is in the process of completing a new education curriculum that emphasizes personalized learning, the relevance of developing engaging environments, and places children at the center (BC Ministry of Education, 2015b). For education to be engaging and personalized, it is essential to know students well; knowing children well involves knowing the families and their backgrounds and cultures (Hedges et al., 2011; Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2009). Timperley, Kaser, and Halbert (2014) stated that a significant change in developing a new education framework is to incorporate the involvement of learners, their families, and their communities; they further asserted that the various stakeholders need to work together and they emphasized that the union should underpin and permeate the whole process. Halbert and Kaser (2013) highlighted the importance of understanding multiple perspectives of the learners and their families, and not just those of the professionals. They emphasized that for students to be successful, stakeholders need to communicate and collaborate.

Murray, Curran, and Zellers (2008) stated that partnerships are more attainable if educators value the parent-teacher role construct and are confident and comfortable with their skills in developing partnerships. Edwards (2006) suggested that educators need to not only be exposed to sociocultural theory but they also need opportunities to investigate and reflect on their own theories and place these in relation to sociocultural theory so that they can start incorporating sociocultural theory into their own practices.

There are few education programs that provide pre-service teachers with adequate training for developing effective partnerships (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). Lazar and Slostad (2010) suggested that teacher apprehensions and fears about parent involvement and partnerships are due to a lack of educational support and training in this area, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Without preparation for family interactions, many new teachers are uncertain about how to foster relationships and partnerships with parents (Epstein, 2005; Forlin & Hopewell, 2006; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002).

Creating partnerships has the potential to change children's lives and learning (Epstein, 2013; Harvard Family Research Project, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2012a). Considering the decades of research that points to the multitude of benefits relating to parent-teacher partnership, it is essential that districts, schools, and education programs start to promote partnerships and support partnership programs (Epstein, 2013; Sheldon, 2011).

Project Overview

In this chapter, I introduced my project focus: parent-teacher partnerships. I shared my personal interest in parent-teacher partnerships and the greater significance of the topic. I highlighted my overarching question, "How can parent-teacher partnerships help support student

learning and development?” and provided additional questions that will guide my inquiry and investigations. I drew attention to theoretical frameworks that will guide this project and the literature review which highlight the importance of assuming a partner-focused stance. I also noted that the BC curriculum is transitioning to a personalized education pedagogical model, and addressed issues relating to differing perspectives and lack of teacher training.

In Chapter Two, I attempt to bring clarity to the meaning of partnership by conducting a literature review relating to research that investigates the concept of partnership. I elaborate on theoretical frameworks that support partnerships and I discuss the various roles that are needed to develop and sustain partnerships within a district, within schools, and within communities. I also provide an overview of the BC Ministry of Education documents related to partnerships and parent involvement and I review studies relating to educational partnerships and training.

In Chapter Three, I make connections to practice, illustrating how research findings can be applied to the BC education system, in classrooms, and in our daily lives. In addition, I consider implications for various stakeholders. This culminates with an outline for a possible partnership program that could be implemented and sustained in the Gulf Islands School District.

In the final chapter, I summarize previous chapters, discuss limitations, and offer suggestions and recommendations. I review the purpose of this project, which is to shed light on partnership programs and describe how various stakeholders can work collaboratively to better support children’s learning and development.

Chapter Two

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, ratified by Canada in 1991, asserted that all children have the right to have their abilities, personalities, and talents recognized and develop to their fullest potential (UNICEF, 2014). The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) stated that learning is strongest when students, teachers, and families work together and become co-learners (2016a, 2016b). Taking on a learner stance and adopting a pedagogy of listening are key to developing partnership relationships (Mardell et al., 2009). Referring to Carlina Rinaldi's 'pedagogy of listening', Mardell et al. (2009) emphasized listening as essential to connecting people and ideas, formulating questions, and developing relationships. Malaguzzi (1994), founder of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, stated that the teacher's role should be defined as "a creator of relationships – relationships not only between people but also between things, between thoughts, with the environment" (p. 55).

The term 'partnership' is often used in education; however, it is rarely defined or fully understood (Phadraig, 2005). Phadraig (2005) stated that Pugh and De'Ath's (1989) 'working relationship' has been widely accepted as a partnership definition that centers on three key elements: a shared sense of purpose; a willingness to negotiate; and, mutual respect (p.102). In education and in parent-teacher partnerships, a shared sense of purpose means that teachers and parents must communicate their educational vision and values (Phadraig, 2005). Parents and teachers need to be honest and open, recognizing that each partner contributes and plays an important role as valid, equal members of a team. In education, at the heart of partnerships, are complimentary roles and the recognition of equal but different contributions (Phadraig, 2005).

As stated in Chapter One, the three theoretical perspectives that frame this project are: sociocultural theory (Bruner, 1966, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978); ecological systems

theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998); and, the theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1987, 2001). Using these theoretical lenses, this chapter will examine literature relating to partnerships in education and the various roles that different stakeholders can assume to support partnership development and student learning over time. The theoretical frameworks will be a foundation for discussing and understanding the benefits and roles relating to partnerships in education between teachers, parents, and the community.

Theoretical Frameworks

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory (Bruner, 1966, 1991; Edwards, 2006; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) acknowledges the diversity of experiences and knowledge systems that different people possess, taking into account language skills, cultural experiences, family practices, and personal interests. Sociocultural theory recognizes that previous experiences impact learning and highlights that when children are able to draw upon their personal experiences in the classroom, they are more likely to be engaged and more apt to be successful (Bruner, 1966). In order to create meaningful learning opportunities, social and cultural contexts need to be considered and an individual's strengths, interests, and experiences must be incorporated (Bruner, 1991; Edwards, 2006; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Children's interests are promoted and fueled by their family, community, and cultural experiences (Hedges et al., 2011). The teacher's role, from a sociocultural perspective involves promoting the active participation of students, parents, and community members throughout the learning process (Edwards, 2006). Through collaboration, adults and children focus on issues and topics that are important to them. Adults share power with children while interacting, challenging, and guiding them (Woodrow, 1999). This is

consistent with the new sociology of childhood perspective that places children as agentic (Marr & Malone, 2007), a view that is increasingly being supported and promoted in education (Sorin, 2005). This image of childhood takes the stance that children are knowledgeable and competent social actors, with their own views and the right to negotiate, make decisions, and be heard (Sorin, 2005). This view allows curriculum to be co-constructed (Woodrow, 1999).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's theory has changed over time to include the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model on proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The theory highlights that through the process of reciprocal interactions and activities between a human and the objects, people, and symbols surrounding him or her, one makes sense of things and understands one's place in the world, existing in it and playing a part towards changing it. In order to be effective, interaction must be regular and over an extended period of time; these enduring practices of interaction are referred to as proximal processes.

Discussing 'person,' Bronfenbrenner devoted much of his attention to personal characteristics and social situations (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Each individual brings three particular characteristics into every social situation: demand characteristics; resource characteristics; and, force characteristics. Demand characteristics act as immediate stimuli and might influence one's initial interactions; they include such things as physical appearance, gender, and age. Resource characteristics relate to emotional, mental, social, and material resources such as skills, intelligence, past experiences, and access to food and housing. Force characteristics involve differences in such things as persistence, motivation, and temperament.

In the PPCT model, four interrelated systems make up the context, or environment. The first system is the microsystem; these are the spaces where a developing individual spends a lot of his or her time involved in interactions and activities. The second system is the mesosystem and acknowledges the interrelations among the multiple microsystems that a person spends time in. The exosystem accounts for the important contexts that are not situated but indirectly influence a person's development. The macrosystem encompasses cultural or social groups that share common belief or value systems. In order for a macrosystem to influence a developing person, it must be experienced in one or more microsystem.

Ecological systems theory divides time into micro-time and meso-time. Micro time accounts for what is happening over the course of an interaction or activity. Meso-time recognizes the consistency and frequency of interactions and activities that take place in a person's environment. Time and timing are both identified as important.

Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Epstein's (1987, 2001) theory of overlapping spheres of influence recognizes that the main contexts for education are the home, school, and community. This theory asserts that more learning takes place when schools, communities, and families work together. Epstein (2001) argued that schools promoting practices that support strong partnerships between school, community, and family are more likely to help children succeed because outreach activities ensure greater consistency between a child's home environment and school context. The theory also stresses that schools must view families and community members as partners in education so that students' learning can be better supported and encouraged. Collaboration is necessary for the development and maintenance of effective partnerships. The theory acknowledges that

difficulties can arise in establishing partnerships when there are inconsistencies or differences between the home and school with regards to role constructs, socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds, experiences, or a common language. Overall, the model illustrates a dynamic interplay of communication and teamwork and emphasizes the connections between various stakeholders (Epstein, 1987, 2001).

To bring the spheres of community, family, and school together, Epstein (1995) identified six involvement practices: i) parenting; ii) communicating; iii) volunteering; iv) learning at home; v) decision making; and, vi) collaborating with the community. ‘Parenting’ involves helping families understand stages of development so that they can be more supportive and caring. ‘Communicating’ involves two-way correspondence about children including activities, projects, and progress. ‘Volunteering’ includes finding and organizing parents to help in classrooms or at schools and attend events. ‘Learning at home’ centers on the ideas and information that teachers and schools provide to families so that curriculum-related learning and homework can be supported outside of school hours. ‘Decision making’ embraces the idea that all parents, no matter what their background or beliefs, can be committee leaders, representatives in the school, and advocates for their children. ‘Collaborating with the community’ comprises pinpointing community services and resources that can strengthen student learning and integrating these resources and services into the school program (Epstein, 1995). This framework of the six types of involvement is intended to help schools take action around school improvement goals and goals for student learning (Epstein et al., 2002). The theory of overlapping spheres of influence asserts that family involvement be included as an essential component within the organization of a school. It also suggests that district leaders need to frame policies, set goals, and assist schools around partnership implementation, development, and

evaluation so that partnerships can grow, programs can be sustained, and students can be supported in their learning and development (Epstein et al., 2002).

Background on Partnership Language within the BC Ministry of Education

In British Columbia, the BC Education Plan recognized the importance of parent involvement in planning curriculum to help ensure student success (Ministry of Education, 2012a). The Education Plan offered educators, students, and families a greater voice and more flexibility in determining what, when, where, and how students will learn. It specified that it would be beneficial for parents, teachers, and students to all work together to ensure passions are discovered, needs are met, and goals are attained (Ministry of Education, 2012a).

In the BC Ministry of Education (2012b) publication, *Enabling Innovation: Transforming Curriculum and Assessment*, a clear goal that emerged from the provincial advisory group was that curriculum should be flexible so that learning can be personalized. Personalized learning recognizes that students need to be engaged in their learning in order to succeed in school and in life; therefore, learning must focus on individual strengths, passions, aspirations, and needs, and be based in community contexts (Ministry of Education, 2015a).

Following various goals and recommendations set out by the provincial advisory group, and responding to 21st century needs and values, the British Columbia curriculum has continued to be updated (Ministry of Education, 2015b). At the primary level, the focus has been on teacher-managed foundational skills and teacher-facilitated interdisciplinary learning that was student-centered and co-planned with parents. The updated Education Plan emphasized more of a balance between student, parent, and teacher, and recognized that parents want to become more directly involved within the education system (Ministry of Education, 2015a). The Ministry of

Education's draft, *Introduction to British Columbia's Redesigned Curriculum*, highlighted community collaboration and identified the importance of having parents and other members of the community collaborate with teachers and interact with students to share their culture, perspectives, and expertise (Ministry of Education, 2015c, p. 7).

In the 'Enabling Innovation' publication, the provincial advisory group recommended that the system of 'reporting' be changed to a focus on 'communicating student learning' (Ministry of Education, 2012b). The reason given for this was to underscore the necessity of ongoing communication between the teachers, learners, and parents. The advisory group recognized the importance of communicating learning in ways and at times that allow for opportunities to understand and respond to learners (Magnusson & Frank, 2014). The updated Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2015a) recognized that learning happens in the community, home, and school, and places emphasis on communicating learning in meaningful ways to help further student development and improvement. A letter to BC teachers from the Deputy Minister, dated May 26, 2016, stated, "Starting next month and continuing through October 2016, we will be asking parents for input on what they would like to know about their child's progress and how they would like to receive that information" (Ministry of Education, letter attachment sent through School District email, personally received June 9, 2016, p. 2, para. 1).

It is obvious that educational perspectives are changing at a provincial and government level and that families and communities are increasingly being acknowledged as key players; however, it is less clear how this is playing out at the local level. For ideas at the provincial scale to become realities at the community level, partnerships need to be thoroughly understood so that a solid foundation for partnerships can be established and partnership programs can be pursued.

Reviewing and assessing relevant research is an essential step in developing plans and moving forward.

Review of the Literature

Foundations for Partnership

Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) examined why parents get involved with their children's education and investigated how various stakeholder roles are constructed and how this relates to optimal education for children. Role construction sets parameters with regards to what parents believe they should or can engage in when it comes to their child's school and education. In a parent-focused construct, parents view themselves as being primarily responsible for their child's educational outcome. In a school-focused construct, the school has primary responsibility for the children's educational outcome. A partnership-focused construct involves parents and schools working collaboratively. To gather information about involvement perspectives and various components of role construction, the researchers conducted 74 interviews with parents of elementary-aged children attending two socio-economically diverse public schools located in different areas of a metropolitan district. In each school, principals identified teachers that were considered to be 'average' with regards to parental involvement practices, not strongly encouraging parent involvement or discouraging it. Six teachers agreed to take part in the study and recruitment letters were sent home with their students. Approximately 50% of the parents in each class decided to participate. Each parent completed a self-efficacy survey and then participated in a 1:1 interview, discussing and answering questions with one of three trained interviewers. Eleven open-ended questions were asked relating to parent-child-school interactions (e.g., feelings about homework, experiences in parent-teacher discussions and

conferences). The interviews were held close to the end of the school year in an empty classroom and each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. After analyzing the transcripts, over 9,000 interview statements were coded. To gather additional information, each of the six teachers was asked to rate each child's general achievement for the year and complete a 4-point parental effectiveness rating for each of the students' parents.

Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) found that role-construction, with its associated values, expectations, goals, and characteristic patterns, contributes significantly to parents decisions about engagement and involvement with schools and that more positive child achievement was associated with partnership-focused and parent-focused parental role constructs and behaviours. The researchers also found that parents' sense of efficacy, which refers to their beliefs about their personal abilities to influence and support their child's schooling success, was positively related to a child's educational achievements. The results of their study emphasized that parents should have clear ideas about what they want from the educational process and what they want their child to gain. Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) also pointed out that the results suggested parents should nurture their own sense of efficacy through talking with teachers, reading, and taking courses about education and child development. The study underscored the need for parents to become actively engaged and involved in their child's education and child development.

Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2007) examined parent motivation in regards to involvement using the three hypothesized psychological constructs from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1995, 1997, 2005). The three overarching motivational sources that this model proposed are: i) parental perceptions regarding invitations to be involved, both general invitations from the school and specific invitations from the teacher or the child; ii) self-

efficacy and role-construction; and, iii) life contexts including energy, time, and skills. To gain more detailed insights regarding parental motivation, the researchers differentiated between home-based involvement activities and school-based involvement activities. While home-based involvement typically refers to parent-child interactions that take place outside of school, such as monitoring progress or helping with homework, school-based involvement generally refers to interactions that occur at the school and focus on the child, such as participating in a parent-teacher conference or volunteering on a field-trip. To conduct their study, Green et al. (2007) sent home questionnaire packets with grade 1 to 6 students who were attending various socio-economically and culturally-diverse public schools in a mid-south U.S.A metropolitan school district. In total, 853 parents participated, completing questionnaire packets that offered a 6-point Likert-style response measure. Questions related to predictor constructs used an 'agree' to 'disagree' response scale whereas questions related to parental involvement activities used a 'never' to 'daily' response scale. Examples of predictor construct questions were: "It is my job to explain tough assignments to my child" (role-construct question); "I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn" (self-efficacy question); "I feel welcome at this school" (general invitation question); and, "I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school" (life-context variable question) (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler, 2007, p. 536). Examples of parental involvement activity questions were: "Someone in this family talks to this child about the school day" (home-based involvement practice); and, "Someone in this family attends meetings" (school-based involvement practice) (p. 536).

Results showed that role beliefs, self-efficacy, perceptions of energy and time, and specific child invitations were significant in predicting both home-based involvement and school-based involvement. For school-based involvement, teacher-invitations were also found to

be a significant predictor. Overall, specific invitations from children and specific invitations from teachers were most strongly related to school-based involvement and beliefs about self-efficacy was an especially strong predictor of home-based involvement. Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2007) stated that interpersonal relationships with teachers and children are the major force leading to parental involvement.

Francis, Blue-Banning, Haines, Turnbulland, and Gross (2016) asserted that benefits result when trusting relationships exist between family members and educators and when student learning is seen as a shared responsibility. To better understand trusting partnerships from parents' perspectives, Francis et al. (2016) conducted a study that included 11 focus groups across 6 culturally and geographically diverse schools. The schools were all part of the Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation Center (SWIFT), a national technical assistance center based at the University of Kansas that partners with universities and organizations to create unified educational learning environments. Members of the organization were called on to nominate schools that were considered to be exemplary in school inclusivity and reform; thirty-seven schools were nominated. SWIFT staff conducted a screening process with all 37 schools that involved online surveys, phone interviews, and on-site visits that involved interviews and observations. An eight-item scoring rubric was used to rate such things as distributed leadership, inclusivity, and community engagement. One middle school and five elementary schools were selected to be included in this study. Of the six schools, five were public. The schools were culturally and geographically diverse, located in various states across the U.S.A. Staff at each selected school were asked to recruit between five and ten demographically representative parent participants. In total, there were 58 parents and, in each focus group, there were 4-12 participants. Six of these focus groups were for parents of children

with various disabilities (disabilities ranged across various academic, social, physical, and behavioural characteristic and needs), and five of the focus groups were for parents who were considered by the principal to be school leaders, highly involved with the school community and partnership activities.

Research teams visited a school over a three or four day period and, while one member of the SWIFT research team facilitated focus group meetings that lasted 1.5-2 hours, another member of the team co-facilitated the discussion and managed the various logistics. All of the focus group facilitators had a set of questions relating to the development of trusting partnerships; in this way, language variance was minimal. All of the focus groups were audio recorded, a professional transcriptionist transcribed the recordings, and the data was uploaded onto an online qualitative software program. Each team member analyzed and coded two transcripts independently and then they all met together, three times over three weeks, to further discuss the data from all six schools. The research team found four apparent themes relating to the construction of positive, trusting relationships between schools and families. The themes related to: i) communication; ii) a sense of belonging; iii) professional commitment and competence; and, iv) family leadership. With regards to communication, the researchers noted that trusting relationships were encouraged when educators treated families as experts and talked with families respectfully, gathering information about children and asking for advice and input. Teachers that provided regular positive communication about children were viewed in high regard and parents seemed especially appreciative of informal conversations and casual, yet informative, newsletters that included photographs. Participants also stated that the parents' role in communication included showing that they care, expressing gratitude to educators, and stating their commitment to their child's success.

Overall, the ability to ask, respond, and share in a timely and respectful way was found to be key to building and maintaining relationships. The researchers discovered that when families were offered opportunities to get involved in leadership roles at the school, a sense of trust and respect was established, staff and families worked more closely together, and partnerships were more likely to develop. The common advice in focus groups with regards to promoting family leadership was to start small, with a very committed group, and then reach out to more families and further distribute leadership. All focus groups shared the opinion of the importance of principals being visible, supporting and interacting with students, teachers, and parents, and they found that positive attitudes, obvious dedication, and open-door policies fostered the development of partnerships.

Preston (2013) investigated community involvement in the school and its connection to social relationships. Preston (2013) suggested that more relevant and rich education exists in the myriad of resources beyond the school walls and referred to the work of Hands (2009), who stipulated that “trust grows through repeated interaction” (p. 53). Within a Saskatchewan suburb community made up of 500 predominantly Caucasian, middle-class individuals, Preston (2013) interviewed 17 people including three teachers, nine community members, and five School Community Council (SSC) members. The School Community Council was comprised of elected community and parent members who promoted community and parent involvement in schools, and advised principals on policies and issues. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 70, most of whom were female (14), and approximately half of them had children that attended the local K-12 school. Thirty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted over a seven-month period, with each participant taking part in one to three interview sessions. In addition to conducting interviews that were transcribed and participant-checked, Preston (2013) attended

SCC meetings and made 11 school and community visits, documenting observations in a reflective journal. Qualitative data were collected, triangulated, and analyzed to find common themes.

Results highlighted that involvement of community members led to improved social relationships between staff, parents, and community members. Preston (2013) investigated the types of community involvement activities that participants perceived as important for relationship building. Citing specific interviews, Preston found that volunteering, such as fundraising and preparing for a school-sponsored event, and attending events were deemed to be important. Also, the importance of providing a welcoming atmosphere, such as offering a comfortable meeting place and hosting community events, helped to foster relationships between the school and all members of the community. Children's interests also served to motivate parents to become involved and get to know one another. Community members that did not have children attending the school highlighted the importance of school invitations and public announcements to help them feel welcome and motivate them to become involved. Every participant thought that community involvement in the school fostered parent-teacher and parent-parent relationships. Preston (2013) noted that fundraising, volunteering, and attending events might act as spring-boards to further the development of partnerships and scaffold community members into leadership roles.

Leadership for Partnership

To inform practices and policies related to leadership preparation and school reform, Auerbach (2009) examined the community oriented, pro-active approach of four exemplar principals working at schools in Los Angeles. Because of their more proactive family

engagement leadership style, these four principals were chosen for this case study from a larger study that was previously conducted in the Los Angeles Unified School District and included 35 administrators (Auerbach, 2007). Each of the four elementary principals had between 10 and 25 years of experience in an administrative position and the schools ranged in size from 570 to 1,900 students. The schools were at least 90% Latino, approximately 67% English Language Learners, and were determined to be low achieving based on the state's Academic Performance Index. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the administrators and each interview lasted between one and a half to three hours. Data were also collected by taking field-notes during workshops, parent meetings, conferences, and informal interviews with parents, staff, and administrators, and by reviewing parent and school documents such as newsletters, press releases, and websites. After data triangulation, analysis, and coding, Auerbach (2009) presented the four cases as contextualized portraits, detailing how each administrator took action to focus on family engagement. All four leaders viewed involvement as a way to improve student achievement. They also stressed the importance of relationship-building, making themselves publicly visible, attending activities, and greeting parents. In addition to providing a school-based parent center, schools embedded partnership and parent involvement language within their school goals. One principal stated that success was built on a growth strategy that started small, working with staff who shared similar philosophies and with parents that were interested in new directions for the school. Community organizations were then recruited and, from there, ideas developed and family engagement grew. Another strategy that was cited as critical included training parents about the education system so that a team of well-informed supporters developed.

Auerbach (2009) found that inviting parents to take part in school-based workshops, open-forums, and discussions was key to developing relationships. One principal started a 'Parents as Authors' writing program, meeting weekly with parents and providing opportunities for them to learn more about the writing process. Referring to parents as "The heartbeat of the school" (p. 16), the principal stated that the program was useful as it helped them get to know some of the parents. Another principal encouraged teachers to open their classroom doors and facilitate inclusive talks that focused on particular topics, such as 'the importance of education'. These 'house meetings' became friendly events, offering family members an opportunity to share stories and get to know one another on a new level; a translator would be present, if necessary. Another relationship-building activity that one principal promoted was to offer teachers support in visiting student's homes and distributing learning supplies. This principal asserted that a person must be hired to dedicate his/her attention to enhancing family partnerships and bridge the various stakeholders involved. The principal also asserted that funds should be set aside for teacher release-time associated with partnership coordinating activities. Auerbach (2009) found that each principal emphasized relationships, supported authentic dialogue, believed in the power of partnerships, and was contemporary in their approach, shaping parent engagement activities to suit the local population's needs and interests.

Hauserman and Stick (2013) examined teachers' perceptions on what behaviours and characteristics were most desirable in a principal. Ten randomly selected teachers working at each of the 77 randomly selected schools, located in Alberta, Canada, were asked to rate their principal's leadership by completing the five-point Likert scale Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass & Avolio, 1997, 2000). The 58 schools that had a response rate of 50% or more were stratified, placing principals on a scale from least to most desirable. The

researchers then recruited five teachers who worked with principals at the upper end of the scale and 4 teachers that worked with principals at the bottom end of the scale to participate in in-depth interviews. At the 9 schools that ranged in size from 250 to 900 students, all of the teachers worked full-time.

Results from the questionnaire showed that the desirable qualities of a principal were in-line with transformational leadership. Interviews were conducted by phone, recorded with permission, and transcribed. The interview questions focused around particular aspects of transformational leadership. Although principals at the low end of the scale treated the teachers as professionals and, upon request, provided some support, they did not help teachers develop leadership skills. Transformational leaders, those that the teachers considered to possess desirable behaviours and characteristics, helped staff develop leadership capacity and supported staff in sharing skills. Principals in the low category were considered to be cooperative and caring, but consultation with staff was limited and this led to power issues. Conversely, transformational leaders involved all stakeholders in decision-making and problem-solving, maintaining a culture of openness and respect. They tried to make their students responsible and they worked with their staff to create a vision. Highly transformational leaders encouraged their staff to share innovative ideas and supported staff with resources. In addition, they encouraged teamwork, professional growth, and reflection. All of these behaviours and characteristics contributed to trusting relationships between the principal and staff members.

Sanders (2008a, 2008b, 2012, 2014) studied the effectiveness of various aspects of the National Program for Partnership Schools (NNPS), a program in the United States that started in 1996 to encourage and support districts and educational leaders in developing ongoing structured partnership programs for schools, families, and communities (Sanders, 2008; Sheldon, 2007).

When districts become members of the NNPS, they have access to partnership training and support at the school level. Using an annual survey to select districts that had strong leadership and at least 3 years of NNPS membership, four districts were selected to be examined thoroughly. Funded by the National Institute of Child and Human Development, this longitudinal, qualitative study started in 2004 and, in each district, data was collected over a five-year period. Recognizing that principals play critical roles in reform implementation and drawing upon a systems approach, Sanders (2014) examined principals' leadership with regards to family, school, and community partnerships and the interplay between principals and district leaders. For this particular study, Sanders (2014) selected District 3 and 4 to focus on as these two districts had actively sustained a commitment to partnership reform for 10 years. District 4 was located in the Midwest and served about 19,000 students attending approximately 20 suburban schools. District 3 was located in the northeast section of the U.S.A. This district served 38,000 students attending 60 urban schools. Data collection was multifaceted and included focus-group discussions, individual interviews, conversations, site visits, document reports, and various observations of such things as workshops, meetings, and presentations.

Sanders (2014) discovered that the greatest challenge in both districts was with principals who maintained an authoritarian approach. Sanders pointed out that contemporary conceptualizations of effective educational leadership emphasizes collaboration and an ability to work with various stakeholders. Overall, Sanders found that successful principals facilitated a culture of positive collaboration and support. In addition to being members of the schools partnership team, supporting the team, and providing the team with resources, effective principals created a welcoming school environment. Sanders also stated that principals engaged more families when they collaborated with community organizations, allocated funds for

partnership-related activities, acknowledged leadership related to family engagement, and attended professional development. Sanders found that partnership interest and commitment from principals was clearly related to the efforts at the district level. Active district support sent a strong message about the importance of and commitment to partnership; district leaders showed support for system-wide implementation by attending partnership events, putting partnership language in district-wide principles and policies, offering professional development, and allocating funds for partnership program implementation and development. To support partnership sustainability, each of the districts hired at least one partnership coordinator who was responsible for creating clear expectations and providing concrete supports at all levels.

Epstein, Galindo, and Sheldon (2011) investigated direct correlations between leadership and partnership program quality. The researchers also sought to test sociocultural theory and organizational theory, examining how districts and schools worked together to focus on particular organizational goals and develop a collaborative practice, building capacity and expertise. In the three year study, Epstein, Galindo, and Sheldon (2011) used survey data from 24 school districts (urban, suburban, and rural) and over 400 schools (76% elementary) located in 15 states. On average, approximately 45% of students were Caucasian, 35% were African American, 12% were Latino or Hispanic, 5% were Asian American, and a few were of other ethnic backgrounds. Household language ranged from just English to over 100 different languages. School size ranged from about 50 to over 5,000. Starting in 2006, the researchers collected school and district NNPS survey data, completed annually and related to program progress and evaluation. Through quantitative analysis, the researchers investigated various school and district factors that affected the quality of basic partnership program implementation and advanced outreach measures. On a 13-item scale, basic partnership program implementation

was assessed with questions revolving around action teams for partnership, plan implementation, involvement activities, and activity evaluation. On a nine-item scale, advanced program outreach was measured. Questions related to such challenging activities as involving hard-to-reach families and initiating program improvements. Responses were collected using a four-point Likert-scale.

The researchers found that teamwork between the district and school had positive results and that a principal's support and the district's assistance in a partnership program contributed significantly to partnership program implementation (including forming a team and writing a plan) and advanced outreach measures (such as connecting with parents about homework and best practices). Above all, Epstein, Galindo, and Sheldon found that direct facilitation from district leaders resulted in improved school partnership programs. With ongoing district support, including such things as communication, collaboration, funding, and technical assistance, schools were more likely to write plans, identify budgets, and conduct specific community and family involvement activities across the partnership spectrum. With the results, the researchers identified 5 policy-related actions that districts and schools could implement to improve leadership quality and foster the development of more effective partnerships between schools, families, and communities. Their first suggestion involved each district having a designated partnership leader to assist all schools in their efforts towards partnerships and program improvement. This individual would offer support to staff, parents, and community members in addition to collecting data for program evaluation. The second and third suggestions focused on skills and partnership facilitation; they suggested that the district leader should have opportunities to strengthen his or her skills in partnership facilitation and that school principals should strengthen their support for family and community involvement. The fourth suggestion

related to the benefits of shared leadership. Epstein, Galindo, and Sheldon (2011) stated that leadership should be distributed across levels of stakeholders. Finally, partnership programs need to center on capacity building, as opposed to compliance and monitoring. The researchers stated that district facilitators need to gain expertise so that, with information, materials, and tools, they can encourage partnership programs and support schools in organization, implementation, and ongoing improvement.

Speaking at the 2013 National Parents Council Primary Education Conference in Dublin, Ireland, Joyce Epstein discussed the importance of organizing school-based programs for partnership (Epstein, Conference Presentation, 2013). Grounded in research, her presentation discussed important concepts, necessary structures, and anticipated results of school-based partnership programs. For over 30 years, Epstein has been researching family-school partnerships, and asserted that teachers, working alone, cannot meet the academic, emotional, and physical needs and goals for children. She emphasized the importance of a strength-based model whereby schools and districts seek and tap into the strengths of parents and community members so that networks of support are established. Outlining important steps that schools need to take in order to strengthen the process of community and family engagement, she asserted that family-like schools and school-like families are the foundation for partnerships, whereby parents and teachers are sending the same messages about the importance of school, the necessity of trying your hardest, and the significance of each child's unique and wonderful qualities and expertise. In explaining 'how' partnerships can become reality, Epstein clarified that schools must formally accept the responsibility of organizing an 'action team for partnerships,' made up of teachers, parents, the administrator, and possibly community members. The team must write an action plan, allocate a budget, conduct monthly meetings, and evaluate the progress, making

changes as necessary. Epstein (Conference Presentation, 2013) asserted that, rather than being a set of practices and ‘add-on’s,’ family engagement must be an integrated process and program that has administrative support.

Partnership Barriers and Training

Castro (2016) explored the existing and desired connections between a rural community and its local elementary school and identified barriers to developing partnership relationships. Respecting the privacy of 3,500 member community, pseudonyms and places were used. Castro (2016) conducted 21 interviews over two months with various members of the school and local community, including the superintendent, the current principal, the previous principal, five teachers, three other staff members, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) president, six parents (some with multiple children and up to 12 years of school affiliation), and three community members (not connected to the school). Of the 14 full-time teachers, five were randomly selected to participate. To recruit participants, Castro asked for assistance from the parent liaison, had a classroom teacher send out requests, and mailed letters to all families in the school. Additionally, snow-ball sampling was used to recruit community members and direct requests were used for such participants as the PTA president. Each interview was digitally recorded and lasted 30 to 75 minutes.

The data revealed that the major challenge, most frequently reported, was the time it takes to organize and sustain partnerships. One teacher stated that although various stakeholders have great ideas, the various pieces are not formalized and, therefore, do not become implemented and organized at a larger scale or over time. Other participants emphasized this lack of coordination as a major challenge. The principal reported that knowing someone with

connections, who is willing to share contacts and help out, was useful in establishing community connections. The principal admitted, though, that although help was received from a day coordinator and from the university, partnerships were still far from streamlined or coordinated. The principal suggested that a 'partnership coordinator' position would be a solution to promote partnerships, enhance placed-based learning, and overcome the issues of time and organization.

Noting the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010) policy on parent engagement, Wong (2015) conducted multi-level research to examine the difference between desired and actual levels of engagement practices, focusing on immigrant family experiences and their perspectives. The participants in this study were associated with a high school in Toronto; at this school, over half the population was Asian, nearly half had a first language other than English, and nearly a quarter had arrived in Canada within 3 years of the study. The fifteen-minute paper surveys asked parents about their desired and actual involvement and engagement across 44 different activities. Of the families that had been in the country for three years or less, 80% were from the Philippines; therefore, the surveys were available in Tagalog as well as in English. Surveys were sent home with all of the students at the school and parents were asked to voluntarily participate and respond to questions using the six-point Likert-scale, from 'never' to 'almost always.' One-hundred and eighty-five surveys (representing 24% of the families) were completed and returned; Wong (2015) found that the data represented and captured the cultural diversity within the school's population, with nearly 50% of respondents being Filipino, 30% South Asian, 6% White, 5% Black, 5% Latin American, and nearly 10% of other ethnicity. Twenty-one percent of the school was reported to be 'new immigrants' and 22% of the completed surveys were from participants that reported living in the country for three years or less. To collect qualitative data, 12 parents and six teachers were randomly selected to participate in semi-structured interviews.

Results from the parent survey responses showed that a significant difference existed between desired levels and actual levels of parental involvement and engagement. During the interviews, teachers were asked to share their perspectives about involvement and engagement practices and to reflect on parent responses. Wong found that all of the interviewed participants identified parents' time-constraints to be a barrier that leads to a gap between desired levels of parent engagement and actual levels of parent engagement. Seventy-five percent of the parents stated that different beliefs about roles and involvement practices caused the gap and 75% stated that a lack of knowledge about Canadian education caused the gaps. Half of the parents specified that difficulties in school/teacher-parent communication created gaps. Teachers also admitted that communication was a challenge and over 60% of the teachers asserted that differences in language and culture resulted in barriers to parent involvement. Interestingly, parents perceived the biggest gap resulting from their lack of knowledge of subject matter or the Canadian education system; In the teacher responses, this was the least mentioned barrier. The third highest barrier to actual engagement practices proposed by teachers related to culture and language; this was only mentioned by a few of the parents. Results from the teacher interviews showed that teacher's wanted more education with regards to parent engagement, especially relating to communication skills. Two suggestions offered by the practicing teachers were professional development opportunities and mentorship opportunities.

Hindin and Mueller (2016) developed a study that focused on teachers' experiences with family involvement, understanding involvement to include direct participation at schools, communication between home and school, and at-home support for education. They examined current involvement practices, challenges, and needs of 89 elementary public school teachers with a wide range of years-of-experience; forty-one taught in urban districts while 48 taught in

suburban districts in northeast U.S.A. To gain insights into teacher experiences and beliefs, they asked teachers to anonymously complete surveys that included three multiple choice questions and various open-ended prompts. To collect qualitative data, the surveys included questions that asked teachers what involvement practices they were successfully implementing, what challenges they faced, what they wished they had learned more about in their teacher education programs, and what they would be interested in learning more about in professional development. Nine percent of the teachers completed the survey by using an online link while the rest of the participants filled in hard copies of the survey that had been distributed by the researchers and their colleague during professional development workshops at different schools. The researchers collected, coded, and analyzed data to find overlapping themes.

The researchers found that every teacher reported challenges, and of particular note they found that time constraints and parents' work schedules were the biggest challenges that seemed to prevent parents from taking part in involvement initiatives. Less than half of the suburban teachers and none of the urban teachers reported successful practices relating to supporting learning at the home. Hindin and Mueller (2016) also found that more than two-thirds of the teachers wanted professional development relating to parent involvement. The majority of teachers stated that teacher education programs had not adequately prepared them to develop partnerships and they wanted to learn more. Breaking the data into sub-codes, Hindin and Mueller (2016) found that the top strategies that teachers wished they had learned more about in their education programs were general communication strategies and communicating with difficult parents. In addition, strategies for educating parents and getting them involved was of high interest. Relating to professional development and referring to the sub-coded data, many teachers were keen to learn more about encouraging or motivating parents to be involved. Also,

there was interest in learning more about strategies for at-home learning and strategies for engaging non-responsive parents.

To better understand whether administrators and teachers were prepared to conduct school, family, and community partnerships, Epstein and Sanders (2006) mailed surveys to a random sample of Faculty of Education Deans from American colleges and universities. In total, 350 surveys were completed from 161 institutions. Surveys included questions related to demographics, degrees offered, partnership courses, courses that included partnership topics, and future partnership interests. Nearly 60% of the schools provided a school, family, and community partnership course or a parent involvement course; the majority of these courses were required, while half of them were for graduate students. Epstein and Sanders (2006) noted that although most respondents felt that competence in partnering was important, approximately 90% of the respondents felt that newly graduated teachers were not prepared in the area of partnerships. Nearly 70% 'strongly agreed' and over 25% 'agreed' that teachers should know how to conduct partnership practices. Although this was the case, only 7.2% of the respondents 'strongly agreed' that new graduates were ready to work with families and communities. While approximately 90% of the respondents 'strongly agreed' that principals need to have skills and knowledge in conducting school, family, community partnerships, only about 19% felt that new principals were actually prepared for partnering. Over two-thirds of the respondents stated that education and training related to partnerships should increase, either through implementing compulsory partnership courses or adding partnership as a strand within other courses.

Deslandes, Fournier, and Morin's (2008) investigated first year Faculty of Education students' perspectives on family-school partnerships. The students were mostly in their first year of the program, and were enrolled in a four-year Bachelor of Education at the University of

Quebec Trois-Rivieres. Responding to the Quebec Ministry of Education's (2001) partnership language, embedded in the professional competencies required for preservice teachers, the University of Quebec Trois-Rivieres developed a 3-credit foundational course for preservice teachers (Deslandes, Fournier & Morin, 2008). The course focused on school, family, and community partnerships and was offered over 15 weeks. Before the 3-credit partnership course started in January 2004, the researchers distributed a quantitative survey to the 78 students enrolled in the course. The participants completed questions relating to their competence and confidence with regards to developing school, family, and community partnerships. Eighteen items were measured on a four-point scale relating to knowledge and comfort levels; questions in this section associated with such things as conducting parent-teacher conferences, developing parent workshops, identifying parent involvement strategies, feeling comfortable with partnerships, and being knowledgeable about integrating community members. Eight items were measured on a six-point scale relating to teacher attitudes about parent involvement. Twenty-two items were measured on a six-point scale relating to teacher beliefs surrounding specific involvement practices and their importance. Lastly, 21 items were measured on a six-point scale relating to personal practice plans. During their last class in the course, in April 2004, the same test was administered; however, two additional qualitative questions were added about the respondents' views of their competencies regarding working with community members and parents and about their changing perspectives towards partnerships and partnership activities.

The results showed that participants' comfort level and knowledge increased significantly over time. In addition, their attitudes about parent involvement increased significantly. Two areas stood out, including an increased positive awareness of the strengths that each family has and about the importance of parents as partners in education. Over the term, the students became

aware of the benefits of partnerships and various strategies and activities that promote partnership. The data showed that students learned a lot about the importance of interactive homework, the benefits of providing families with community resources, and the help that can be received from retired members of the community. The significant knowledge and comfort level gains reported by students between start of the course to the end suggests that a foundational course in partnership is beneficial and relevant.

Summary

This chapter summarized literature related to the growing acknowledgement of the relevance of partnerships between schools, families, and communities. Partnerships foster higher student achievement and well-being, and the need for partnerships in education is clearly established within the literature. The chapter outlined the various roles of stakeholders within a partnership model and discussed various approaches, strategies, and programs that have allowed leaders, schools, and districts to experience success in their parent and community approaches. The literature review showed that partnerships take time, effort, and funding, in addition to a foundational agreement that education is a shared responsibility. Parents need to feel that they can, and should, take on active roles and develop clear goals with regards to their child's education; parents can also better support their child's education when they take steps to build their self-efficacy. The research highlighted that communication must be open and respectful so that trusting relationships can be established. The literature pointed to the importance of face-to-face, supportive interactions and regular, ongoing communication between families and educators and between administrators and teachers. The literature showed that leadership styles that are transformational and innovative support the culture of a school. A welcoming and

empowering culture is a key component for partnerships to develop. The BC curriculum has responded to this change by including some of these ideas, stating that more parent and community engagement will benefit children and their learning. In the next chapter, I reference the theories that frame this project and draw on the literature to make tangible plans to implement partnership practices in my local school district.

Chapter Three

Understanding is based in a cultural context. Overtime, and through various experiences, understanding develops. Although definitions often exist, certain terms have more room for interpretation. The ambiguity of the terms ‘involvement’, ‘engagement’ and ‘partnerships’ remains. Although Wong (2015) drew on the Ministry of Ontario’s (2010) terminology by using the terms involvement and engagement interchangeably, she noted that there is often a distinction between the terms, with ‘involvement’ consisting of attending and supporting school events while ‘engagement’ demands more active roles such as contributing to discussions and making decisions. Galindo and Sheldon (2012) argued that several researchers sub-categorized involvement into ‘at-school’ and ‘at-home’ interactions, activities, and characteristics to better understand how a child’s education is shaped. Preston (2013) defined ‘community involvement in schools’ as “any student-focused school-community connection that directly or indirectly supports the students physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs” (p. 416). Preston also outlined multiple forms of family and community collaborations in this definition in addition to in-school parent involvement (e.g. guest speakers, fundraising activities, adult classes at the school, local museum visits, attending school events, community mentorships, scholarships and donations, etc.). While discussing partnerships, Epstein (2013) outlined six different types of parent involvement and a variety of school-based activities and initiatives that are essential for partnership growth and sustainability. Auerbach (2010) characterized genuine partnerships as “respectful alliances among educators, families, and community groups that value relationship building, dialogue, and power sharing as part of a socially just, democratic school” (p. 729). Returning to Pugh and De’Ath’s (1989) ‘working relationship’, they defined partnerships as including a shared sense of purpose; a willingness to negotiate; and, mutual respect (p.102).

In this chapter, I draw on the literature relating to family and community involvement, engagement, and partnerships to inform and develop the project portion of my capstone. I recognize the importance of educators, students, families, policy-makers, and community members working together, and I realize that definitions about involvement, engagement, and partnerships are multidimensional and continue to be socially constructed. Acknowledging the importance of welcoming environments, I will outline the design of a welcome area at my school. Recognizing that training and education is needed for various stakeholders in the area of school, family, and community partnerships, I have created three workshops and presentations. One workshop is for parents, so they can feel more welcome in the school and more encouraged to get involved in their child's educational experience. One workshop is for school staff and focuses on the benefits of partnerships and ways in which staff can become more actively involved in embracing partnership relationships. The final workshop is to inform district staff on the benefits of partnerships and the necessity of supporting partnership programs, now, and in the future.

Welcoming Environments and Welcome Area

An overarching finding that emerged from the literature review was the importance of having welcoming environments at schools. Francis, Blue-Banning, Haines, Turnbulland, and Gross (2016) found that a sense of belonging was helpful in building trusting relationships. To foster relationships between the school and members of the community, Preston (2013) stated the importance of providing a welcoming atmosphere and providing a comfortable meeting place. Auerbach (2009) described structures and positions (e.g. districts hiring a parent ombudsperson, districts or schools having a parent coordinator or facilitator, schools offering parent workshops and adult education classes, and schools creating parent centers) that were common to districts

and schools working towards increased family involvement. Through examining the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) and the work of Sanders (2014), it was revealed that effective principals created a welcoming school environment.

In developing this project, I thought about my school and my community, considering how our practices and philosophies connected with my literature review. I also reflected on the past four months of staff meetings and school-visioning sessions. I remember my principal stating that she wished more parents would come to the school's weekly whole-school meetings. I also remember the principal sharing hopes for a revitalized library space, so that it would be more welcoming and appealing. Drawing on the study conducted by Hauserman and Stick (2013), I realized that the principal at my school possesses characteristics and behaviours that are in-line with transformational leadership. She helps staff develop leadership capacity and supports staff in sharing skills. She involves various stakeholders in decision-making and problem-solving, maintaining a culture of openness and respect. Overall, I have come to notice that the principal encourages leadership, teamwork, and professional growth. She also has a good rapport with the community; she is easily approachable, friendly, caring, and visibly present. With all of this in mind, and by reflecting on my literature review, I thought that a school-based initiative might be supported by my principal. Therefore, I asked my principal if she would be willing to read my graduate project and meet to discuss ideas and possibilities. During our meeting, we agreed that a welcome area would be something that the school needs and would be beneficial to a range of stakeholders. After our meeting, I created a planning sheet (see Appendix A).

For this capstone project, I intend to use the planning sheet and discuss various design ideas with stakeholders to create a welcome area at our school. This welcome area is intended to encourage parents and community members to come into the school and feel welcome, and a

place where information is shared and interactions are encouraged. I believe a welcome area would support the development of partnerships and enhance the positive feeling at the school, encouraging a more welcome and inclusive environment. A welcome area located at the entrance of the school and extending into the library would encourage involvement activities such as attending whole-school meetings and reading with students. Additionally, this area could be a place where information is shared and friendly interactions and conversations could occur.

Promoting Interactions

The importance of principals being visible, interacting with families, and establishing open-door policies was evident throughout the literature review (Auerbach, 2009; Francis et al., 2016; Sanders, 2014). A welcome area provides a place where a principal can greet parents and where interactions are encouraged, not only between parents, but also with teachers, school staff, and community members. Francis et al. (2016) found that parents were especially appreciative of teachers that would engage in informal conversations. A welcome area would offer an alternative, additional location for such conversations to occur.

Sharing Information

A school bulletin board enables families and community members to have easy access to information on what is happening in the school, including upcoming events and how they can become involved. Preston (2013) found that social relationships develop through such things as volunteering and attending school and community events held at the school. Auerbach (2009) found that inviting parents to participate in school-based workshops, open-forums, and discussions were key factors to developing relationships. A bulletin board offers a space for such

activities and opportunities to be posted. Francis et al. (2016) revealed that parents appreciated casual, yet informative, newsletters that included photographs. The school newsletter and photographs that are currently emailed to parents could also be available for viewing in the welcome area.

Family and Community

Epstein (2013) emphasized the importance of schools tapping into the strengths of parents and community members so that networks of support are established. Several researchers also found that distributing leadership contributes to developing and maintaining trusting relationships and enhancing partnership potentials (Epstein, 2013; Francis et al., 2016; Hauserman & Stick, 2013). If parents or community members have skills they would like to share with the school community, they can sign-up in the welcome area, providing details on how they want to be involved and how they can be contacted. For example, if a parent or community member wanted to be a garden leader, they could express their interest in writing stating their interest and their availability ('I would like to come into the school once a week, for an hour, to teach a group of 6-10 students about gardening). At staff meetings, the opportunities can be discussed and arrangements can be made to include parent and community leaders.

Sanders (2014) found that when principals collaborated with community organizations, families became more engaged. A community bulletin board located within the welcome area will be one way that community organizations can share information about what is happening in the community and what supports are available through local organizations and services. A goal of the welcome area is to increase partnership-focused role constructs and boost parent self-

efficacy, as these factors have been found to increase engagement and support student success (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997).

Francis et al. (2016) stated that, in order for trusting relationships to develop, parents' need to show that they care and they need to express gratitude to educators. One way that parents could express their appreciation is by writing notes about what they are grateful for and hanging the notes in a defined location within the welcome area.

Workshops and Presentations

Due to the lack of training and education on educational partnerships (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Hindin & Mueller, 2016; Lazar & Slostad, 2010; Wong, 2015), part of my capstone project involves sharing information and research with district staff, school staff, parents, and community members. I feel that it is important to increase the awareness of partnership benefits at the district level so that principals and teachers are more likely to receive district support and encouragement. Due to this, I will create a presentation for school district personal and school board members. Grounded in research, this presentation will highlight the benefits of partnerships and show how partnership language is embedded in provincial documents. Drawing on the literature, the presentation will also offer suggestions for developing a sustainable partnership program. I also feel that it is important to offer school staff an information workshop, grounded in research, relating to partnerships benefits and strategies to encourage further partnership efforts in our district. Encouraging staff to share and generate ideas about partnership practices will be one part of this workshop; I will also offer some suggestions, grounded in research, to promote and support partnerships. The importance of embedding partnership language and parent involvement language within school goals has been emphasized in research

(Auerbach, 2009; Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011; Sanders, 2014), and this will be one of the recommendations offered to staff. In addition, in order for students to have a higher chance of academic and social success, it is imperative that parents know it is their responsibility to take an active role in their child's education (Green et. al, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997; Epstein, 1995; Phadraig, 2005). To work towards this greater awareness and possible change in role construction, I will develop a presentation for parents that encourages their increased engagement by outlining role constructs and reviewing the benefits of partnership. I will also introduce them to the welcome area.

District Presentation

Evident in the literature review was the importance of district support (including open-lines of communication, training, technical support, and funding) to ensure the success of partnership programs (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011; Sanders, 2014). Although obtaining district or provincial funding is beyond the scope of this project, it is within my reach to help increase partnership awareness and encourage the district to support partnership initiatives in our district. Monthly school board meetings are held throughout the year and I hope to share the focus of my project - the importance of partnership programs with families and communities - at one of these meetings. In the form of a Pechakucha-style presentation, I will present some of my findings to district staff and to the school board (see Appendix B). In less than 10 minutes, I will go over the benefits of partnership and provide some ideas for enacting and sustaining partnership programs. My biggest hope is that the district will acquire a deeper understanding of the importance of partnerships and hire a partnership coordinator in the future.

Staff Workshop

To encourage an emphasis on school-family partnerships, I will offer a partnership presentation and workshop (see Appendix C) at our school-based professional development day event in the spring. During the workshop, I will outline the research on partnership and highlight the benefits of partnerships. Sanders (2014) and Auerbach (2009) both emphasized the importance of thinking locally, working with the strengths of those in your community, and being flexible to try different methods and make changes as needed with regards to partnership practices. While sharing this information, I will offer suggestions of practices and strategies that have proved to be effective in the research. I will ask staff members to generate and share ideas about what they think might work for them at their particular school community. My intent is that this workshop will help educators acquire a richer understanding of the benefits of partnerships and the approaches and strategies that could be helpful to them in their practice.

Parent Presentation and Welcome Area Introduction

I will invite parents to come into the school to learn more about the school, about the welcome area, and about partnerships. This presentation (see Appendix D) and discussion will be scheduled in-line with the completion of the welcome area. Since role construction and self-efficacy are foundational pieces relating to involvement and partnerships (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones; 1997), role-constructs will be discussed, the benefits of parent involvement and partnership will be explicitly stated, and information about resources and assistance will be shared. Included in this session will be a mini-orientation of the welcome area. Information about the various ways that parents can support the development of partnerships will also be discussed.

Summary

In Chapter Three, I reflected on the research and addressed how this will guide my project on educational partnerships. My capstone project is two-fold as it will: i) educate stakeholders about the importance of partnerships; and ii) create a welcoming space where stakeholders can come together. By establishing a welcome area at our school, stakeholders will be able to meet, interact, relax, and share information in a comfortable space. By offering a district presentation, facilitating a staff workshop, and inviting parents to a presentation and Welcome Area introduction, stakeholders will develop a greater awareness of the importance of, and need for, partnerships. With transformational leadership being supported in our district and present at my school, this project is possible. I hope that my efforts will inspire a larger and more sustainable partnership program within our district in the future.

Chapter Four

The literature on partnerships in education demonstrates the numerous benefits for students when schools find ways to work with families and communities. Current research has revealed the importance of transformational leadership qualities to foster school reform, the need for more training and education in the area of partnerships, the various activities that support relationship-building for partnership development, and the different ways that partnership programs can be implemented in schools and in districts. These findings align with the new provincial curriculum which addresses the relevance of developing meaningful partnerships with families. Teachers, parents, administrators, district leaders, and post-secondary institution training programs all have important responsibilities in promoting partnerships and encouraging partnership programs to become an integrated part of the education system.

Recommendations

The Responsibility of Teachers and Parents

Every person entering into a relationship brings with them pieces of his or her life, including feelings, experiences, skills, backgrounds, values, and understandings (Hedges et al., 2011; Malaguzzi, 1994; Moll et al., 1992). Assuming a learner's stance and understanding the importance of listening are essential in building relationships and forming partnerships (Mardell et al. 2009; Phadraig, 2005). To foster diversity and respect differences, the teacher needs to become a learner alongside his or her students and welcome parents and families as experts within the classroom (Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2009). For partnerships to develop, stakeholders must first agree to share responsibility in education. It is therefore important that teachers and parents understand the value of partnerships and believe in a partnership-focused

role construct where all stakeholders recognize and accept that the responsibility for a child's education and development is shared (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997). It is also important that parents and teachers communicate the same messages to children about the importance of school and about the necessity of trying your best and rising to challenges (Epstein, 2013). When educators and parents share the belief that every child has particular qualities and unique expertise, individualized goals can be created (BC Ministry of Education, 2012a; Epstein, 2013). To support individualized learning goals, regular communication between parents and teachers is essential (Magnusson & Frank, 2014).

Research has also revealed that parents want to learn more about the education system and become more involved (Wong, 2015). Parents should nurture their own sense of efficacy, through talking with teachers, reading, and taking courses about education and child development (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones 1997). To motivate parents and community members to become involved with schools, Green et al. (2007) highlighted the importance of specific invitations. Inviting and encouraging parents to assume leadership roles supports the development of partnerships (Epstein, 2013; Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011; Francis et al., 2016) which demonstrates respect and trust for parent's knowledge and ideas by the teaching staff and administration.

The Responsibility of School and District Leaders

Principals that are friendly, visible, pro-active, and have qualities of transformational leadership support the development of partnerships in their schools and within their communities (Auerbach, 2009; Hauserman & Stick, 2013; Sanders, 2014). For partnership programs to develop, principals must learn about the importance of family and community involvement and

actively distribute leadership across levels of stakeholders (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011). Auerbach (2009) suggested that principals need to learn about partnerships and interact with leaders who are actively engaged in innovative partnership practices; with more knowledge, principals can become role models at their schools.

Sanders (2014) suggested that principals are more likely to be interested in partnership programs if district supports are provided and positive accountability measures are present. With district support, schools are more likely to write plans, identify budgets, and conduct partnership activities (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011). Several studies have revealed that coordination and time are major challenges in developing partnerships programs (Castro, 2016; Hinden & Mueller, 2016; Wong, 2015), and other studies have addressed the necessity of a designated partnership coordinator as key in establishing and maintaining partnership programs (Castro, 2016; Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011; Sanders, 2014). Epstein, Galindo, and Sheldon (2011) stated that the district facilitator should have opportunities to strengthen his or her skills and expertise in school, family, and community partnerships so they can build capacity and support schools in organization, implementation, and ongoing improvement of partnership programs.

The Responsibility of Post-Secondary Education Programs

Based on the research, it is clear that teacher education and training related to partnerships is lacking (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Wong, 2015). Although some post-secondary institutions are recognizing this need and offering courses on school, family, and community partnerships (Deslandes, Fournier, & Morin, 2008), there is still a need to create more programs that address the benefits of partnership and effective partnership practices. Epstein and Sanders (2006) highlighted the importance of partnership training, finding that approximately 90% of

their 350 research respondents felt that newly graduated teachers were not prepared in the area of partnerships. However, changes in education are occurring, including in British Columbia, where a greater focus is being placed on families and communities (Ministry of Education, 2015a, 2015c). For example, the importance of having parents and other members of the community collaborate with teachers and interact with students was highlighted in *Introduction to British Columbia's Redesigned Curriculum* (BC Ministry of Education, 2015c).

Areas for Further Research

Based on the literature review, it is evident that further investigation on how teacher education programs can best offer course work on developing effective partnerships with all stakeholders. For example, universities might consider offering specific partnership courses (e.g., Deslandes, Fournier, & Morin, 2008), and arranging for authentic parent interactions during practicums. Although teacher education programs are striving to provide pre-service teachers with knowledge and experience to take action, further longitudinal research could be conducted. Murray, Curran, and Zellers (2008) suggested that follow-up studies with pre-service teachers would be helpful to acquire insight into how increased partnership confidence and competence materializes in their teaching careers. It is worth considering how improvements in partnership training results in improvements in partnership practices, from a teacher's perspective, and from a community and family perspective.

Since stakeholders must first agree to share responsibility for the education of a child, research into what strategies and approaches best encourage parents to adopt a more partnership-focused role-construct would be helpful for districts, schools, and teachers. Further research on

communicating with parents and community members on the benefits of partnerships would also be helpful when proceeding with partnership programs.

On a local scale, gaining insight into the knowledge and awareness that is already present among stakeholders would provide a baseline that could be used to guide further research and evaluation. On a provincial scale, research on how British Columbia school districts are encouraging partnership practices would provide insights and possibly lead to other studies focused on gaining further insights into exemplar partnership practices with school staff, families, and communities.

Conclusion

There are many stakeholders involved in a child's education, such as parents and family members, community members, teachers, administrators, educational assistants, and the children themselves. The BC Education Plan recognizes the important role that various stakeholders play in supporting a child's education, helping to ensure learning is more personalized and positive (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Research has also shown that when stakeholders work together, students benefit academically, socially, and emotionally (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Harvard Family Research Project, 2016a, 2016b; Henderson, 1988; Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Witmer, 2005). Districts, schools, teachers and parents can all take steps to foster the development of more effective partnerships between schools, families, and communities.

It is my hope that this project will increase awareness on the benefits of partnerships in education which will inspire educational professionals, families, and community members. By working with families, staff, and the Gulf Islands School District, I plan to share the value of

partnerships and make efforts to influence the macrosystem as described by Bronfenbrenner (1989), and bring together the spheres of influence, described by Epstein (1987, 1995, 2001). In addition to sharing benefits of partnerships, I plan to collaborate with teachers to explore strategies for partnerships. In addition, I have made efforts to transform the entrance of the school into a welcome area so that interactions can be encouraged, sharing of information can be centralized, and partnership development can be supported.

Although the idea of partnerships is not new, it has generally not been a priority in education (Epstein, 2013). However, over the last 5 years, the BC Ministry of Education (2012a, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c) has placed more of an emphasis on partnerships in education. Research has shown the benefits of partnership and various studies have provided examples of successful relationship-building and partnering strategies. I believe that with some encouragement, districts and schools can examine their current partnership practices and make plans to further develop their programs. It is time for partnerships in education to become a priority.

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Appendix A

Welcome Area Planning

Welcome Area Planning						
ITEMS TO GET	Done	Max price	Actual Price	Notes/ Donated by	Special Thanks to	Contact Info
Couch (and chair) - Wipable						
Large Plants/Bushes (X5)						
Hanging Plant (spider/vine)						
Rolling table/cart (for coffee/snacks)						
Coffee Maker						
Kettle						
Mini-fridge						
Clothing racks for lost and found						
Clothing hangers (X50)						
Clothing compartment hanger						
Photo screen						
White lights (2X christmas light chain)						
Arbutus branch(es)						
8 stools						
Window shelf						
Storage bench for hockey equipment						
Storage bench for other equipment						
Bulletin Boards (3)						
Small White Board/Chalk Board						
TOTAL						

Appendix B District Presentation

(A speech with accompanying pictures, 20 pictures X approximately 30 seconds each)

1. Whose responsibility is it to educate a child? Many of us would agree that family members, educators, and all the people in a child's life are involved with this. All of a child's experiences contribute to their learning and growth - academically, emotionally, physically, socially. For more than 30 years, research studies have revealed the benefits that can result when there are partnerships between schools, families, and communities, and when parents and community members become involved and engaged in a child's education and school.
2. The terms 'partnership', 'involvement' and 'engagement' are surrounded by a certain level of ambiguity. These terms are increasingly being used in education - district discussions, school policies, provincial curriculum documents - but they are terms that are not often defined. In some literature, definitions are offered, but they are not consistent.
3. So, what do these terms really mean? Through analyzing research and talking with colleagues, I have come to realize that personal perceptions and experiences play a major role in how different people understand the terms - 'Partnership,' 'involvement,' and 'engagement'; it's important to keep this in mind. Now let's look at some of the language in BC's Ministry documents.
4. The 2012 BC Education Plan stated the importance of parent involvement in planning curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2012a). It specified that it would be beneficial for parents, teachers, and students to all work together so that goals can be attained. The plan offered more flexibility in determining what, when, where, and how students will learn.
5. In the BC Ministry of Education 2012(b) publication, *Enabling Innovation*, a clear goal that emerged from the provincial advisory group was personalized learning. This recognizes that students need to be engaged in their learning in order to succeed in school and in life; therefore, learning must focus on individual strengths, passions, aspirations, and needs, and be based in community contexts (Ministry of Education, 2015a).
6. As you know, the British Columbia curriculum has continued to be updated (Ministry of Education, 2015b). The updated 2015 Education Plan emphasized more of a balance between student, parent, and teacher, and recognized that parents want to become more directly involved within the education system (Ministry of Education, 2015a). Terms that came up were "student-centered" and "co-planned."
7. In addition, the Ministry of Education's 2015 draft, *Introduction to British Columbia's Redesigned Curriculum*, highlighted community collaboration and identified the importance of having parents and other members of the community collaborate with teachers and interact with students to share their culture, perspectives, and expertise (Ministry of Education, 2015c, p. 7).
8. So, within provincial documents, families and communities are increasingly being acknowledged as key players. How is this playing out at the local level? Our district

acknowledges the importance of partnerships and has been making efforts to include and encourage parents and community members. But, could we be doing more?

9. Before we look at 'the more,' let's have a quick review of the benefits of partnership. Studies have found that when parents become involved, benefits to students include higher grades and test scores, more positive attitudes and behaviour, long-term academic achievement (Henderson, 1988, in a review of 49 studies related to parent involvement), increased student attendance, a reduction in drop-outs, improved student motivation, and improved self-esteem (Chavkin and Williams, 1988).
10. In addition to parent involvement, studies have shown the benefits that result when schools develop community partnerships. These include higher academic performance (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Sheldon, 2007) and increased rates of attendance for students (Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Students also benefit from connections to learning opportunities outside of school (Blank et al., 2003).
11. It is not just the students that benefit. Research has found that parents and professionals experience greater satisfaction (Billman, Geddes, & Hedges, 2005; Epstein, 2005; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Forlin & Hopewell, 2006; Pinkus, 2005; Witmer, 2005). Teachers experience more respect from parents (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Witmer, 2005) and they show more positive morale (Murray, Curran and Zellers, 2008). Parents and families experience better psychological and physical well being (Pinkus, 2005).
12. Research continues to be conducted on the topic of partnerships, with more focus being placed on making partnerships a reality - and this includes recognizing and overcoming challenges such as 1) differences in belief and value systems, including role-constructs; 2) uncertainties about how to collaborate and compromise; 3) difficulties in establishing consistent expectations and goals; 4) differences in communication styles and needs; 5) and, to no surprise - busy lives and lack of time (Murray, Mereoiu, & Handyside, 2013). (Wong, 2015). (Hindin & Mueller, 2016)
13. Big task! So, we have to ask ourselves: Are we going to shrug our shoulders and say, "It's too much of a challenge, or it's too much work.... too much time.... no funding." Or, will we say, "Yes, partnerships are needed, but it's not my responsibility - it's the principal's job. They are responsible for developing partnerships. Or, no, it's the teacher's job - teachers should be working with the parents. Actually, it's really the parents' - they need to just get involved and know their role."
14. So, I return to the question, could we be doing more? More to really focus on partnerships and make a partnership program a quality and sustainable part of our transformational school district #64? We know of the benefits. The language is in the provincial documents. Some of the language is on our website and in our conversations. So, what's next? The big question is 'How?'
15. Joyce Epstein is a professor that has been focusing on partnerships for over 30 years. With intentions to help districts and schools take action, Epstein has identified 6 types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making,

and collaborating with the community. She states that schools need to create at least one school goal relating to partnerships and establish an action team for partnerships.

16. Epstein, along with other researchers, have found that direct facilitation from district leaders resulted in improved partnership programs. Other research has highlighted the need for a district facilitator - a designated person, working to support all district schools, bridging stakeholders, formalizing and organizing partnerships on a larger scale over time, and collecting data for program evaluation and improvement (Auerbach, 2009; Castro, 2016). This person is the foundation for school, family and community partnerships.
17. Another key idea that came up within the research was the importance of identifying a budget, whether it be for providing professional development, hiring a staff member, ensuring teachers are given time to meet with parents or participate in action teams for partnership, or creating welcome areas at schools - a budget is necessary.
18. Ultimately, partnerships cannot be 'a side order.' It must be integrated in the district and in schools, and there must be administrative support (Epstein, Galindo & Sheldon, 2011). Partnership programs require transformational leadership characteristics and are strong when leadership is distributed across all levels of stakeholders (Hauserman & Stick, 2013; Sanders, 2014). It is important that the focus is on capacity building.
19. Partnerships are not necessarily easy to promote, and they can be difficult to maintain (Keyes, 2002), but can we really not try? Disregarding the benefits seems like an injustice to our community of youth and all of the stakeholders involved. As a district that prides itself on innovative practices and that strives to place each child at the centre of education, it seems necessary to take the next steps.
20. We might all like the concept of partnerships, but without giving it serious focus, attention, and time, it is unlikely to be fruitful or sustainable. Our great ideas sometimes get pushed to the sides of our desks. Working alone, it just won't happen. So, I am here to argue that it must become a district priority. Partnerships need to not only be placed into our language, but also into our actions.

~~~~~ Distribute the two-page 'District Presentation Handout' - See below

## **Background on Partnership Language within the BC Ministry of Education**

In British Columbia, the BC Education Plan recognized the importance of parent involvement in planning curriculum to help ensure student success (Ministry of Education, 2012a). The Education Plan offered educators, students, and families a greater voice and more flexibility in determining what, when, where, and how students will learn. It specified that it would be beneficial for parents, teachers, and students to all work together to ensure passions are discovered, needs are met, and goals are attained (Ministry of Education, 2012a).

In the BC Ministry of Education (2012b) publication, *Enabling Innovation: Transforming Curriculum and Assessment*, a clear goal that emerged from the provincial advisory group was that curriculum should be flexible so that learning can be personalized. Personalized learning recognizes that students need to be engaged in their learning in order to succeed in school and in life; therefore, learning must focus on individual strengths, passions, aspirations, and needs, and be based in community contexts (Ministry of Education, 2015a).

Following various goals and recommendations set out by the provincial advisory group, and responding to 21<sup>st</sup> century needs and values, the British Columbia curriculum has continued to be updated (Ministry of Education, 2015b). At the primary level, the focus has been on teacher-managed foundational skills and teacher-facilitated interdisciplinary learning that was student-centered and co-planned with parents. The updated Education Plan emphasized more of a balance between student, parent, and teacher, and recognized that parents want to become more directly involved within the education system (Ministry of Education, 2015a). The Ministry of Education's draft, *Introduction to British Columbia's Redesigned Curriculum*, highlighted community collaboration and identified the importance of having parents and other members of the community collaborate with teachers and interact with students to share their culture, perspectives, and expertise (Ministry of Education, 2015c, p. 7).

In the 'Enabling Innovation' publication, the provincial advisory group recommended that the system of 'reporting' be changed to a focus on 'communicating student learning' (Ministry of Education, 2012b). The reason given for this was to underscore the necessity of ongoing communication between the teachers, learners, and parents. The advisory group recognized the importance of communicating learning in ways and at times that allow for opportunities to understand and respond to learners (Magnusson & Frank, 2014). The updated Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2015a) recognized that learning happens in the community, home, and school, and places emphasis on communicating learning in meaningful ways to help further student development and improvement. A letter to BC teachers from the Deputy Minister, dated May 26, 2016, stated, "Starting next month and continuing through October 2016, we will be asking parents for input on what they would like to know about their child's progress and how they would like to receive that information" (Ministry of Education, letter attachment sent through School District email, personally received June 9, 2016, p. 2, para. 1).

## HOW TO FURTHER PURSUE A DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### ALL OF THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS ARE FROM MY REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Hire a district staff member to oversee the development of a united partnership program:

- supporting schools in developing goals and action plans
- pulling together community information, contacts, and resources
- bridging the various stakeholders
- communicating with the hard-to-reach families
- promoting family and community involvement
- planning and evaluating the program to guarantee improvement and sustainability

Schedule more time for teachers to collaborate with parents so that:

- teachers can learn more about each child and better support them, personalizing their learning
- parents and teachers build stronger relationships and maintain more ongoing communication
- learning goals can be set and various ways to support a child learning can be discussed

Support schools in setting up a welcome area or parent center, where:

- parents feel welcome in the school
- parents can have direct access to school and community information and resources
- school staff, families, and community members have a common place to engage in conversation

Encourage principals and teachers to build trusting relationships with families. Some of the things that they can do includes:

- host open-forums and discussions on specific educational topics
- provide workshops for parents
- invite family members to take-on leadership roles
- provide regular class and school newsletters that include photographs

In order to move forward with partnerships, we must share the belief that educating a child is a shared responsibility. We must find ways to have open and ongoing communication about role-constructs, encouraging parents sense of self-efficacy and the importance of getting involved.

Provide professional development opportunities - not about what partnerships are, but about how partnerships can be promoted and maintained. Ask district staff what they would like to know more about so that relevant workshops and presentations can be offered.

**Literature review available upon request. Please email [mhingston@sd64.bc.ca](mailto:mhingston@sd64.bc.ca)**

## Appendix C

### Teacher Partnership Presentation and Workshop

#### **Supplies:**

- Pencils for all participants
- Multiple chart-paper markers
- 5 pieces of chart paper
- Lined paper for all participants (For 3-minute free-write)
- ‘Term Paper’ (‘partnership,’ ‘engagement,’ or ‘involvement’) for writing definitions - (1 for each person)
- Sticky-Notes for writing benefits (Approx. per person 3)
- 1 piece of chart with the 4 headings: i) Benefits to students, ii) benefits to schools/teachers, iii) benefits to parents, and iv) other
- 4 prompts from slide 16, printed and pasted onto chart paper
- Printed form with the questions: What would you like to know more about? How would you like to learn? What supports/structures are necessary, or are you hoping for?
- ‘What will you do?’ papers - title and description sections (name - optional)

~~~ Presentation and slides, see below

Partnerships



Melissa Hingston
UVic Masters Project
2017

www.copyblogger.com

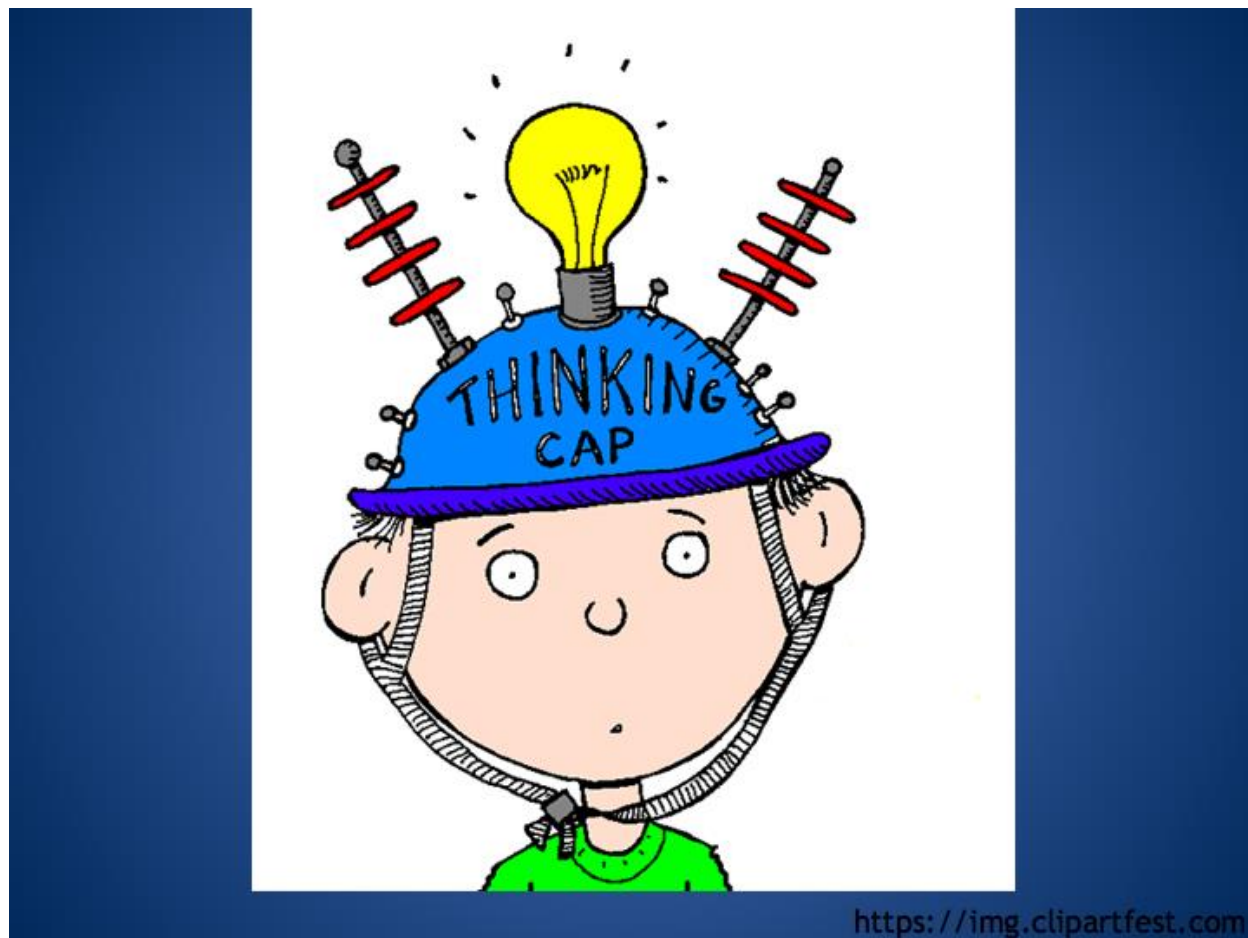
1. Hello, and thank you for having me. I am excited that I have been given this time to share some of my learning about partnerships and facilitate a workshop for the school staff. I hope you are all ready to think, share, and discuss ideas about partnerships, including your successes and ways in which we (both individually and as a team) can further develop partnerships.

3-Minute Free Write

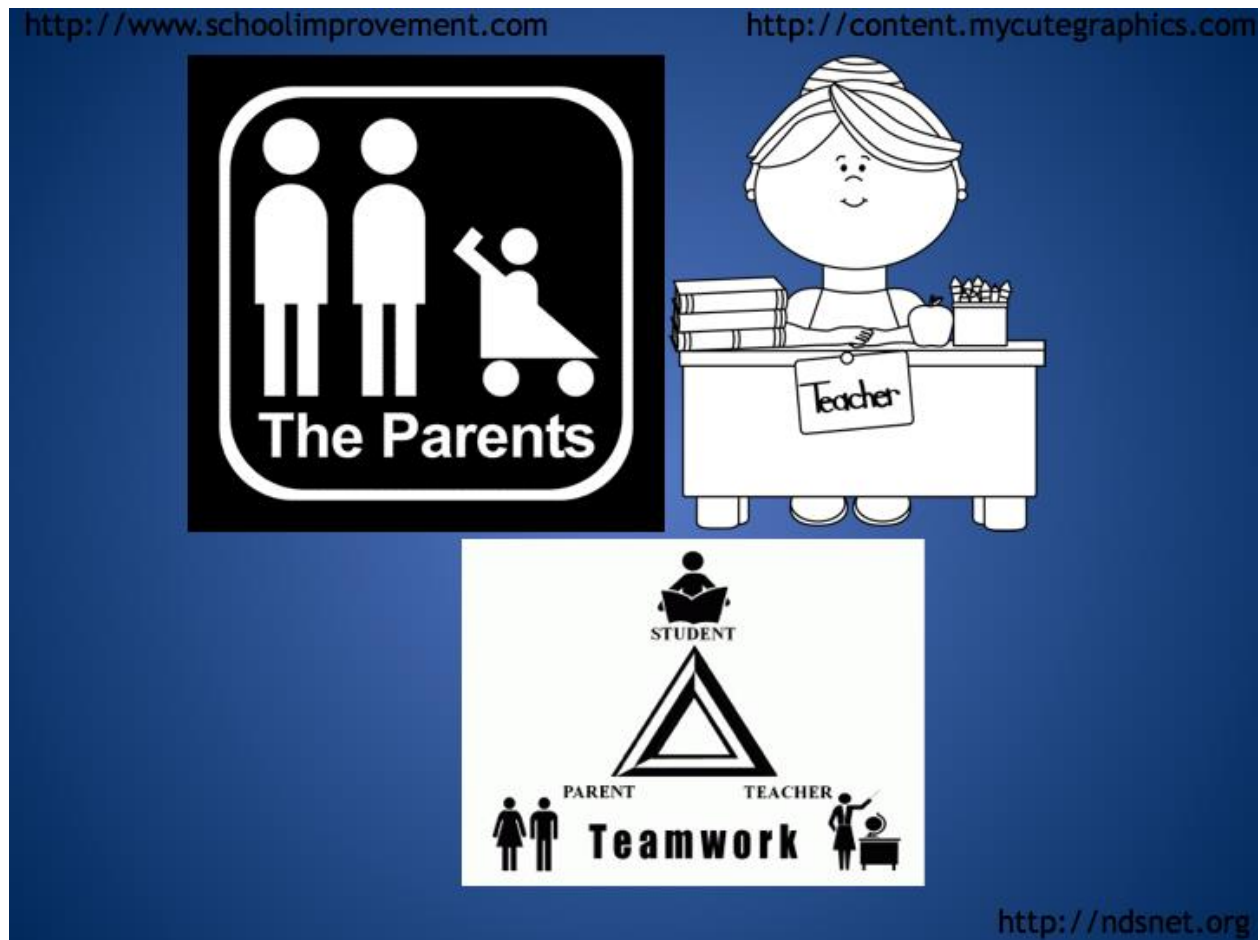
What has been successful?

What have you felt has been truly worthwhile?

2. **!!! ACTION !!!** ~~~~ 3 minute free-write (distribute lined paper) ~~~~~ Written prompt: “Think about some of the things that you have done to try and work in partnership with parents or community members, or some of the things you have tried to do to get parents more involved or engaged. What has been successful? What have you felt has been truly worthwhile?” ~~~~~ Please feel free to keep writing for another minute, or turn to a neighbour and share your thoughts.

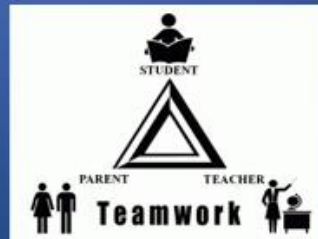


3. Who's responsibility is it to educate a child? We all have ideas about roles - about who's responsibility it is to do certain things - about what you think you should be doing and teaching, what you feel parents should be doing, and so on.



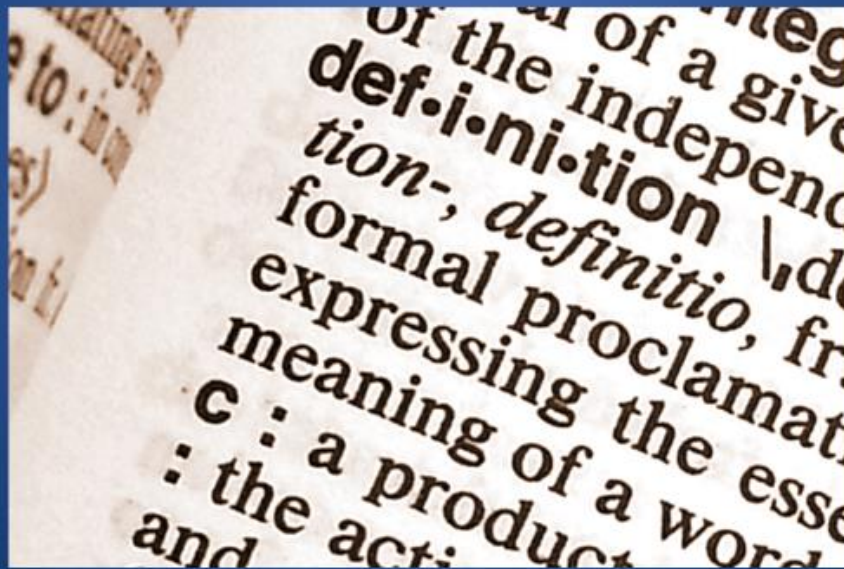
4. If you have more of a parent-focused construct, you view parents as being primarily responsible for a child's educational outcome. If you hold more of a school-focused construct, you believe that you - the teacher and the school - are primary responsibility for a child's educational outcome. A partnership-focused construct involves parents and schools working collaboratively.

<http://www.themotherco.com>



5. Examining child achievement and role construction, researchers have found that more positive achievement was associated with parent-focused and partnership-focused parental role constructs and behaviours (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997). What this is saying is that when parents get involved and engaged with school and their child's education, benefits result. Taking courses at UVic, the topic of partnerships has been my focus over this past year.

“Partnership” “Engagement” “Involvement”



<http://jhfc.duke.edu>

6. !!!ACTION!!! So, to get us started - On the piece of paper that I am about to hand to you, you will see a term (*'partnership,' 'engagement,' and 'involvement'*). First, I want you to try to define the term. If you need to, or want to, write some examples. In a moment, I will ask you to share with another person or in a small group to compare your definitions and understanding. ~~~~~ Write/Define.

Share and Compare



PROMPTS:

How are your definitions the same or similar?

What differences do you notice or agree on?

<http://www.registerforshare.org>

7. ~~~~~ Partner-up to compare and contrast. *Prompting Questions - Did you find that your definitions were the same or similar? What differences did you notice or agree on? ~~~~~* Share out.

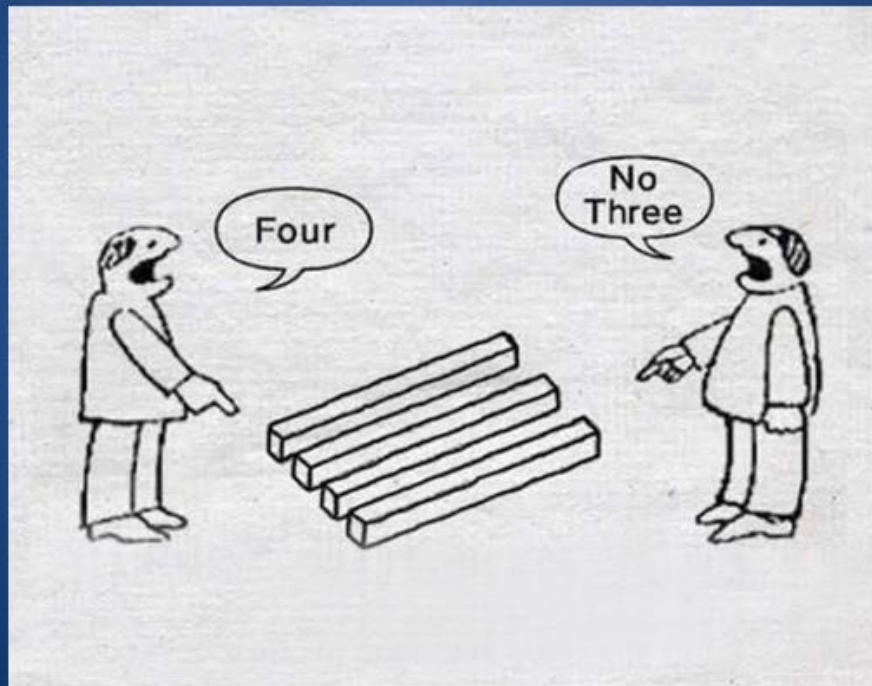
<http://plasticclass.blogspot.ca>



<http://iseibpsychology2012.wikispaces.com>

8. Now, the terms 'partnership', 'involvement' and 'engagement' are surrounded by a certain level of ambiguity. These terms are increasingly being used in education - district discussions, school policies, provincial curriculum documents - but they are terms that are not often defined. In some literature, definitions are offered, but they are not consistent.

<https://pbs.twimg.com>



9. So, what do these terms really mean? Through analyzing research and talking with colleagues, I have come to realize that personal perceptions and experiences play a major role in how different people understand the terms - 'Partnership,' 'involvement,' and 'engagement'; It's important to keep this in mind.



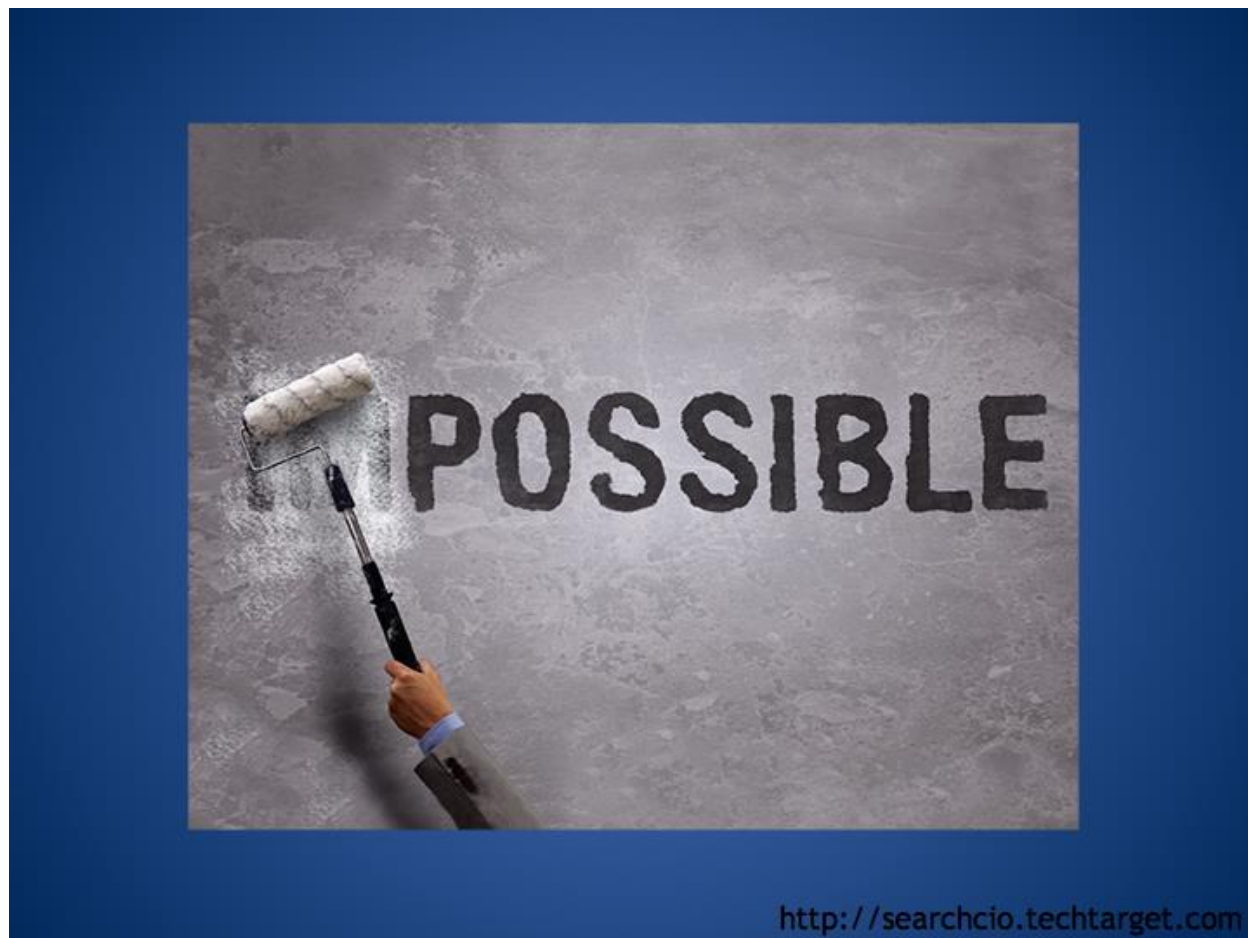
- Shared sense of purpose
- Mutual respect
- Willingness to negotiate

<http://www.peppervirtualassistant.com>

10. In my review of literature, I came across a definition of a 'working relationship' (Pugh & De'Ath, 1989) to characterize partnerships. I want to share this because I think the 3 components are so important to partnerships - i) a shared sense of purpose (stakeholders are working towards the same ultimate goal); ii) mutual respect; and, iii) a willingness to negotiate.



11. Moving on, I think that we have all spent some time looking through the BC's Ministry of Education documents relating to the 'transforming curriculum' and you might recall that there were several references to parents, teachers, and students working together and co-planning. Personalized learning and the significance of knowing each child's strengths, passions, aspirations, and needs were also highlighted. The importance of setting goals and engaging in ongoing communication about learning were present. Overall, there was an emphasis on parents becoming more directly involved and there was more of a focus on community collaboration.



12. So, within provincial documents, families and communities are increasingly being acknowledged as key players. How is this playing out at the local level? Our district definitely acknowledges the importance of partnerships and has been making efforts to include and encourage parents and community members. But, could we be doing more?



What are the benefits?

What do you think?

<http://beatingpancreatitis.com>

13. !!! ACTION!!! Before we look at ‘the more,’ let’s think about the benefits of family and community partnership. Working with one or two other people, please write what you think are the top benefits of partnership. For each benefit, use one sticky-note. (Hand-out sticky-notes, 3 or 4 per group)~~~~~ Group work/writing. ~~~~ I have created 4 headings on a chart (Benefits to students, benefits to schools/teachers, benefits to parents, other). Please place each sticky note where you think it best fits on the chart. I will leave the chart up so that you can look at everyone’s responses later, if you wish to.



14. Studies have found that when parents become involved, benefits to students include (now, if you want to raise your hand because you identified this as a benefit, please do): higher grades and test scores, more positive attitudes and behaviour, long-term academic achievement (Henderson, 1988, in a review of 49 studies related to parent involvement), increased student attendance, a reduction in drop-outs, improved student motivation, and improved self-esteem (Chavkin and Williams, 1988).



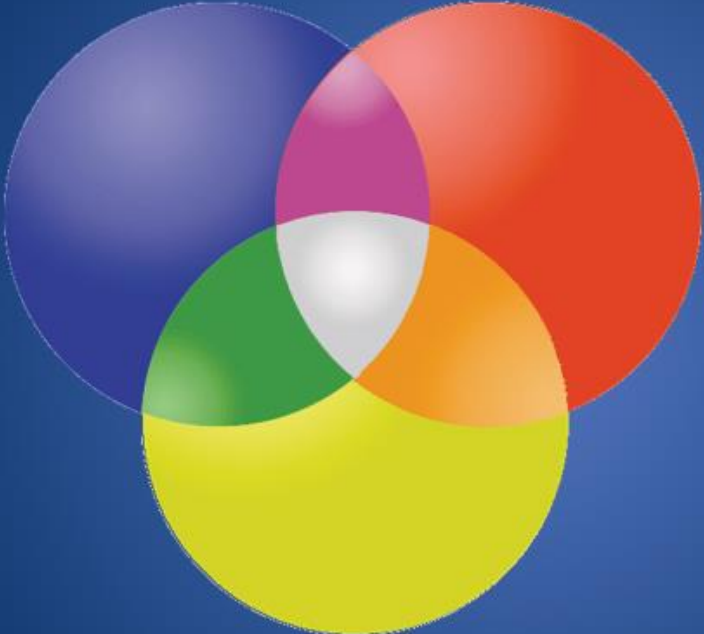

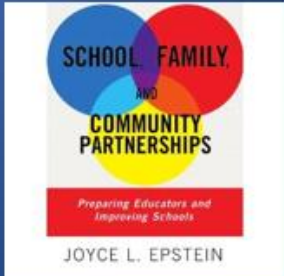
www.getlinkedinnow.com

15. In addition to parent involvement, studies have shown the benefits that result when schools develop community partnerships. These include higher academic performance (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon, 2003) and increased rates of attendance for students (Sheldon, 2003, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Students also benefit from connections to learning opportunities outside of school (Blank et al., 2003).



16. It is not just the students that benefit. Research has found that parents and professionals experience greater satisfaction (Billman, Geddes, & Hedges, 2005; Epstein, 2005; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Forlin & Hopewell, 2006; Pinkus, 2005; Witmer, 2005). Teachers experience more respect from parents (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Witmer, 2005) and they show more positive morale (Murray, Curran and Zellers, 2008). Parents and families experience better psychological and physical wellbeing (Pinkus, 2005).

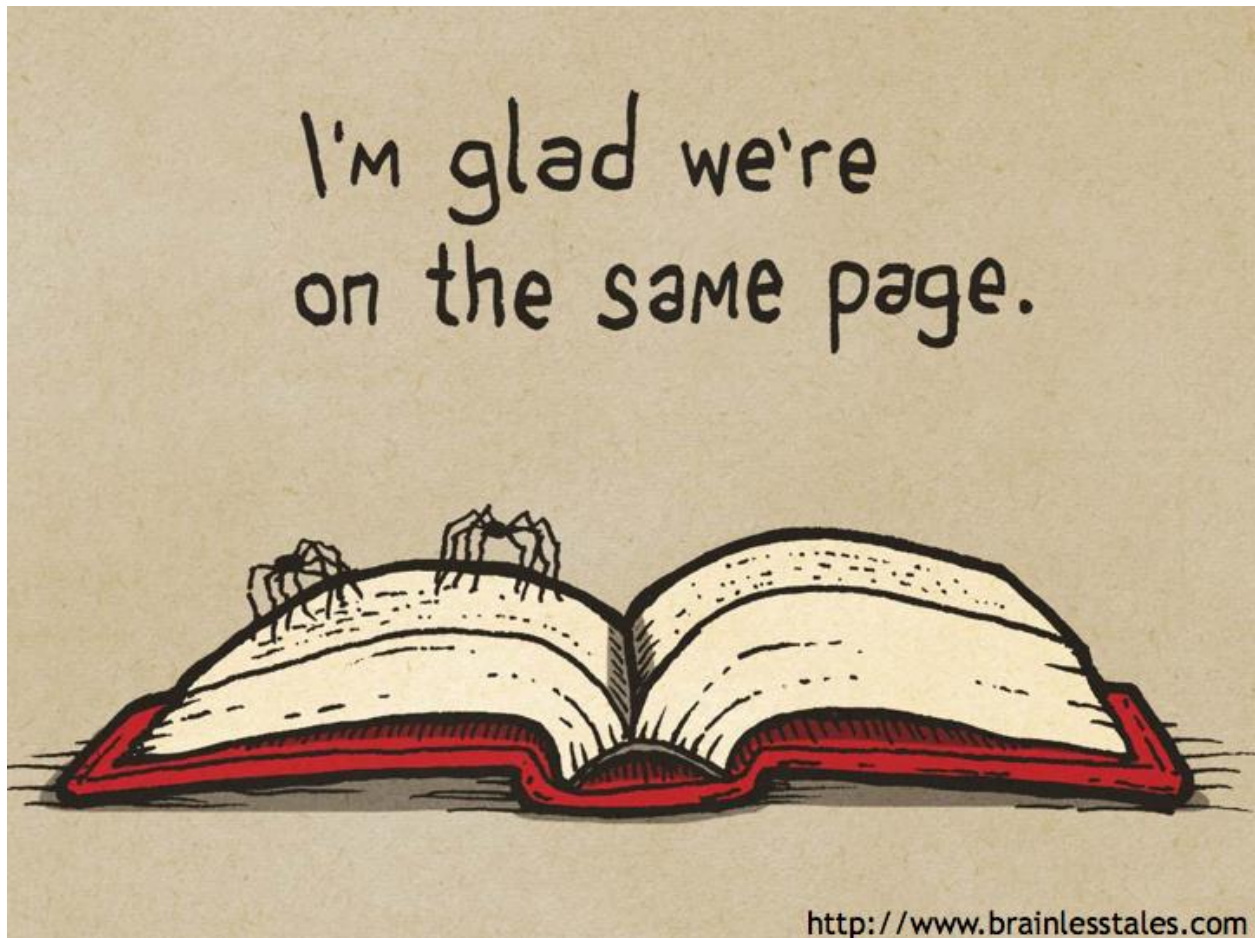
www.parenttoolkit.com

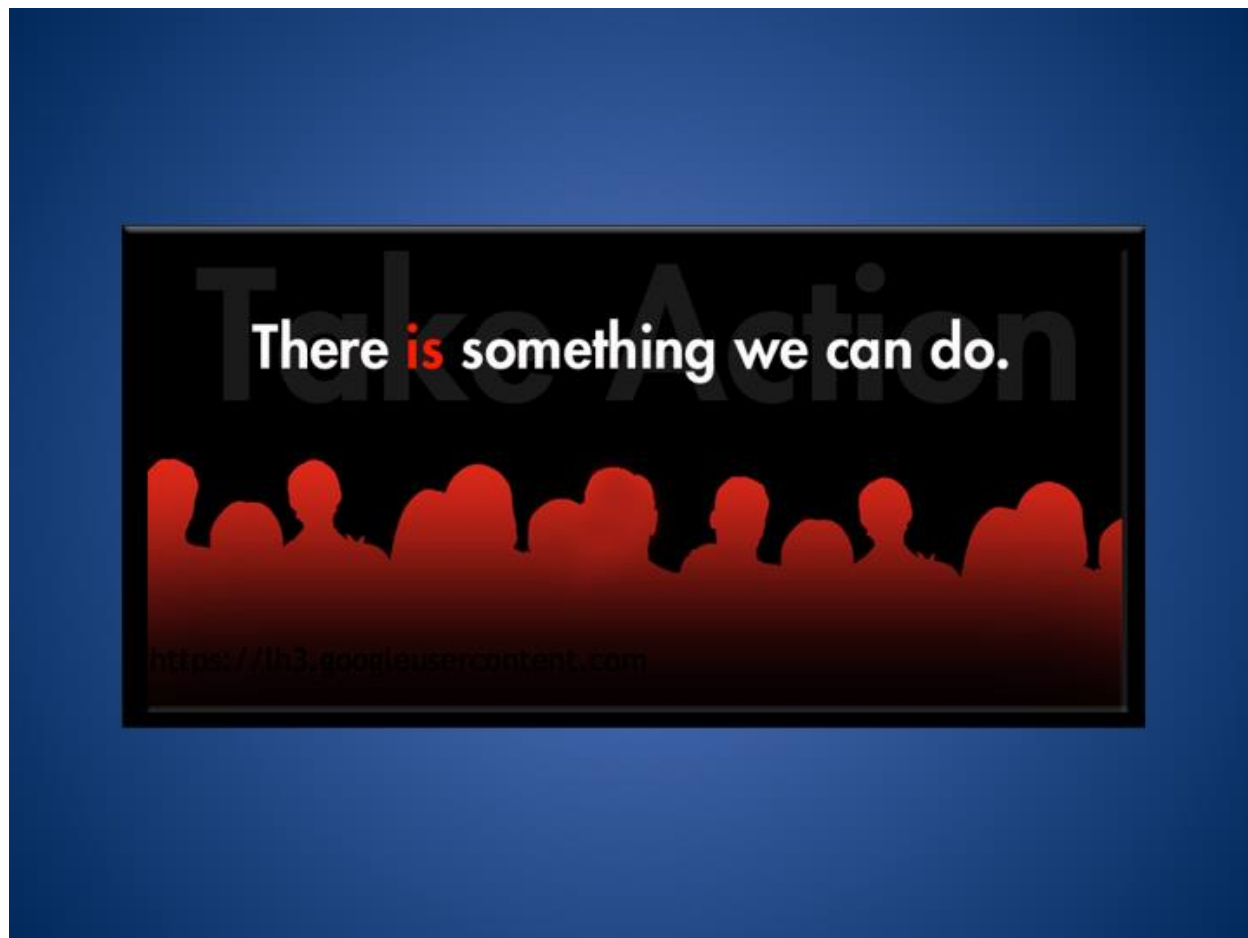
https://theceliacscene.com

http://drralph.pbworks.com

17. The 'Spheres of Influence' model asks, 'Where do children learn and grow?' and it recognizes that the answer is, 'Excellent schools, strong families, and healthy communities.' Research data shows that children are most successful in learning when the three spheres overlap (Epstein, 2013 Conference).



18. Joyce Epstein is a professor that has been focusing on partnerships for over 30 years. She emphasized that teachers, working alone, cannot meet the academic, emotional, and physical needs and goals for children. Outlining important steps that schools need to take in order to strengthen the process of community and family engagement, Epstein asserted that family-like schools and school-like families are the foundation for partnerships, whereby parents and teachers are sending the same messages about the importance of school, the necessity of trying your hardest, and the significance of each child's unique and wonderful qualities and expertise.



19. !!! ACTION !!! So, how are partnerships encouraged and developed? What can we, as teachers, do? There are lots of ideas, and you identified some of them during your free-write at the start. I would like to tap into the research that I examined and offer you 4 prompts. After reading the prompts I will ask you to move to one of the chart papers where you will be able to offer some responses, using the markers to write.

1. Offering families leadership roles helps to establish a sense of trust and respect, and partnerships are more likely to develop. What are some different leadership roles that could be offered? How could it be built into the schedule?
2. The importance of providing a welcoming atmosphere helped to foster relationships. How can we create a more welcoming environment, in our classrooms and at our schools?
3. Children's interests served to motivate parents to become involved and get to know one another. How can we tap into children's interest to bring families into schools?
4. One relationship-building activity that came up in the research involved teachers opening their classroom doors to facilitate inclusive talks that focused on particular topics, such as 'the importance of education'. These 'house meetings' became friendly events, offering family members an opportunity to share stories and get to know one another on a new level. The meetings might also help to develop curriculum and support learning. What are your ideas for 'house-meeting' topics (or prompting questions) that you think would be relevant and interesting?



20. ~~~~~ (Read the prompts and then invite individuals to move to one of the charts).

- Offering families leadership roles helps to establish a sense of trust and respect, and partnerships are more likely to develop (Francis et al. 2016). (~~~Read the rest off the slide)
- The importance of providing a welcoming atmosphere helped to foster relationships (Preston, 2013). How can we create a more welcoming environment, in our classrooms and at our schools?
- Children's interests served to motivate parents to become involved and get to know one another (Preston, 2013). How can we tap into children's interest to bring families into schools?
- One relationship-building activity that came up in the research involved teachers opening their classroom doors to facilitate inclusive talks that focused on particular topics, such as 'the importance of education' (Auerbach, 2009). (~~~Read the rest off the slide)

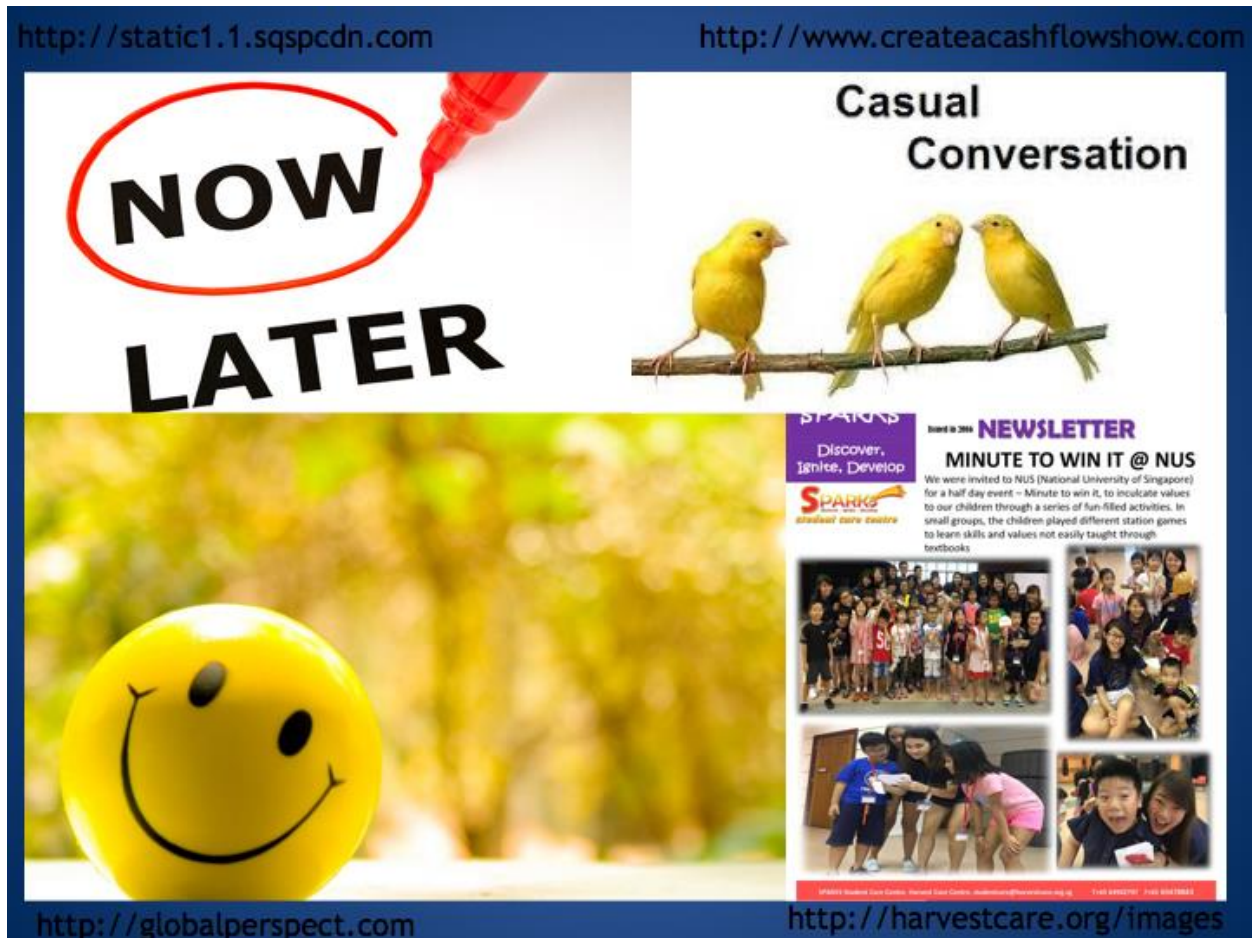


21. ~~~~~ (Invite them to move to another chart and make a new group to discuss and add their ideas to the chart paper). ~~~~~ Share out.



<http://images.medicaldaily.com>

22. I would like to share a few points that stuck out to me, when I was reviewing literature. It might be obvious to some of you, a reminder to others, and new to a few. These are some things that I am trying to keep in mind...



23. The ability to ask, respond, and share in a timely and respectful way was found to be key to building and maintaining relationships (Francis et al., 2016). Teachers that provided regular positive communication about children were viewed in high regard. This communication included informal conversations and casual, yet informative, newsletters that included photographs.



<http://goldenageofgaia.com>

24. Another thing! - Examining motivation behind school involvement, researchers found that specific invitations from children and specific invitations from teachers were most strongly related to parents' school-based involvement (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). Community members (without children attending school) highlighted the importance of school invitations and public announcements (Preston, 2013). Yes, people are looking for invitations.



25. Onto another thing! - This one is much bigger, and it would take group focus and group effort. - Each school must create at least one school goal relating to partnerships. Each school must also establish an 'Action Team for Partnerships' - this team would meet monthly, making plans and evaluating progress. Members would include an administrator, teacher(s), parents, and community members. These are Epstein's suggestions and are based on years and years of research.



26. Here are some suggestions that a few researchers have offered to teachers who are striving to achieve partnerships (Guirra & Luciano, 2010):

- Ensure adequate time is given to morning welcomes and afternoon farewells.
- Spread individual meetings throughout the year.
- Plan group get-togethers and meetings to explore ideas, share perspectives, and help dialogue.
- Invite parents to participate.

<http://cdn.quotesgram.com>

Do you ever wish
you had a second chance
to meet someone again
for the first time...

27. More suggestions include (Keyes, 2002):

- Recognize the special significance of 'first meetings' - these meetings influence how roles will be enacted as the partnership develops and sets the tone for the relationship.
- Be aware of cultural aspects
- Adapt communication to meet the needs of specific parents.
- Establish and communicate clear aims for these meetings.
- Goldberg (1997) and Macbeth (1989) state that the aim should be to set goals for the next stage of the child's learning.



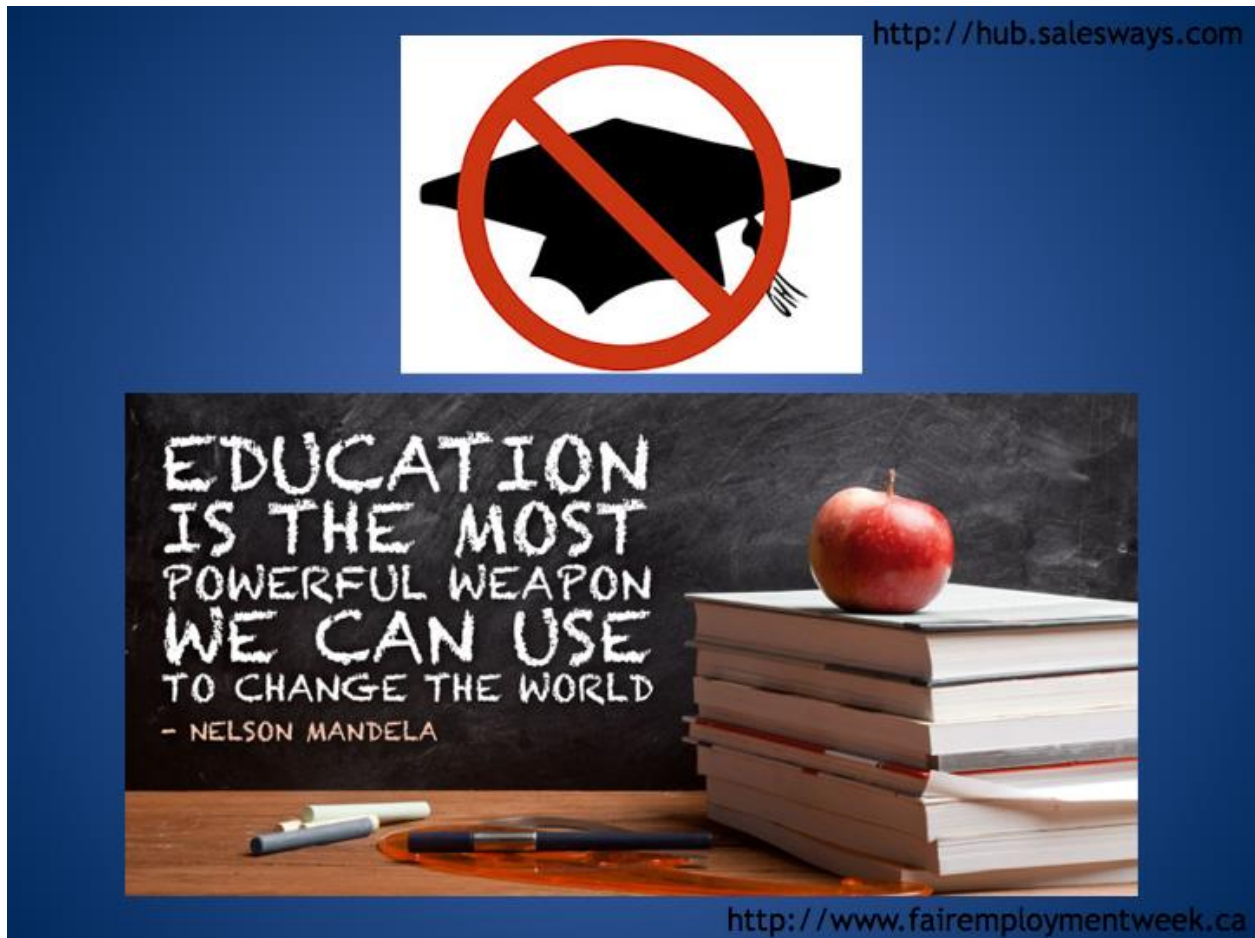
28. And, to build partnerships, here is some advice (Murray, Mereoiu, & Handyside, 2013)! - Avoid judgment. Communicate consistently and clearly. Try to overcome past negative perceptions and interactions. Now, moving away from the research and literature for a moment...



29. !!! ACTION !!! It is true that challenges exist, both with establishing and with maintaining partnerships. Talk with a person or two about what you think the biggest challenges are, from a teacher and/or parents perspective. *What are the biggest challenges in establishing and maintaining partnerships?~~~~~* In 5 words or less, share out.




30. Here are some of the challenges that were highlighted in research: 1) differences in belief and value systems, including role-constructs; 2) uncertainties about how to collaborate and compromise; 3) difficulties in establishing consistent expectations and goals; 4) differences in communication styles and needs; 5) and, to no surprise - busy lives and lack of time (Murray, Mereoiu, & Handyside, 2013).



31. One of the major issues relating to partnerships is a lack of education and training. Investigating partnership preparedness, researchers found that approximately 90% of respondents felt that newly graduated teachers were not prepared in the area of partnerships (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). In another study, the majority of teachers stated that teacher education programs had not adequately prepared them to develop partnerships and they wanted to learn more (Hindin & Mueller, 2016). In a different study, interviews with teachers revealed a desire for more education with regards to parent engagement (Wong, 2015).

<http://susannoyesandersonpoems.com>



- communicating with difficult parents
- engaging non-responsive parents
- educating parents
- encouraging or motivating parents to be involved
- learning more about strategies for at-home learning
- interactive homework
- community resources
- involving retired community members

32. Teachers wished they had learned more about (Hindin & Mueller, 2016):

- communicating with difficult parents
- engaging non-responsive parents
- educating parents
- encouraging or motivating parents to be involved
- learning more about strategies for at-home learning

In another study that investigated pre-service teachers enrolled in a partnerships course (Deslandes, Fournier & Morin, 2008), learning that was highlighted related to:

- interactive homework
- community resources
- involving retired community members

- ‘What do you want to know more about?’
- ‘How do you want to learn about whatever you want to learn about?’
- ‘What do you aspire to do with parents and families, and with the community and community members? What are your visions for partnership?’
- ‘What supports or structures do you feel would be helpful, or would be necessary?’



www.medifastblog.com

33. !!! ACTION !!! I stop here and wonder, ‘What do you want to know more about?’ I am also curious, ‘How do you want to learn about whatever you want to learn about?’ I also wonder, ‘What do you aspire to do with parents and families and with the community and community members - what are your visions for partnership?’ Then, to do whatever it is you aspire to do, ‘What supports or structures do you feel would be helpful, or would be necessary?’ As I speak with administrators and district staff about partnerships, I would like to share this information in hopes that more support will emerge for training and for partnership program development. If you are willing to share, and willing to provide information, please fill in whatever sections you want to on this paper (hand-out table-chart paper). Now, I’ll give you a few minutes to fill in this form. You could also take time to look around at the various charts on the wall that we have created as a group today. ~~~~~ Collect papers.



34. !!! END ACTION !!! - Finally, now, looking ahead... What will you do? What will you do? This might be an something you have done before that you will continue. It might be something that you have wanted to do but have not yet tried. Or, it might be something that was shared or generated today. This is for you to remember and it is the ticket out the door, but I hope that it will also be a resource for colleagues. The way it can be a resource is this: (1) You give your idea, or each of your ideas, a title. (2) You provide a brief description. (3) You give it to me. I will compile these, make a google doc, and share-out with you. Then, you can add as you wish, see what other people are trying, and have somewhere to start, or continue, in your steps towards and conversations about partnerships. Thank you.

Partnerships



What will YOU do?

<http://weknowyourdreams.com>

35. So, what will YOU do?

Appendix D

Parent Presentation

1. Who's responsibility is it to educate a child? We all have ideas about roles - about who's responsibility it is to do certain things - about what you feel you should, or can, engage in when it comes to school and education.
2. If you have more of a parent-focused construct, you view yourself as being primarily responsible for your child's educational outcome. If you hold more of a school-focused construct, you believe that the school has primary responsibility for your child's educational outcome. A partnership-focused construct involves parents and schools working collaboratively. The topic of partnerships is what I have been learning more about over this past year.
3. Examining child achievement, researchers have found that more positive achievement was associated with parent-focused and partnership-focused parental role constructs (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997). What this is saying is that when you get involved and engaged with school and your child's education, benefits result.
4. Studies have found that when parents become involved, benefits to students include higher grades and test scores, more positive attitudes and behaviour, long-term academic achievement (Henderson, 1988, in a review of 49 studies related to parent involvement), increased student attendance, a reduction in drop-outs, improved student motivation, and improved self-esteem (Chavkin and Williams, 1988).
5. It is not just the students that benefit. Research has found that parents and professionals experience greater satisfaction too (Billman, Geddes, & Hedges, 2005; Epstein, 2005; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Forlin & Hopewell, 2006; Pinkus, 2005; Witmer, 2005).
6. So, with all of these benefits, it's not surprising that provincial documents are transforming and our educational approach has been changing over the last 5 years. There is now language about parent involvement in planning curriculum. There is language about parents, teachers, and students working together. Also, flexibility in determining what, when, where, and how students will learn is included. More personalized learning is emphasized and there is more of a focus on individual strengths, passions, aspirations, and needs. In addition, parents and community members are being encouraged to share their cultures, perspectives, and expertise.
7. So, within provincial documents, families and communities are increasingly being acknowledged as key players. I think about how this is materializing at our local level and how we can be working more in partnership to promote student achievement and happiness?
8. So, how are we going to work towards more parent involvement and improved partnerships between the school, families, and the community? Joyce Epstein is a professor that has been focusing on partnerships for over 30 years. With intentions to help districts and schools take action, Epstein has identified 6 types of involvement - this framework shows how parents can be involved in lots of different ways (Epstein et al., 2002):

9. The first is parenting. This involves helping families understand stages of development and helping them create home environments that are more supportive of learning.
10. The second is communicating. This involves designing and conducting two-way communication between the school and home to ensure that all families are being reached about such things as activities, projects, progress, and events.
11. Volunteering is the third. This is about organizing help for school programs and for classroom involvement, and about recruiting people to support student activities and attend events.
12. The fourth way involves learning at home. This includes offering information and ideas to families about ways to help their children, outside of the school hours, with curriculum related activities, homework, and decisions.
13. The fifth type of involvement is decision making. This is about getting involved with school decisions and helping develop parent leaders at the school. This includes leading a committee or being a school representative.
14. Collaborating with the community is the sixth type of involvement that Joyce Epstein identified. This involves finding community resources and services that could strengthen student learning, and integrating the resources and services within the school.
15. Some researchers differentiate between home-based involvement, which typically refers to parent-child interactions that take place outside of school, such as monitoring progress or helping with homework, and school-based involvement, which generally refers to interactions that occur at the school and focus on the child, such as participating in a parent-teacher conference or volunteering on a field-trip (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sadler, 2007).
16. Parents' sense of efficacy, which refers to their beliefs about their personal abilities to influence and support their child's schooling success, has been positively related to a child's educational achievements (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997). Researchers suggested that parents should nurture their own sense of efficacy through talking with teachers, reading, and taking courses about education and child development (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997). They also suggested the importance of parents having a clear idea about what they want from the educational process and what they want their child to gain (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997).
17. It is true that challenges exist. Some of the challenges that were highlighted in research include: 1) differences in belief and value systems 2) uncertainties about how to collaborate and compromise; 3) difficulties in establishing consistent expectations and goals; 4) differences in communication styles and needs; 5) and, to no surprise - busy lives and lack of time (Murray, Mereoiu, & Handyside, 2013).
18. Partnerships are not necessarily easy to promote, and they can be difficult to maintain (Keyes, 2002), but it seems that we should try. Disregarding the benefits seems like an injustice to our community of youth and all of the stakeholders involved.

19. We might all like the concept of partnerships, but without giving it serious focus, attention, and time, it is unlikely to be fruitful. We must work together to establish goals and support the children as best we can in the home, in the school, and in the community.
20. Research has found that the parent qualities and characteristics that positively influence partnerships are: Warmth, sensitivity, nurturance, the ability to listen, consistency, a positive self-image, personal confidence, and effective interpersonal skills (Swick, 1992) - FROM Keyes, 2002). Now, we would probably all love to say that we possess all of these qualities, but in truth... That's ok. We can still try and we can still work towards improved collaboration.
21. Here are some benefits that can come from parents openly communicating about their child. When parents shed light on the out-of-school side of their child, teachers can capitalize on interests and hobbies. This provides motivation for your child to learn and can help the teacher create a learning space that is more relevant (Green, 1988).
22. In knowing the out-of-school side of a child, teachers can support social interactions. Teachers are better able to encourage children to share their skills and expertise. In doing this, children gain confidence among peers and build increased self-worth and self-esteem (Green, 1988).
23. Teacher can also better facilitate positive interactions and encouraging friendships through recognizing and supporting mutual interests. In addition to those benefits, when parents help teachers know more about their children, teachers can better understand and support children in their learning styles and behaviours (Green, 1988).
24. Parents communicating with teachers can bring about benefits, and vice versa - it's a reciprocal relationship (Green, 1988). When teachers communicate about school and learning, letting parents know how their child is doing in the classroom, the parent has an opportunity to reinforce skills and support learning. When parents take time to reinforce what is taking place at school, they underscore the value of education, they show the child that school is important, and they send the message that learning is a 'good thing to do' (Epstein).
25. In developing trusting relationships, researchers have said that a parent's role in communication is to show that they care by expressing gratitude to educators and stating their commitment to their child's success (Francis, Blue-Banning, Haines, Turnbulland, & Gross, 2016).
26. Epstein, the leading researcher on this topic, asserted that family-like schools and school-like families are the foundation for partnerships, whereby parents and teachers are sending the same messages about the importance of school and education, the necessity of trying your hardest, and the significance of each child's unique and wonderful qualities and expertise.
27. The Fernwood School lobby has been transformed over the last few months to encourage more parents and community members to come inside and enjoy the space and the school. Thanks to Kelda for her focus and support with this, and to various other members of the district staff, parent body, and supporting community, this space has become a reality. 'The Welcome Area' is intended as a space for parents, school staff, and community members to relax, enjoy, converse, and share.

28. My overall hopes are for more partnerships, for more and more parents to be become involved, and for more positive communication and support between the school, the home, and the community. I want to thank you, so much, for coming today and for giving me the time to speak and share.