

Partners *in* Education

A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships

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"My vision for family engagement is ambitious...

I want to have too many parents **demanding excellence** in their schools. I want all parents to be **real partners in education** with their children's teachers, from cradle to career. In this partnership, students and parents should feel connected—and teachers should feel supported. When parents demand change and better options for their children, they become the **real accountability backstop for the educational system**."

—ARNE DUNCAN, U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, MAY 3, 2010



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Introduction

For schools and districts across the U.S., family engagement is rapidly shifting from a low-priority recommendation to an integral part of education reform efforts.

For schools and districts across the U.S., family engagement[1] is rapidly shifting from a low-priority recommendation to an integral part of education reform efforts. Family engagement has long been enshrined in policy at the federal level through Title I of ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act), which requires that Title I schools develop parental involvement policies and "school–family compacts" that outline how the two stakeholder groups will work together to boost student achievement.[2] State governments are increasingly adding their voices to the chorus. As of January 2010, 39 states and the District of Columbia had enacted laws calling for the implementation of family engagement policies.[3] In 2012, Massachusetts was one of several states to integrate family engagement into its educator evaluation system, making "family and community engagement" one of the four pillars of its rubric for evaluating teachers and administrators.[4]

These policies are rooted in a wide body of research demonstrating the beneficial effects of parental involvement and family–school partnerships. Over 50 years of research links the various roles that families play in a child's education—as supporters of learning, encouragers of grit and determination, models of lifelong learning, and advocates of proper programming and placements for their child—with indicators of student achievement including student grades, achievement test scores, lower drop-out rates, students' sense of personal competence and efficacy for learning, and students' beliefs about the importance of education.[5] Recent work by the Chicago Consortium on School Research has also shown that "parent and community ties" can have a systemic and sustained effect on learning outcomes for children and on whole school improvement when combined with other essential supports such as strong school leadership, a high-quality faculty, community engagement and partnerships, a student-centered learning climate, and effective instructional guidance for staff (See Figure 1 on page 6).[6] In particular, research shows that initiatives that take on a partnership orientation—in which student achievement and school improvement are seen as a shared responsibility, relationships of trust and respect are established between home and school, and families and school staff see each other as equal partners—create the conditions for family engagement to flourish.[7]

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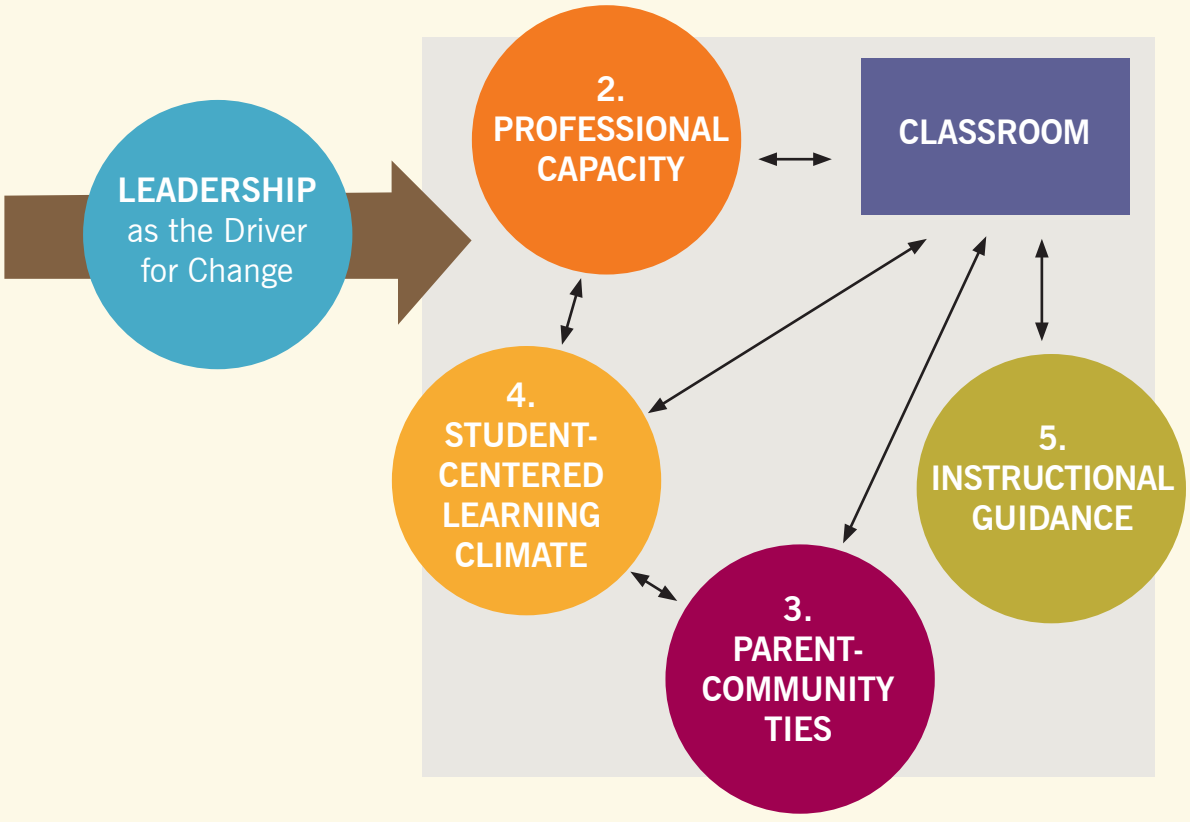
Given this research base, the increase in policies promoting family engagement is a sign of progress toward improving educational opportunities for all children. Yet these mandates are often predicated on a fundamental assumption: that the educators and families charged with developing effective partnerships between home and school already possess the requisite skills, knowledge, confidence, and belief systems—in other words, the *collective capacity*—to successfully implement and sustain these important home–school relationships. Unfortunately, this assumption is deeply flawed. Principals and teachers receive little training for engaging families and report feeling under-prepared, despite valuing relationships with families.[8]

Parents, meanwhile—particularly low-income and limited-English-proficient parents—face multiple barriers to engagement, often lacking access to the social capital and understanding of the school system necessary to take effective action on behalf of their children.[9] Without attention to training and capacity building, well-intentioned partnership efforts fall flat. Rather than promoting equal partnerships between parents and schools at a systemic level, these initiatives default to one-way communication and "random acts of engagement"[10] such as poorly attended parent nights.

This paper presents a new framework for designing family engagement initiatives that build capacity among educators and families to partner with one another around student success. Based in existing research and best practices, the "Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships" is designed to act as a scaffold for the development of family engagement strategies, policies, and programs. This is not a blueprint for engagement initiatives, which must be designed to fit the particular contexts in which they are carried out. Instead, the Dual Capacity-Building Framework should be seen as a *compass*, laying out the goals and conditions necessary to chart a path toward effective family engagement efforts that are linked to student achievement and school improvement.

Figure 1: Five Essential Supports

The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research[11]



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The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships

The following section provides a brief explanation of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework and its components.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework (See Figure 2 on page 8) was formulated using the research on effective family engagement and home–school partnership strategies and practices, adult learning and motivation, and leadership development. The Dual Capacity-Building Framework components include:

1. a description of the capacity challenges that must be addressed to support the cultivation of effective home–school partnerships;
2. an articulation of the conditions integral to the success of family–school partnership initiatives and interventions;
3. an identification of the desired intermediate capacity goals that should be the focus of family engagement policies and programs at the federal, state, and local level; and
4. a description of the capacity-building outcomes for school and program staff as well as for families.

After outlining these four components, we present three case studies that illustrate and further develop the Framework. The case studies feature a school, a district, and a county whose efforts to develop capacity around effective family–school partnerships embody the Dual Capacity-Building Framework.

The Challenge

Many states, districts, and schools struggle with how to cultivate and sustain positive relationships with families. A monitoring report issued in 2008 by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education found that family engagement was the weakest area of compliance by states.[12] According to the 2012 "MetLife Survey of the American Teacher," both teachers and principals across the country consistently identify family engagement to be one of the most challenging aspects of their work.[13] A common refrain from educators is that they have a strong desire to work with families from diverse backgrounds and cultures and to develop stronger home-school partnerships of shared responsibility for children's outcomes, but they do not know how to accomplish this. Families, in turn, can face many personal, cultural, and structural barriers to engaging in productive partnerships with teachers. They may not have access to the social and cultural capital needed to navigate the complexities of the U.S. educational system,[14] or they may have had negative experiences with schools in the past, leading to distrust or to feeling unwelcomed.[15] The limited capacity of the various stakeholders to partner with each other and to share the responsibility for improving student achievement and school performance is a major factor in the relatively poor execution of family engagement initiatives and programs over the years.[16]

Contributing to this problem is the lack of sustained, accessible, and effective opportunities to build capacity among local education agency (LEA) staff and families. If effective cradle-to-career educational partnerships between home and school are to be implemented and sustained with fidelity, engagement

Figure 2: The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships



initiatives must include a concerted focus on developing adult capacity, whether through pre- and in-service professional development for educators; academies, workshops, seminars, and workplace trainings for families; or as an integrated part of parent–teacher partnership activities. When effectively implemented, such opportunities build and enhance the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of stakeholders to engage in effective partnerships that support student achievement and development and school improvement.

Opportunity Conditions

There are many types of effective capacity-building opportunities for LEA staff and families, some of which are explored in the case studies described in the next section. Opportunities must be tailored to the particular contexts for which they are developed. At the same time, research suggests that certain *process conditions* must be met for adult participants to come away from a learning experience not only with new knowledge but with the ability and desire to apply what they have learned. Research also suggests important *organizational conditions* that have to be met in order to sustain and scale these opportunity efforts across districts and groups of schools.

Process Conditions

Research on promising practice in family engagement, as well as on adult learning and development, identifies a set of process conditions that are important to the success of capacity-building interventions. The term *process* here refers to the series of actions, operations, and procedures that are part of any activity or initiative. Process conditions are key to the design of effective initiatives for building the capacity of families and school staff to partner in ways that support student achievement and school improvement. Initiatives must be:

Linked to Learning

Initiatives are aligned with school and district achievement goals and connect families to the teaching and learning goals for the students. Far too often, events held at schools for parents have little to do with the school or district's academic and developmental goals for students. These events are missed opportunities to enhance the capacity of families and staff to collaborate with one another to support student learning. Families and school staff are more interested in and motivated to participate in events and programs that are focused on enhancing their ability to work as partners to support children's cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development as well as the overall improvement of the school.

Relational

A major focus of the initiative is on building respectful and trusting relationships between home and school. No meaningful family engagement can be established until relationships of trust and respect are established between home and school. A focus on relationship building is especially important in circumstances where there has been a history of mistrust between families and school or district staff, or where negative past experiences or feelings of intimidation hamper the building of partnerships between staff and parents. In these cases, mailings, automated phone calls, and even incentives like meals and prizes for attendance do little to ensure regular participation of families, and school staff are often less than enthusiastic about participating in these events. The *relationship* between home and school serves as the foundation for shared learning and responsibility and also acts as an incentive and motivating agent for the continued participation of families and staff. Participants in initiatives are more willing to learn from others whom they respect and trust.

Developmental

The initiatives focus on building the intellectual, social, and human capital of stakeholders engaged in the program. Providing support to communities is important, but initiatives that build capacity set out to provide opportunities for participants (both families and school staff) to think differently about themselves and their roles as stakeholders in their schools and communities.[17] In addition to providing services to stakeholders, the developmental component of these initiatives focuses on empowering and enabling participants to be confident, active, knowledgeable, and informed stakeholders in the transformation of their schools and neighborhoods.

Collective/Collaborative

Learning is conducted in group rather than individual settings and is focused on building learning communities and networks. Initiatives that bring families and staff together for shared learning create collective learning environments that foster peer learning and communications networks among families and staff. The collective, collaborative nature of these initiatives builds social networks, connections, and, ultimately, the social capital of families and staff in the program.

Interactive

Participants are given opportunities to test out and apply new skills. Skill mastery requires coaching and practice. Existing family engagement strategies often involve providing lists of items and activities for teachers to use to reach out to families and for families to do with their children. This information dissemination strategy is an important but insufficient condition of learning and knowledge acquisition. During learning sessions, staff and families can receive information on skills and tools, but must also have the opportunity to practice what they have learned and receive feedback and coaching from each other, peers, and facilitators.

Organizational Conditions

As organizations, LEAs and schools struggle to create family–school partnership opportunities that are coherent and aligned with educational improvement goals, sustained over time, and spread across the district. Research on the conditions necessary for educational entities to successfully implement and sustain family engagement identifies the following organizational conditions that support fidelity and sustainability.[18] Initiatives must be:

Systemic

Initiatives are purposefully designed as core components of educational goals such as school readiness, student achievement, and school turnaround. Family–school partnerships are seen as essential supports[19] to school and district improvement and are elevated to a high priority across state, district, and school improvement plans.

Integrated

Capacity-building efforts are embedded into structures and processes such as training and professional development, teaching and learning, curriculum, and community collaboration. A district or school's efforts to build the capacity of families and staff to form effective partnerships are integrated into all aspects of its improvement strategy, such as the recruitment and training of effective teachers and school leaders, professional development, and mechanisms of evaluation and assessment.

Sustained

Programs operate with adequate resources and infrastructure support. Multiple funding streams are resourced to fund initiatives, and senior-level district leadership is empowered to coordinate family–school partnership strategies and initiatives as a component of the overall improvement strategy. School leaders are committed to and have a systemic vision of family engagement and family–school partnerships.

Policy and Program Goals

The Framework builds on existing research suggesting that partnerships between home and school can only develop and thrive if both families and staff have the requisite collective capacity to engage in partnership.[20] Many school and district family engagement initiatives focus solely on providing workshops and seminars for families on how to engage more effectively in their children's education. This focus on families alone often results in increased tension between families and school staff: families are trained to be more active in their children's schools, only to be met by an unreceptive and unwelcoming school climate and resistance from district and school staff to their efforts for more active engagement. Therefore, policies and programs directed at improving family engagement must focus on building the capacities of both staff and families to engage in partnerships.

Following the work of Higgins,[21] we break down capacity into four components—the "4 Cs":

Capabilities: Human Capital, Skills, and Knowledge

School and district staff need to be knowledgeable about the assets and funds of knowledge available in the communities where they work. They also need skills in the realms of cultural competency and of building trusting relationship with families. Families need access to knowledge about student learning and the workings of the school system. They also need skills in advocacy and educational support.

Connections: Important Relationships and Networks—Social Capital

Staff and families need access to social capital through strong, cross-cultural networks built on trust and respect. These networks should include family–teacher relationships, parent–parent relationships, and connections with community agencies and services.

Confidence: Individual Level of Self-Efficacy

Staff and families need a sense of comfort and

self-efficacy related to engaging in partnership activities and working across lines of cultural difference.

Cognition: Assumptions, Beliefs, and Worldview

Staff need to be committed to working as partners with families and must believe in the value of such partnerships for improving student learning. Families need to view themselves as partners in their children's education, and must construct their roles in their children's learning to include the multiple roles described in the Framework.

The Framework suggests that before effective home–school partnerships can be achieved at scale and sustained, these four components of partnership capacity must be enhanced among district/school staff and families.

The 4 Cs can also be used to develop a set of criteria from which to identify metrics to measure and evaluate policy and program effectiveness.[22] Examples of criteria aligned with the 4 Cs for both family and staff are included in the final section of this report.

Staff and Family Partnership Outcomes

Once staff and families have built the requisite capabilities, connections, confidence, and cognition, they will be able to engage in partnerships that will support student achievement and student learning.

Staff who are prepared to engage in partnerships with families can:

- honor and recognize families' existing knowledge, skill, and forms of engagement;
- create and sustain school and district cultures that welcome, invite, and promote family engagement; and
- develop family engagement initiatives and connect them to student learning and development.

Families who, regardless of their racial or ethnic identity, educational background, gender, disability, or socioeconomic status, are prepared to engage in partnerships with school and districts can engage in diverse roles such as:

- *Supporters* of their children's learning and development
- *Encouragers* of an achievement identity, a positive self image, and a "can do" spirit in their children
- *Monitors* of their children's time, behavior, boundaries, and resources
- *Models* of lifelong learning and enthusiasm for education
- *Advocates/Activists* for improved learning opportunities for their children and at their schools
- *Decision-makers/choosers* of educational options for their children, the school, and their community
- *Collaborators* with school staff and other members of the community on issues of school improvement and reform

As a result of this enhanced capacity on the part of families, districts and schools are able to cultivate and sustain active, respectful, and effective partnerships with families that foster school improvement, link to educational objectives, and support children's learning and development.

The Framework builds on existing research suggesting that partnerships between home and school can only develop and thrive if both families and staff have the requisite collective capacity to engage in partnership.



The Three Case Studies

In this section, we offer three cases of current efforts that bring the principles of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework to life.

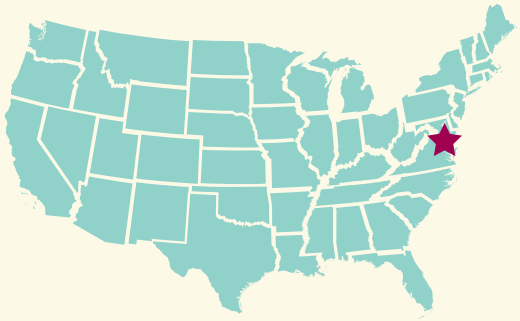
In the following sections, we offer three cases of current efforts that bring the principles of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework to life. The first case looks at **Stanton Elementary School** in Washington, DC, which has successfully implemented two strategies identified as best practices in family–school partnerships: home visits and academic parent–teacher teams. The second case looks at **Boston Public Schools**, whose Office of Family and Student Engagement builds capacity for partnership among both parents and educators through their Parent Academy and school-based Family–Community Outreach Coordinators. The third case describes California's **First 5 Santa Clara,** a county-wide effort to support the healthy development of its residents aged 0–5 through community-based Family Resource Centers and pre-kindergarten family programming. Throughout the case descriptions, we use italics to highlight the ways that these diverse efforts embody aspects of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework. While each case looks at a different level of organization—school, district, or county—they all speak to one another, and together they offer a sense of the breadth of possibilities inherent in the Framework.

CASE 1

Stanton Elementary School

A School in Crisis

In June 2010, Carolyn John learned that she had been chosen as the new principal of Stanton Elementary School, a start-up charter school located in the Anacostia neighborhood in southeast Washington, DC. Stanton was rated the lowest-performing elementary school in the district (DCPS). At the end of the 2010 school year, only 15% of the students were proficient in math and a mere 9% were proficient in reading. One parent described the school this way: "These were elementary school kids, and they were running the school. Parents were disconnected, staff and families were battling one another, and many of the staff seemed not to care." During the 2009–2010 school year, police were called to the elementary school on 24 occasions, and tensions and feelings of distrust were high between the school and parents. The school had been reconstituted two years earlier, and now had been identified for school turnaround by DCPS. Opting for the federal



school turnaround "restart" model, the DCPS selected Scholar Academies, a charter-school management organization, to partner with Principal John and her staff to transform the school.

Armed with a new, energetic teaching staff, Principal John began the 2010–2011 school year with a focus on improving instruction, implementing a new behavior management system, and improving the school culture. Principal John stated, "We started out with all the strategies that dominate the school reform conversation, and figured if we did all of those things, we would see drastic improvement in six to eight months." She said that she and her staff also scheduled all of the "boilerplate" family engagement events such as

back-to-school nights, bake sales, parent–teacher conferences, cookouts, and school dances—none of which were well attended by parents.

Despite these efforts, academic performance did not improve; in fact, test scores declined, and the school culture remained extremely problematic. Over 250 short-term suspensions were recorded within the first 25 weeks of school, parent attendance at parent–teacher conferences was 12%, and there were frequent incidents of hostility and disrespect between family and community members and staff. Principal John stated that she spent over 90% of her time "putting out fires, literally and figuratively," leaving little time to focus on teaching and learning. Staff were demoralized, with several stating that they went home each evening during the first year emotionally drained and distressed. Staff and parents refer to the 2010–2011 school year as "Year Zero" because of the lack of any real change at the school.

The Family Engagement Initiative at Stanton

In the spring of 2011, the Flamboyan Foundation partnered with DCPS's Office of Family and Public Engagement to initiate a family engagement pilot program with a small number of schools. Schools were chosen for the initiative based on criteria that emphasized the school leader's commitment to make family engagement part of the school's core improvement strategy, their strength as an instructional leader, and their ability to make positive changes in the culture and climate of the school. Stanton was one of the schools chosen for the pilot. In the spring and summer of 2011, using SIG (School Improvement Grant) funding and a grant from the Flamboyan Foundation to support the initiative, the staff received training on two components of the pilot program: the Parent–Teacher Home Visit Project from Sacramento, California and the Academic Parent–Teacher Team model from Creighton, Arizona.

Under the Parent–Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP), teachers and other school staff visit families with the goal of building relationships of trust and respect between home and school. These visits provide opportunities for educators to spend time in the neighborhoods in which they work and to listen to the perspectives of community members. The visits are not designed to be assessments of families; rather, they are relational in nature and are specifically designed to be respectful of families' assets and strengths and to build the capacity of both the educator and the family to support the academic and social success of every student.[23] Teachers begin the home visit conversations by asking families to share their hopes and dreams for their child as well as information about their child's strengths and possible challenges.

After their training by the Sacramento PTHVP team in the summer of 2011, Stanton teachers began conducting home visits to the families of their students. The staff set a goal of conducting 200 home visits by October 1; they exceeded their goal by completing 231 visits by their deadline. Stanton parents said that the home visits changed everything about the previous relationships between home and school. Parent Nadia Williams24 stated, "the staff are so welcoming and inviting now, everyone greets parents when we come into the school. I've never had such positive relationships with school staff like I have here at Stanton." Parents also stated that new positive energy at the school allowed them to shed any defensiveness they had previously felt when they interacted with staff. This then opened the parents up to listening to and learning from teachers and administrators.

Parent Katrina Grant described the immediate impact of the home visit on her relationship with staff and her interactions with them:

> What made me more engaged was the home visit. When they first called about the home visit, first, I was skeptical. I thought it was a CPS (Child Protection Services) visit. For the teachers to take the initiative, to come to my area where I live and have no problem with it, to sit in my living room, and ask about me and my child, that really meant something to me. It meant that this person is going to be my partner, and we were going to work together, and she cares for my child. The whole time we discussed my child. For me, that was the first engagement that signaled a change for me.
>
> Before, I used to always be on my guard and feeling defensive. I'm not defensive anymore. I really appreciate that—by my not being defensive, it allows me to take in information. At one time, I was so defensive I wouldn't hear a thing. Now, I trust when my children are here that they are in good hands. The staff has welcomed me to the point that now that they can say anything and tell me things and I'll feel okay about it.

Parent Ellen Little made the distinction between the PTHVP home visits and other home visits she had received in the past:

> To make a long story short, that home visit was the best visit of my life. Now, the teacher and I are so connected. I really appreciate these home visits;

> when I was coming up we received home visits, but they were for CPS or they were for attendance issues. Home visits were for a lot of negative issues and so there are a lot of negative connotations around the idea of home visits. I'm glad that is changing.

Teachers commented that the effect of the summer and early fall home visits was felt "instantly." Teacher Melissa Bryant commented, "We really saw the impact of the home visits at our first back-to-school night in September. We had set up a small number of chairs because of our usual low attendance, but then parents kept coming and coming. We had to run and get more chairs, and the next thing we knew, staff had to give up their seats for parents." Teachers also stated how the home visits profoundly changed their perceptions of Stanton parents. "I used to put parents in boxes based on their engagement levels," stated Bryant. "I learned from the home visits that all parents care about their children's education. . . . If parents don't help with academics, it's because they don't know how, not that they don't care."

As staff began to develop relationships of trust and respect with families through the home visits, the second phase of the initiative was introduced: Academic Parent–Teacher Teams (APTT). The APTT model, developed by Dr. Maria Paredes, repurposes traditional parent–teacher conferences with a focus on group learning and collaboration. Family members of all the children in a single class meet together with the teacher three times a year for 75 minutes, along with a single 30-minute individual parent–teacher conference. The APTT initiative provides a structure for parents to meet with teachers and converse, build *networks* with other parents, and learn ways to support their child's academic skill development. The objectives of the APTT model include increasing parents' *efficacy* and *confidence* to support student learning, and building school faculty capacity to work effectively with families.

Team meetings usually begin with icebreakers and time to celebrate the progress that students have made. Parents share with teachers and with one another the areas their child is struggling with, and the successful strategies they have been using to support their child's learning. Teachers, in turn, explain what knowledge and skills the students are expected to master at each grade level. They present academic performance data for the entire class and give parents individual information about their own child's performance. Teachers then model activities that parents can do at home with their child, and assist parents in setting goals for their child's progress.[25]

Stanton staff ran APTT meetings in the fall, focusing on reading and math goals for the year. Parents were given materials and a chance to learn and practice activities they could do with their children at home to help them master specific math and reading skills. These meetings were both *interactive* and *collaborative;* parents worked together with one another and with teachers to share techniques, practice activities, and celebrate success. Teachers found that these meetings not only served as a way to support parents, but as a way to inform their own teaching. They commented that they learned new skills from parents that they could use in their classroom instruction.

By the end of the 2012 school year, Stanton increased their math scores by more than 18 percentage points and reading scores by more than 9 percentage points.

During the 2011–2012 school year, the Stanton staff conducted a total of 450 home visits and scheduled 30 APTT meetings for families. During the previous year, only 12% of the families had attended parent–teacher conferences. In 2011–2012, approximately 55% of the parents attended all three APTT meetings. By the end of the 2012 school year, Stanton increased their math scores by more than 18 percentage points and reading scores by more than 9 percentage points. These increases were brought about through strategic interventions such as improving school culture, focusing on rigorous instruction, and through their new model of family engagement.[26] School staff specifically point to the shift from a focus on behavior to a focus on academics as key in the building of new relationships of trust and respect between home and school. Teachers and families now describe Stanton as a "joyous place" where families, community members, and school staff work as a team to improve student achievement. Teacher Sheryl Garner discussed the shared responsibility and reciprocal relationships that have developed between her and the parents of the children in her classroom:

> As a result of the home visits and the relationship building, parents meet up to the expectations that teachers have for parents, and then teachers meet up to the expectations that parents have for teachers. I know what the parent wants for their child, and they know what I want from their child and from them. I do my part, they do their part, and then the child does their part. We become the team.

Conclusion

The Stanton case provides a promising example of how building the capacity of both school staff and families to work in partnership, in combination with the other "essential supports"27 required for school improvement—effective leadership, the professional capacity of staff, a student-centered learning climate, and instructional support and guidance—can lead to dramatic shifts in the culture and climate of a school and in the academic outcomes for children. Principal John stated, "The work of family engagement is particularly important to me, my staff, and our community because experience has taught us that the adults in a school building alone cannot drive dramatic change by themselves."

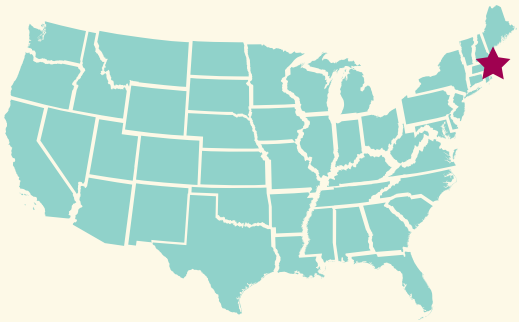
CASE 2

Boston Public Schools

Background

In the fall of 2008, Michele Brooks was hired on as the new Deputy Superintendent for Family and Student Engagement for the Boston Public Schools (BPS). A former parent organizer and member of the Boston School Committee, Brooks first assessed the "current state" of family and community engagement at BPS. What she found was a system in which "great things, wonderful things, were happening in pockets…but it was all random and not connected." Her task—and that of her staff over the coming years—would be to build a system that was cohesive, coordinated, and integrated across the district. A key piece of this effort would involve building the capacity of teachers, administrators, district personnel, and families to engage in authentic school–home partnerships.

Brooks had inherited a district with a long history of efforts to engage families, dating back to Judge Arthur Garrity's 1974 desegregation order and the creation of the Citywide Parents Council. These efforts became more institutionalized in 1995 with the establishment of the Parent Support Services Office, and then in 2002 with the creation of the Office of Family and Community Engagement (OFCE) and the position of Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement. By the time Brooks took over, the OFCE—now restructured as the Office of Family and Student Engagement (OFSE)—had made progress in a number of areas. Most notably, they had established the position of Family and Community Outreach Coordinator (FCOC)—school-based personnel dedicated to increasing family engagement at the school level. But even though decades of work



around family engagement had led to broad consensus about the value and meaning of family engagement, the OFSE, and the system as a whole, struggled to translate robust policies into effective implementation.

One of the major issues Brooks faced was that many people, both inside and outside the OFSE, assumed it was the job of OFSE staff to directly engage families. But with 22 staff and around 38,000 families in the district, there was no way the OFSE could do this alone. So Brooks led a strategic planning process that reframed the work of engaging families as the responsibility of everyone in the district. The role of the OFSE, then, would be to *build the capacity of the district* to engage families. In fact, the OFSE incorporated a four-pronged approach to capacity building:

- build the capacity of families to become engaged as partners in their children's education;
- build the capacity of school staff to understand the benefits of family engagement and build school-wide and individual practice;
- build the capacity of students to be actively engaged in their own learning; and
- build the capacity of the district to promote core values of engagement and to develop an infrastructure that includes accountability.

Brooks stated, "Once we identified our new direction of building capacity for family engagement, our office did an assessment of where we were at in terms of our own current capacity. We wanted to assess where we already had systems, structures, and programming, and where we needed to improve." They found that building family capacity was by far their most developed strength. The OFSE had been working to make Family Resource Centers more family friendly, offering School-Site Council trainings, and improving communication with parents. In 2009, they launched Parent University, a capacity-building initiative that now serves as a national model. But when it came to building school and district capacity, Brooks and her staff saw the need for new and innovative efforts.

Building Teacher Capacity

Efforts to build the capacity of school personnel to engage families had so far been promising but sporadic. So the OFSE went to its teacher and principal advisory groups to inquire into exactly where school staff needed the most support and training. Teachers explained that they needed a way to better leverage conversations that they were already having with families. As Brooks explained,

> They wanted to move beyond the "your child is a good child, your child is doing well in school" kind of conversations that were perfunctory. They wanted to know, "How do we talk to parents about student progress? How do we engage families in ways that will link them to learning and what is happening in our classrooms?" Teachers wanted to know about how to talk to parents about student outcomes. So that was an area that we knew as the OFSE that we needed to build our own internal capacity.

As a result, the OFSE—in collaboration with teachers, the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, the Office of Communications, and the initiative "Countdown to Kindergarten"—developed the *Family Guides to Learning*. These guides, which cover the skills and knowledge students should be learning at each grade level, serve not only as a resource for families, but as a tool to help teachers build their capacity to have effective conversations with families. Only given to schools that agree to use them as a teacher tool, the *Guides* are often used during parent–teacher conferences to facilitate discussions of outcomes and student trajectories. The OFSE offers trainings and a "tip sheet" to teachers for using the *Guides* with families.

Next, the OFSE developed a 12-hour professional development series on family engagement that teachers could opt into. Teachers in the course had the opportunity to examine their current practice, understand the research on family engagement, and learn how they could apply that research in building up their personal engagement practices. A large component of the training, Brooks explains,

> …focused on cultural proficiency. Who are your families? How do you know who your families are? We gave them tools around home visits, "listening" conferences instead of traditional parent–teacher conferences, and student-led parent–teacher conferences. We tried to give them all these different strategies that would help them understand their students and their families more deeply and to build effective engagement practice.

The Boston Public Schools story highlights the possibilities for creating engagement initiatives that are systemic across a district, integrated into the work of teaching and learning, and that build school and district capacity at multiple levels.

Since the professional development sessions were developed in 2011, they have been continually assessed and revised. Most recently, they were aligned with the new Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Standards, which include family and community engagement as one of the four "pillars" of effective teaching. Soon they will be offering a 60-hour credit-bearing class in conjunction with the BPS Office of Educator Effectiveness. Teachers will "test into" the course based on their level of proficiency. Some of the teachers who took the 12-hour course have been selected to serve as faculty and teacher leaders for the district on family engagement. Veteran teacher Ilene Carver, who was identified as a teacher leader in the initiative, has long been an advocate for building the capacity of school staff to partner with families. Carver stated:

> I would not have survived my first year of teaching if I hadn't built relationships with the families that I taught. I feel that my success as a teacher is dependent on my relationships with families. I tell teachers that "your survival is dependent on these partnerships with families as well as a factor in affecting student outcomes." I am thrilled that this is finally happening, that the district is looking at the training of teachers as a part of a *systemic* plan to cultivate partnerships.

Building Whole-School Capacity

Though individual teacher practice is a key piece of family engagement, Brooks and her staff saw that for engagement to be *integrated* and *sustainable,* it would need to be addressed on the school level. While the *Family Guides to Learning* were in development in the spring of 2009, the OFSE started to work with teachers and principals on their whole-school improvement plans. The OFSE wanted to ensure that schools had a viable family engagement strategy that was *linked to its instructional strategy*. Based on promising practice in Boston and around the country, they created a set of criteria for, and examples of, "high-impact strategies" aligned with district academic targets. These criteria included strategies that:

- target a specific grade level or group of students;
- focus on the mastery of a specific task;
- provide a specific role for families to play in the mastery of that task; and
- involve two-way communication between home and school around task mastery.

The OFSE created binders with support materials to help teachers and principals build their whole-school improvement plans—links to outside resources, suggestions for how to raise funds, etc. Although the OFSE offered specific examples of initiatives, they also encouraged schools to be creative. As Brooks says, the examples were presented as "ideas, we wanted the schools to take them and use them as their own—to be tweaked to fit their school's context."

Implementation varied by school. Some schools were very successful at implementing the strategies. In others, however, the information was used to write family engagement into the whole-school improvement plan, after which the document languished on the shelf. The OFSE heard from principals that the strategies were a challenge to implement because family engagement was still seen as an add-on and as not aligned with curriculum requirements such as scope and sequencing. So the OFSE went back to the drawing board and worked with the Office of Curriculum and Instruction to align their high-impact strategies with BPS curriculum materials so that the engagement strategies would not be seen as an add on. These new strategies came out in 2012.

Moreover, Brooks has been working hard to improve the Family Community Outreach Coordinator (FCOC) Initiative. When the OFSE took stock of the current state of the initiative, they found a very uneven terrain. So they looked into what divided schools where FCOCs were able to be effective from those where they were not. They found that "[s]uccessful schools have created specific conditions for engagement and have utilized their FCOC as a catalyst for building effective practice. FCOC schools with moderate-to-low impact generally have not utilized the FCOC in a way that would build internal capacity among school staff to effectively engage families."[28] In other words, the FCOCs were facing a similar dilemma. It was assumed by many that the FCOCs' job was to *do* family engagement on their own—so any issue related to a family was simply dropped in their lap. The OFSE got to work shifting the role of the FCOCs toward being family engagement coaches and providing technical assistance. To this end, they developed a set of effective practices for the FCOCs.

Building District Capacity

When it came to building capacity at the district level, there were strong policies and protocols in place that could serve as a foundation for building a system-wide infrastructure. For example, the BPS framework "The Seven Essentials for Whole School Improvement" named family engagement as "essential." Family engagement also appears in the district's "Dimensions of Effective Teaching and School Leadership." What was not articulated, however, was how such standards would be implemented.

Brooks and her staff took these various policies and standards to the Deputy Superintendents in charge of those areas and said, "This is a part of your work. It overlaps with the work of the OFSE. Let us help you meet the requirements for family engagement. . . . OFSE will be able to give you what you need so that you won't have to figure out this family engagement piece on your own." In this way, OFSE acted not as a monitor but as a partner. They recognized that others were going to be held accountable for family engagement, and offered to help build their capacity. This served as a strategy for building *relationships* across departments and embedding family engagement as a shared, district-wide responsibility.

In one example of such cross-district collaboration, when the *Family Guides* first came out they were distributed not by OFSE but by the district's Curriculum and Instruction coaches. In another example, the OFSE brought in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction in to work on the parent workshops at Parent University. Brooks is proud of these collaborations,

which offer chances to share knowledge and expertise in both directions.

> We're integrated across the district. We have staff on the literacy panel, we have certified teachers coaching the OFSE staff on instructional rounds so that when OFSE staff do a walkthrough, they are not just making the connections to family engagement but to other curriculum and instruction areas as well.

One of the biggest challenges for OFSE at the district level has been assessment; the office is currently working on improving data collection and evaluation. Brooks regrets not focusing on this earlier in her tenure. The OFSE enlisted the leadership development group Ed Pioneers to help them collect the right data, and then added staff with program evaluation experience. Moreover, the team created processes to help everyone shift to an evaluation mindset, so when they start to talk about a new strategy they also have a conversation about how to evaluate it, asking: "What's the problem of practice we are trying to solve and then how will we evaluate impact?" Today they are getting a handle on their current "baseline" and are much more clear about the questions they are trying to answer. With this new focus on assessment, the OFSE has worked with the Office of Assessment to develop the BPS School Climate Survey, which addresses effective family engagement practice in schools. Every year, before the surveys go out, OFSE runs promotions to reach families. The Office of Assessment oversees the survey and then passes the results to OFSE, so that OFSE can work with the schools on areas that need improvement.

Conclusion

The BPS story highlights the possibilities for creating engagement initiatives that are *systemic* across a district, *integrated* into the work of teaching and learning, and that build school and district capacity at multiple levels. But perhaps its most important lesson is about the need for a shift in mindset: family engagement cannot be seen as the job of a single person or office, but as a shared responsibility. As Brooks puts it:

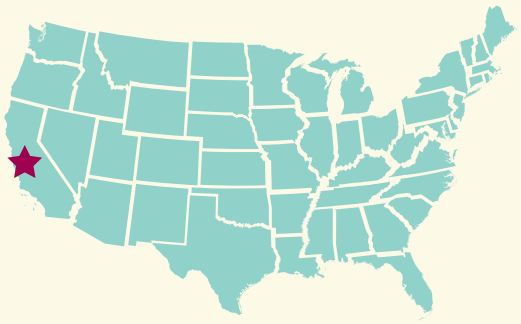
> Capacity building was really about changing the way we worked together, and changing the way we looked at our work. Family engagement wasn't just the OFSE's work; it was everybody's work. Some OFSE staff wanted to hold the work and claim it as their own—everybody was to go through them to get the work done. Now, others have the capacity to talk about and act on the family engagement work in a way that is aligned with effective practice—OFSE let it go so it could grow.

CASE 3

First 5 Santa Clara County

Background

Jolene Smith was working for the Santa Clara County Social Service Agency when she was asked by County Supervisor Blanca Alvarado to lead a community planning process addressing how the county could best support the education and healthy development of its youngest residents, prenatal to age five. Santa Clara County, CA, at the southern end of the Bay Area, covers a sprawling array of cities and suburbs. The county is best known as the home of Silicon Valley. However, the tech wealth concentrated in the county is far from equally distributed across its population of 1.75 million; more than 9% of the population lives below the poverty line. Over 50% of residents speak a language



other than English at home. The county is home to 120,000 children under the age of five.[29] Under Smith's direction, the newly created Early Childhood Development Collaborative (ECDC) ran a two-year community-based planning process, speaking with thousands of residents across the county. As Smith recounts, "Over 5,000 people in Santa Clara County—families, children, professionals, folks in the early childhood community, business, law enforcement—really those 5,000 voices developed our strategic plan."

Participants were asked, "What needs to be in place for your child to grow healthy and strong and reach their full potential?" These conversations resulted in a call for a "family-centered approach" to child development, focused on supporting parents as children's "first teachers." Parents identified a great need for "access to information about how to really nurture and grow their healthy, happy child." The process resulted in a bold vision for change. But, says Smith, at the time there was no money for implementation. "That was going to be our next big challenge: how were we going to raise the money to implement these strategies the community had come up with?"

In 1998, Californians voted to pass Proposition 10, which added a 50-cent tax to each pack of cigarettes sold in the state and funded the establishment of the California Children and Families Commission, or First 5 California. In order to carry out its vision that "all children in California enter school ready to achieve their greatest potential," First 5 California dispersed funds to local commissions in each of the state's 58 counties, charging them with establishing a system of services for children and families. Because Santa Clara County had already developed a plan, it was among the very first counties to apply for Prop. 10 funding. The County received $27 million dollars, and First 5 Santa Clara County was born.

Today, First 5 Santa Clara County works with over 40 nonprofit, school district, and government partners to offer a broad array of services. All services are based in "natural support systems" and draw on the existing organizations and resources in a community. As Smith, who is now the organization's CEO, explains, the goal is *systemic* integration: "Our vision here in Santa Clara County is to act as a catalyst for ensuring that the developmental needs of children ages 0–5 are a priority in all sectors of the community." When it comes to education, First 5 Santa Clara's parent-centered approach offers the training, resources, and opportunities parents need to support their children's learning from infancy, and to partner with schools as their children transition into kindergarten.

Supporting Families in the Franklin-McKinley School District

When Dr. John Porter took over as Superintendent of the Franklin-McKinley School District in San Jose, California in 2006, he was returning to California after working 12 years with school districts in New Jersey and around the nation. He came to Franklin-McKinley with a firm belief in the importance of early childhood development to later school success, but he was frustrated by the Balkanized approach to early childhood funding and services in California. The shining light, however, was First 5 Santa Clara, which early on had chosen Franklin-McKinley as one of its targeted school districts. Porter—whom Smith calls a "visionary man" who "truly believes in early learning"—would work closely with First 5 Santa Clara over the next seven years to expand its existing initiatives and develop new ones.

At the time, First 5 Santa Clara was running a Family Support Center (FRC) out of a portable school building at McKinley Elementary. Together, Porter and First 5 Santa Clara expanded the FRC's capacity and moved it into a more permanent space at Santee Elementary. A centerpiece of First 5 Santa Clara's work with school districts, the FRCs are multi-service centers, run by local partners, which offer a menu of resources, workshops, and learning opportunities for families. Parents who come to an FRC find child enrichment activities, assistance with health insurance, and courses on topics such as early literacy, positive parenting, parent advocacy, and nutrition. As Porter explains, FRCs have pre-planned programming, but also adapt to the needs of attending parents.

> They are like a broker for information for families, but they offer specific training as well. …And every once and a while if they find a need they do something fun with parents. I watched a dance class the other day that they spun off and sponsored for the parents after they did their training. They can go anywhere the parents that they work with want them to go, but their focus is on making sure every parent has the skills necessary for their child to be successful at school.

The FRCs house "community workers," paraprofessionals whose job it is to reach out to families in the community, share information related to health, development and education, and link them with the services at the FRC. Alongside the community workers are "associate community workers," volunteers from the community, many of whom had formerly used the resource centers as parents. Rather than treating each parent as an individual learner, the FRCs are built on a *collaborative* model in which families build connections with one another through mutual teaching and support, and in which the knowledge and skills of families are valued. As Laura Buzo, Program Director for the Family Resource Centers, explains:

> Oftentimes you find parents—especially the immigrant, monolingual, Spanish-speaking parents who may not have any other family here—who feel they are the only ones struggling with these issues, whether it be learning their child may have a learning disability, or their husband just got laid off. By building a sense of community, parents look to each other for support and information sharing. So a lot of activities are about helping the parents learn from each other. What we really want community workers to communicate to the parents is that the community worker doesn't know everything. The parents have a lot of information, have a lot of knowledge, have a lot of resources that they can share with one another.…So we do find that the parents do end up connecting, and becoming a community in the FRC, which really spills out into other areas of the neighborhood and community, because then those parents start taking a leadership role and then they bring other parents in, or they go out and talk to other families about what they're learning.

Locating the FRCs on or near school campuses is an explicit strategy aimed at helping parents get to know their local schools and *building trust* between schools and families. For Porter, this is an important opportunity for teachers and principals to meet both current and future parents, and to experience the kind of support the centers offer. He says that this opportunity has changed how schools relate to incoming kindergarten parents; the schools now focus more on preparing parents before their child starts classes. In addition, he says, principals sometimes learn techniques and information from the FRCs and use them to support parents of children in the higher grades.

Building School–Child–Family Relationships in the Transition to Kindergarten

Not long after taking over as Superintendent, Dr. Porter asked First 5 Santa Clara CEO Jolene Smith and Lisa Kaufman, from the county Office of Education, to sit down and discuss a pressing need he saw in the district: how to support incoming kindergarten students who have not had prior school experience, either in preschool or through Head Start. This discussion resulted in Kinder Academy, which was piloted at Santee Elementary in 2010. Kinder Academy is a summer bridge program that runs for three weeks before the start of kindergarten. During this time, incoming kindergarteners attend classes with their assigned kindergarten teacher. As teacher Jan White describes,

> It's more social than the regular classroom. It's all about learning routines, how we look at books, turn the pages, sit on the circle, teaching the procedures. And it's teaching many of them to get along with other kids. It's all about getting them excited to come to school.

First 5 Santa Clara County offers a bright example of how to build capacity for home–school partnerships in a systemic, sustained way at the county level.

Meanwhile, parents are taking part in First 5 Santa Clara's popular parent program, Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors). Developed by the L.A.-based nonprofit Families in Schools, Abriendo Puertas (AP) is described by Smith as an "evidence-based parent empowerment program, where they learn to be really strong advocates and partners with their child's teacher." The ten-week course, taught by local parents, is framed around the idea of the parent as the child's first teacher, and the curriculum[30] covers the many roles that parents play in supporting their children's education and development—*supporting* learning at home, *making decisions* about learning opportunities, *advocating* for their child's needs, and *collaborating* with educators. The *interactive* nature of the workshops, with plenty of roleplaying, allows parents to practice skills such as having a one-on-one conversation with a teacher or voicing concerns to district staff. But perhaps more profoundly, the course seeks to shift the way parents see themselves, building parents' *beliefs* in their own abilities to support learning and advocate in the school system. Parents who graduate from AP report feeling significantly more capable across an array of areas including helping their children learn, being involved in school, and feeling connected to their community. According to Kinder Academy teacher Jan White, the course has a visible effect.

> It is evident with the number of parents I'll have on the first day of school. They'll all be there, ready to go, "What can I do to help?" Even the ones that don't speak the same language, we communicate and they are right in there helping. I've had an amazing amount of parent support.

The overarching mission of Kinder Academy is relational. The program is designed to facilitate ongoing interactions among the parents, the child, and the

future kindergarten teacher. Because of these interactions, according to Smith, "when the teacher goes into their classroom in September, the children know them, they know what to expect…and parents have a relationship with the teacher. So the triangle engagement has already begun." In fact, this commitment to relationships undergirds all of First 5 Santa Clara's programming. As Smith explains:

> The premise of everything we do is based on engagement and relationship from an ecological perspective aimed at the healthy development of the child. That is the number one charge, all the way from the top of the system down to what happens at the street level. That's why the operators of our FRCs are community organizations from the neighborhoods, so the relationship is already there. Parents trust the place, they trust what they learn. We have associate volunteers [from the community] engaged in the design, the recruitment, because neighbors trust neighbors. Then as we move up into the school-system level, it's all about relationships and engagement: the parent–child–teacher relationship, the school administrator–parent–child relationship, the superintendent's relationship to what is happening in the classroom.

For Jan White, relationships with parents have been vital to her work as a classroom teacher. White uses the Kinder Academy time to begin her home visits with parents, where she works to develop p*artnership-oriented* relationships: "Just building that relationship with the parents and letting them know that we're on the same team, that we're working on this together." Over time, these relationships have helped to shape her views of parents, and her job satisfaction.

> I have gained an amazing amount of respect for what our parents go through, and I have to say I'm not sure I could overcome many of the obstacles that they overcame. I highly respect what they do, and even though it may not always be the way I do it, or the way I would do it, or how I think they should do it, I don't think I've met a parent yet who wouldn't do whatever they could to help their child do better in school. They just don't always know how. I have grown to love and respect these parents very much. That's why I don't leave.

Leadership Pipeline: A Parent's Experience

Christina Hernandez learned about First 5 Santa Clara when her second child was heading into kindergarten at Santee Elementary School. A stay-at-home mother with two children, Hernandez was concerned about her son's transition into school, particularly because he had no previous experience with preschool or daycare. When she received a letter inviting her to Kinder Academy, Hernandez enrolled. Three weeks before the start of the school year, her son began attending sessions with his soon-to-be kindergarten teacher.

While her son was learning how to get along with other kids, Hernandez was in AP, where she remembers learning useful information about healthy eating and healthy living. She also says that she developed the knowledge and the confidence she needed to navigate the public school system. When she found out that her son had a hearing impairment, she was able to take steps to support him at home and in school.

> I was able to talk to the teacher and see if she'd seen any changes, or anything catching her attention. She did see that he wouldn't respond when he would sit in the back. So I was actually able to talk to her and see if she would let him participate more, get him involved more in activities, sit him up in the front. Through her I was able to talk to the principal, have a one-on-one about how we were going to take Isaac and give him the speech support he needed.

Through Kinder Academy, Hernandez learned about the Family Resource Centers, eventually serving as a parent volunteer and assisting facilitators with their classes and workshops. Today she works in the FRC as part of the Quality Early Learning Opportunities program, which offers childcare and enrichment for children whose parents are taking part in FRC activities. As program director Buzo explains, "Hernandez is an excellent example of how parents can begin by taking a single program and then develop into community leaders." Hernandez reports being at school every day, speaking with her children's teachers about how her children are doing in school and how she can help them at home. She also helps other parents, connecting them to services through the FRC.

For Hernandez, the biggest benefits of involvement are the new connections she's built to her community and the example she sets for her children.

> I feel more connected to my community now. I was a stay-at-home mom for seven years. I would just stay at home, and go drop them off [at school]. Now I don't just walk straight home. I participate at the FRC, and I have something to look forward to. I see other parents, and they see what I've done, and they see that if I could do it anyone could do it....My kids, seeing what I've done, that I've got confidence.

Conclusion

First 5 Santa Clara County offers a bright example of how to build capacity for home–school partnerships in a systemic, sustained way at the county level. Through its partnership with districts like Franklin-McKinley, First 5 Santa Clara has helped to empower a population of confident, knowledgeable parents who can support and advocate for their children. The program has also fostered a school system that values parental involvement and builds strong relationships with families and communities. Recently, First 5 Santa Clara has been increasing its efforts to support teachers in reaching out to parents; a pilot program is placing "family support specialists" in classrooms to facilitate teacher–parent interactions and to help parents connect with available resources. As Superintendent Porter explains, "What First 5 has done is help districts keep their eye on the ball with what parents need to be better advocates for their child when they start right away at school, and not wait for the shoe to drop later on."



Conclusion and Recommendations

Schools, districts, and government agencies across the country are becoming more aware of the importance of building family–school partnerships that are focused on student learning and development.

Schools, districts, and government agencies across the country are becoming more aware of the importance of building family–school partnerships that are focused on student learning and development. This paradigm shift can clearly be seen in the increasing number of federal and state policies that include family engagement as an integral part of school and district reform. As educators and policymakers become clearer on the *why* of engagement, they are still struggling with the *how*. We argue that these struggles emerge in part from a lack of attention to building capacity among families, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders.

In this paper, we have shared a framework for designing partnership initiatives that build capacity among families and schools while supporting student learning. We do not offer a one-size-fits-all prescription because any effort must begin by assessing local conditions, assets, and needs. The cases we describe above should give some sense of the diverse models being developed around the nation, and these are far from exhaustive. Instead of a *roadmap,* we offer those developing family engagement programs and policies a *compass,* a reorientation toward adult learning and development that can lay the foundation for the family and community ties that the Chicago Consortium has shown are so integral to whole-school reform (See Figure 1 on page 4).

As the cases above make clear, programs for building capacity for family–school partnerships need not always be carried out prior to, or in addition to, other engagement activities. Capacity-building can be built into the very fabric of an initiative by designing it according to the process and organizational conditions outlined in the Framework. An initiative that is relational, collaborative, and developmental can build capacity at the same time that it directly addresses student success. So, while building capacity does require resources, it need not divert attention from the shared concerns of parents and educators: the students. For those designing new family engagement programs or policies, we hope the Dual Capacity-Building Framework can serve as a scaffold for planning. Educators and policy makers can lay a strong foundation for ambitious engagement efforts by including capacity goals for families and staff and by embedding the necessary process and organizational conditions from the very start. For those who are already running family–school partnership initiatives, the Framework can serve as a tool for facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue. Having stakeholders work through the Framework components together can clarify where an initiative is strong and where more work is needed.

> The Framework reveals that, in order for family–school partnerships to succeed, the adults responsible for children's education must learn and grow, just as they support learning and growth among students.

Moreover, the Framework's goals and outcomes can be used as the basis for developing metrics that measure capacity growth among family and staff. The following are examples of possible criteria based around the 4 Cs of capacity development and aligned with the outcomes for family and staff.

Capabilities:

- Families have increased their knowledge and understanding of what their children should

know and be able to do from birth through secondary school and have increased their portfolio of tools and activities that they can use to enhance their children's learning.

- Families have enhanced knowledge and understanding of educational policies and programs, such as those associated with special needs and Title I.
- Families have enhanced their own skills associated with literacy and language acquisition, degree completion, and job skills.
- District and school staff have increased their knowledge of the assets and funds of knowledge of the families and communities they work in.
- District and school staff have increased their knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive practices and pedagogy.
- District and school staff have increased their portfolio of ways to reach out and build respectful and trusting relationships with families.

Connections:

- Levels of relational trust have increased between families and school staff.
- The number and scope of parent-to-parent networks and connections has increased.
- The number of cross-cultural networks (across race, socioeconomic status, education level, etc.) have increased between school staff and families.
- Families and staff have increased their connections to community agencies and services.

Confidence:

- Families and school staff indicate an increase in their comfort level and sense of self-efficacy when engaging in home–school partnership events and activities.
- An increased number of families and staff from diverse backgrounds take on positions of leadership at the school or in the community.

Cognition:

- Families' beliefs about the role they play in their children's education have broadened to include multiple roles.
- District and school staff members' core beliefs about family engagement have been discussed and documented.
- Staff and families' belief systems about the value of home–school partnerships are linked to learning and school improvement.
- Staff have a commitment to family engagement as a core strategy to improve teaching and learning.

In addition to long-term assessment of student learning and development, these criteria offer proximal outcomes that can serve as early and ongoing evidence of successes and challenges, offering invaluable information for assessing and improving initiatives. In Boston, for example, the Office of Family and Student Engagement has begun measuring proximal[31] outcomes such as proficient practice among educators, what families know and are able to do, and how welcoming schools are to families and community members. Assessment tools aligned with the Framework are already available, including the Harvard Graduate School of Education PreK–12 Parent Survey.[32] Designed in collaboration with SurveyMonkey, the Parent Survey measures capacity-related outcomes such as school climate and parents' feelings of self-efficacy.

The knowledge distilled in the Dual Capacity-Building Framework is the result of decades of work by teachers, parents, researchers, administrators, policy makers, and community members. The Framework reveals that, in order for family–school partnerships to succeed, the adults responsible for children's education must learn and grow, just as they support learning and growth among students.

Endnotes

1. The terms *family/ies* and *parent/s* are used in this paper to represent any adult caretakers who have responsibility for the well-being of a child or children. This includes, for example, biological parents, foster care providers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, or fictive kin.
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About the Authors

Karen L. Mapp

Karen L. Mapp, EdD, is a Senior Lecturer on Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) and the Faculty Director of the Education Policy and Management Master's Program. Over the past twenty years, her research and practice focus has been on the cultivation of partnerships among families, community members and educators that support student achievement and school improvement. She has served as the co-coordinator with Professor Mark Warren of the Community Organizing and School Reform Research Project and as a core faculty member in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership (EDLD) program at HGSE. She is a founding member of the District Leaders Network on Family and Community Engagement, is a trustee of the Hyams Foundation in Boston, MA, and is on the board of the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) in Washington, DC. Dr. Mapp served as a consultant on family engagement to the United States Department of Education in the Office of Innovation and Improvement.

Dr. Mapp joined HGSE in January of 2005 after serving for eighteen months as the Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement for the Boston Public Schools (BPS). While working with the BPS, she continued to fulfill her duties as president of the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE). She joined IRE in 1997 as Project Director, was appointed vice-president of IRE in May of 1998 and served as president from September 1998 to December 2004. Dr. Mapp holds an EdD and MA in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, an MA in Education from Southern Connecticut State University, and a BA degree in Psychology from Trinity College in Hartford, CT.

Dr. Mapp is the author and co-author of several articles and books about the role of families and community members in the work of student achievement and school improvement including: *A New Wave Of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (2002); "Having Their Say: Parents Describe How and Why They are Engaged in Their Children's Learning" (2003); *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* (2010); "Debunking the Myth of the Hard to Reach Parent" (2010); "Title I and Parent Involvement: Lessons from the Past, Recommendations for the Future" (2011); and *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform* (2011).

Paul J. Kuttner

Paul Kuttner is a researcher and educator whose work focuses on community-based approaches to school reform, youth civic engagement, and social change. He is a co-author of *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform* (2011, Oxford University Press), and a co-editor of *Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline* (2012, Harvard Educational Review). His current research focuses on the emerging field of youth cultural organizing, a youth development and social change strategy that engages young people as artists and change agents in their communities.

Mr. Kuttner is currently finishing his doctoral studies at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and is a former co-chair of the Harvard Educational Review editorial board. Prior graduate school, He worked as a theater educator in Chicago, and co-founded the community-based organization Communities Creating Change. He holds an MA from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a BA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Credits

AUTHORS
Karen L. Mapp
Paul J. Kuttner

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
Lacy Wood

EDITOR
April West

DESIGNER
Shaila Abdullah

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4700 Mueller Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78723
Tel: 800-476-6861
Fax: 512-476-2286
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