CORE FUNCTION	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Family Engagement in a School Community	Provide two-way, school-home communication linked to learning	The school regularly communicates with parents about its expectations of them and the importance of the curriculum of the home (what parents can do at home to support their children's learning). (5182)

While family discussions and everyday actions are often not visible to educators, research shows this "curriculum of the home" has statistically large effects on student outcomes. School staff can take advantage of opportunities to communicate with families about the importance of these seemingly ordinary interactions to support children's learning, simultaneously building stronger relationships with families, respecting their diverse home cultures, and increasing student success.

Are all school staff aware of the curriculum of the home and its importance? When and how do we communicate with parents and other family members about the many subtle but important ways they can support their children's learning? Are staff trained in effective communication practices?

> The school is most effective when the home does its part. Therefore, the connection between the school and the home is essential to school improvement and school success. Helping parents fully engage in the learning lives of their children is a necessary function of the school, and one that requires considerable, consistent, and competent attention. A fruitful connection between the school and the home is built upon purpose, communication, education, and association. (Redding, 2006, p. 145)

We have significant research that shows that schools can improve their students' learning by engaging parents in ways that directly relate to their children's academic progress, maintaining a consistent message of what is expected of parents, and reaching parents directly, personally, and with a trusting approach (Redding, 2006). The "curriculum of the home"—the bundle of attitudes, habits, knowledge, and skills that children acquire through their relationship with their family and that facilitates school learning—is more predictive of academic learning than the family's socioeconomic status (Marzano et al., 2001; Redding, 2000, 2006). This includes monitoring homework, of course, but also includes many other aspects of home life that are important for school adjustment that teachers may or may not recognize as parental involvement (Ferrara, 2009). Even parents who rarely or never come to the school are often deeply involved with their children at home (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Shumow, 2010). In a series of meta-analyses, Jeynes found that subtle aspects of parental involvement—such as expectations and parenting style—were actually the most salient to children's achievement (Jeynes, 2010, 2011). Redding (2006) describes:

> From the example and expectations of their parents, children learn to do their best whatever the task, to honor the importance of punctuality, and to give schoolwork priority over other activities.…When parents monitor their children's use of time, the quality of their televiewing, their use of computer games and the internet, and their associations with peers, children learn to place proper value on competing interests. Parental knowledge of their children's progress in school and their personal growth, gained in part from close communication with teachers, helps emphasize the importance of learning and provides parents with the information necessary to make the best decisions about their children's schooling. (p. 153)

Henderson and Mapp's (2002) review of research confirms families' desire to be involved in their children's education across all ethnicities, locations, and socioeconomic status levels; it also confirmed that such involvement, especially involvement at home, was correlated with student achievement. They also echoed Swap's (1993) conclusions that effective parent engagement must be comprehensive in nature, with the school consistently interfacing with parents at many points, in many venues, over the course of the schooling years (Redding, 2006). A study that examined the school-level effects on tested student achievement in 129 high-poverty elementary schools that implemented a common set of comprehensive parent engagement strategies over a two-year period showed significant positive results as compared with statistically matched schools (Redding et al., 2004).

Walberg (2007) notes, "cooperative efforts by parents and educators to modify alterable academically stimulating conditions in the home have had beneficial effects on learning for both older and younger students" (p. 96). Teachers can help each student's family members to be aware of what they can do outside of school to encourage their child's academic success at each age and grade level (Caspe et al., 2006/2007; Kreider et al., 2007; Walberg, 2007). In one study, migrant parents participated in sessions available throughout their child's kindergarten year that helped them engage their children in academic activities linked to their children's curriculum in school; when initially compared to a control group, small differences were found. However, the treatment group scored (statistically) significantly better when measured at the end of first grade and again at the end of fifth or sixth grade (St. Clair & Jackson, 2006; St. Clair et al., 2012). This suggests that equipping families with "new abilities to nurture their children's language skills leads to positive and lasting reading outcomes for their children" (St. Clair et al., 2012, p. 9). However, families who have endured trauma of various types often need extra support to reestablish positive interactions (Greenfield et al., 2020).

The home is highly influential in a student's school success, including literacy development (Redding, 2000, 2006; Walberg, 2007). Parents' encouragement in the use of correct, effective, and appropriate language forms a child's readiness for the language-rich environment of the school (Redding, 2006). Hiatt-Michael (2011) cites research showing:

> Parental expectations, speaking and reading to children, number of books in the home, parental interest in written and oral communication, parental knowledge of language arts development, and parental enjoyment of reading foster student achievement in reading. (p. 88)

Based on his 2012 meta-analysis, Jeynes (2013) recommends:

> First, school leaders and teachers can enhance the efficacy of parental involvement by offering advice to parents on the most vital components of voluntary expressions of family engagement, such as setting high expectations and adopting parenting styles that are associated with positive student outcomes. This guidance is particularly important because many parents do not realize how powerful and effective these factors are in promoting positive student outcomes. Second, the school can take an active role in encouraging parental engagement in areas such as checking homework and shared reading activities, given that school-based guidance appears to increase the efficacy of those particular behaviors. (para. 9)

Home visiting, usually by pairs of teachers trained to use the time to build relationships and to share about the importance of the curriculum of the home, has proved to be a powerful and effective tool that benefits students, families, and teachers (Kyle, 2011; Sheldon & Jung, 2015; Wright et al., 2018). Visits may be to the student's home or to a location in the community of the family's choosing (Cornett et al., 2020).

Weiss and Stephen (2009) report that programs that train parents to be appropriately and effectively involved in their children's homework have found positive effects on parents' supportive involvement and increases in the time children spend on homework, higher homework accuracy, and higher grades. These benefits of family involvement at home extend into high school, although it is important for parental engagement practices to be developmentally appropriate and responsive to maturing adolescents' needs (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2009). Catsambis "found that adolescents whose parents were aware of their coursework, encouraged college attendance, and obtained information about postsecondary opportunities completed more course credits in science and mathematics" (Sanders, 2011, p. 142).

Interactive homework, especially when coupled with teacher outreach and invitations for two-way communication, can be especially effective in bridging home and school with powerful, positive outcomes for students. In a randomized

experimental study, Kraft and Dougherty (2013) found that frequent teacher phone calls and text/written messages with families increased students' engagement. Van Voorhis (2003, 2011a, 2011b) has done several studies based on TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork, developed by Epstein and colleagues); Bennett-Conroy (2012) also used TIPS and teacher phone calls as the basis for a quasi-experimental comparison. In all cases, students' homework completion and parental involvement increased, and (where measured) grades improved. Reading School–Home Links, available from the U.S. Department of Education (1999), are another example of student assignments that require parent–child interaction, link to school learning, and simultaneously educate parents about school learning (Redding, 2006).

These opportunities to communicate what families can do to encourage their children's learning and where they can find further support range from flyers handed out at registration to the school compact, from family nights to parent education courses, from shared leadership on school councils to parent–teacher–student conferences to informal discussions in the hallways or parking lot. Schools should take advantage of creative ideas and myriad opportunities to promote the curriculum of the home:

> Even small improvements in the amount and quality of academically constructive hours outside school are likely to have more than moderate learning effects while contributing little or nothing to schools' costs. (Walberg, 2011, p. 70)

Professional Development for Teachers and Leaders

Dotger and Bennett (2010) propose that teachers and school leaders need both preservice training and ongoing professional development, including practice in engaging with a variety of family contexts, to develop the necessary skills to foster effective school–home partnerships. One study found that student performance in math and reading improved at a 40–50% high rate when teachers reached out to parents in these three ways:

- Met face-to-face with each family at the beginning of the school year
- Sent families materials each week on ways to help their children at home
- Telephoned routinely with news on how the children were doing, not just when they were having problems or acting up (Westat & Policy Studies Assoc., 2002, cited in Henderson et al., 2007, p. 94)

Symeou et al. (2012) reported on a professional development course that involved training teachers to use active listening and other communication skills (typically used by counselors) and provided opportunities for practice and reflection, which resulted in teachers reporting increased confidence and better communication with the parents of their students.

Teacher training is even more essential when the teacher and the students' families have different home cultures. The Bridging Cultures Project used in-service training and action research to help a cadre of teachers learn about collectivistic cultures vs. individualistic cultures (Trumbull et al., 2000, 2001, 2003, 2020). Though the project aimed to promote more effective instruction, the teachers found that it also greatly facilitated improved communication and partnerships with their students' families. Kugler (2012) notes that something as basic as eye contact can easily be misinterpreted by those from different cultures—school personnel born and raised in the U.S. expect to have eye contact during conversation as a basic sign of attention and respect from the listener. However, for many people in other cultures, the opposite is true—looking away or down shows respect and deference to the speaker. Similarly, wording can be easily misinterpreted: offering a workshop or tip sheet on "parenting" may insult families ("They think we're not doing a good job! I don't want someone telling my how to raise my kids;" Henderson et al., 2007, p. 83). Instead, offer suggestions for maximizing learning outside of school, and invite the families to suggest specific topics of interest. Teacher training can bring awareness of the deficit view many hold toward parents of poverty, language difference, or low education by showing how to recognize and build on families' strengths and funds of knowledge (Chen et al., 2008; Moll & González, 2004). "When school staff have a better understanding of their students' home cultures, families' parenting practices, home contexts, home crises, or significant family and community events, they can develop processes and strategies to bridge school-based and home-based activities and increase support for student learning" (Ferguson, 2008, p. 14).

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