Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding research on strategies for improving parent and community engagement in schools. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource.

**Question:** What research is available on strategies for improving parent and community engagement in schools? Are there differences in rural and urban settings?

**Key words and search strings used in the search:** parent, community and school partnerships; partnerships in education; school community relationship; family school relationship; partnerships between school, family, and community

**Search databases and websites:**
2. JSTOR: [http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch](http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch)
3. Google Scholar: [www.google.com/scholar](http://www.google.com/scholar)

**Citations Retrieved: (NOTE: Abstracts and executive summaries are copied directly from the reports when possible to ensure accuracy):**


**Abstract/Summary:** The extant literature documents the importance of school counselors’ roles in school-family-community partnerships, yet no model exists to guide school counselors through the process of building partnerships. The authors propose a model to help school counselors navigate the process and principles of partnerships. They define partnerships; discuss the principles of democratic collaboration, empowerment, social justice, and strengths focus that should infuse partnerships; enumerate a partnership process model; and discuss implications for practice and research. (Contains 1 table and 1 figure.)

**Abstract/Summary:** This study tests key constructs of sociocultural and organizational learning theories with quantitative methods to better understand the nature and impact of district and school leadership and actions on the quality of programs of family and community involvement. Research Design: Survey data from a "nested" sample of 24 districts and 407 schools are used to measure theoretical constructs of district "assistance" to schools and "shared work" on partnership program development. Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses explore the independent and simultaneous contributions of district leadership and school teamwork on the implementation of basic structures and advanced outreach in partnership programs. Also, gap analyses compare supplementary data from 220 schools that had consistent district leadership for 3 years to 106 schools without this support. Findings: HLM analyses show that principals' support for family and community involvement and schools' reports of district assistance contribute significantly to schools' basic program implementation and to advanced outreach to involve all families in their children's education. Over and above school measures, district leaders' direct facilitation contributes to the quality of the school programs. Gap analyses indicate that schools with consistent district leadership take more basic and advanced actions to establish and improve their partnership programs. Conclusions: This study--with a large sample of districts and schools, appropriate quantitative methods, and a content focus on partnerships--provides strong empirical support for the importance of sociocultural and organizational theories in studying school improvement. Implications for improving district and school policy and practice are discussed. (Contains 4 figures, 2 tables, and 5 notes.)


**Abstract/Summary:** Much attention is given today to the importance of forging family, school, and community partnerships. Growing numbers of schools, many of them with afterschool programs, are dedicating resources to support and sustain relationships with families and community-based organizations. And, among government agencies and the philanthropic sector, there is widespread recognition that schools cannot be successful if they function alone in their quest to educate our nation's children, but must work with families and in the context of the community. Although the field is enjoying unprecedented popularity and many more schools and afterschool programs are partnering with community agencies and organizations, the notion of engaging parents and the community has not yet become an integral part of school reform, and in the afterschool field, practitioners who work at the program level directly with students often struggle with how they can make partnerships a reality. This chapter draws upon lessons learned
from the School of the 21st Century (21C) to provide practical strategies for reaching out to and working with families and the community. The School of the 21st Century includes an afterschool component and is one of several national initiatives that use a community school strategy.


**Abstract/Summary:** This article investigates school counselor involvement in partnerships using Epstein's six types of school-family-community involvement interactions (i.e., parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community). Findings show more involvement in parenting and collaborating with the community interactions and reveal a new partnership interaction practiced by school counselors. Recommendations for school counselors and areas for future research are discussed.


**Abstract/Summary:** Early adolescence is often marked by changes in school context, family relationships, and developmental processes. In the context of these changes, academic performance often declines, while at the same time the long-term implications of academic performance increase. In promoting achievement across elementary and secondary school levels, the significant role of families, family-school relations, and parental involvement in education has been highlighted. Although there is a growing body of literature focusing on parental involvement in education during middle school, this research has not been systematically examined to determine which types of involvement have the strongest relation with achievement. The authors conducted a meta-analysis on the existing research on parental involvement in middle school to determine whether and which types of parental involvement are related to achievement. Across 50 studies, parental involvement was positively associated with achievement, with the exception of parental help with homework. Involvement that reflected academic socialization had the strongest positive association with achievement. Based on the known characteristics of the developmental stage and tasks of adolescence, strategies reflecting academic socialization are most consistent with the developmental stage of early adolescence. (Contains 1 figure, 9 tables, and 1 footnote.)


**Abstract/Summary:** This article responds to the theme issue by providing a glimpse of the historical and contemporary efforts in the area of developing school, family, and community partnerships, a long-standing area of need and inquiry in the literature. It reports on the
collective learning from these articles where implications of the findings pointed to the importance of elevating the importance of these partnerships. Implementation ideas of strong family, school, and community partnerships are considered along with areas that require continued attention including, but not limited to providing professional development learning opportunities, inviting voices from all stakeholders involved, shifting the paradigm of family and community involvement from a deficit model to a resource-rich model, and promoting a more free flowing sharing of research-based practices between the research community and those who are in the frontlines of these partnerships.


Abstract/Summary: This report presents findings from the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012 (NHES:2012). The Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey collected data on children enrolled in public or private school for kindergarten through 12th grade or homeschooled for these grades. The survey collected information about various aspects of parent involvement in education, such as help with homework, family activities, and parent involvement at school. For homeschooled students, the survey asks questions related to the student’s homeschooling experiences, the sources of the curriculum, and the reasons for homeschooling.


Abstract/Summary: The importance of parent involvement in Parents who monitor their student's schoolwork and daily activities, communicate frequently with teachers and help develop schools and its relationship to student achievement have been widely studied. Nevertheless, many principals and teachers report that lack of parent involvement continues to be an obstacle to increasing student achievement at school. The purpose of this study was to determine whether emerging technologies facilitate better parent-teacher communication and parent involvement. Data were collected through surveys and semi-structured focus group interviews to analyze the relationship between parents' and teachers' perceptions of student achievement when electronic communications are used between parents and school. The study revealed that parents and teachers both place a high value on proactive parent involvement. Because proactive involvement does not require parents to be physically at their children's school, the question of how technology can be used to keep parents involved in their children's academic lives becomes important. As access to technology continues to expand, the capabilities for connecting parents to schools will continue to grow. As schools invest in
websites, phone calling systems, parent portals, online curriculum, and other types of technologies that connect schools to home, research needs to continue to focus on the effectiveness of these technologies to increase parent involvement.


**Abstract/Summary:** Adolescents present a unique collection of characteristics and challenges which middle school interdisciplinary teams were designed to address. This article describes a research study which explored parental involvement strategies employed by interdisciplinary teaching teams from three very different middle schools: an affluent suburban school, a mid-level rural school, and a high poverty urban school. A multiple-case study approach was used, and interdisciplinary teams at each middle school were interviewed, responded to journal questions, and were observed at parent nights and related events. Parents were also included as participants through focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and written questionnaires. The researcher identified themes within each setting, as well as four cross-case themes. All of the interdisciplinary teams in this research study utilized strategies grounded in a belief regarding the essential role parental involvement plays, maintained an open and approachable attitude toward parents, served as a resource to parents, and approached problem-solving opportunities as a team. The findings of this study serve as a bridge between what is known about adolescent development, best middle school interdisciplinary teaming models, and the essential nature of parental involvement in education.


**Abstract/Summary:** This study draws from 4 years of qualitative case study data to describe how programmatic and district factors interacted to affect reform sustainability in two school districts—one urban and the other suburban. These districts have been implementing a reform developed by the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) for over a decade. NNPS assists schools, districts, and state departments of education to develop comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Findings suggest that reform characteristics, specifically the evidence base, costs, and flexibility of the NNPS reform, and district leadership, specifically district leaders’ reform knowledge, professional influence, and reform focus converged to explain, in part, the case districts’ success in sustaining the reform. Implications of these findings for reform developers and leaders are discussed.

Abstract/Summary: Despite increasing interest in the role of community involvement in school improvement, few studies have examined motivations for, or results of community partnership development in high schools. To fill this gap, the authors conducted case studies of three high schools with successful community partnerships. The authors found that case high school leaders' motivation for community partnership development fell into three inter-related categories: (1) improving student academic and personal success, (2) enhancing school quality, and (3) supporting community development. The case high schools developed an array of community partnership activities that reflected these different motivations for partnership development. The article concludes with case school leaders' advice for building effective school-community connections.


Abstract/Summary: Parental participation and cooperation in children's educational experiences is positively related to important student outcomes. It is becoming increasingly evident that context is a significant factor in understanding academic achievement, and the setting in which a child, family, and school is situated is among the salient contexts influencing performance. Although the family-school partnership research literature has increased over recent decades, it has been conducted primarily in urban and suburban settings. The goals of this paper are to (a) review the empirical literature on family involvement and family-school partnerships in rural schools, (b) provide a synthesis of the state of the science, and (c) point to a research agenda in this area. Eighteen studies were identified that met the criteria for this review. A critique of the research methods and analytical approaches is provided, along with a call for more research on the topic of family-school partnerships in rural settings, including rigorous and systematic studies pertaining to the effects of family-school involvement and partnerships in rural schools. (Contains 2 tables and 1 endnote.)


Abstract/Summary: This study examined data from over 300 U.S. schools on their efforts to develop high quality programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Analyses show that elementary schools, schools with greater support from parents, teachers, and the community; and schools that evaluated progress reported higher quality partnership programs over time. Higher quality programs were associated with wider implementation of parent-child interactive homework, higher levels of parent volunteering, and more parents on school decision-making committees. Results identify factors that could help schools develop quality
partnership programs and suggest that these programs translate into higher levels of family involvement in students learning.


**Abstract/Summary:** In this study, the author suggests that the current ELL parental involvement model often overlooks the structural aspects and power asymmetry of parent-teacher relationships that can hinder productive collaboration. In doing so, the author uses postcolonial theory as a conceptual lens to investigate the dynamics of ELL parent-teacher interactions from rural ELL parent perspectives by looking at those interactions as intercultural relations. The study uses a general qualitative methodology to explore the dynamics of ELL parent-teacher interactions. Three broad themes that emerged as obstacles that inhibit productive ELL parent-teacher interactions were (1) teachers' judgments toward ELL students and their parents, (2) ELL parents' frustration about their inability to influence a teacher's decision making, and (3) ELL parents' fear of repercussions for speaking up. The paper concludes with important implications for teachers working with ELL students in rural areas.

**Referrals**

**Organizations:**
- The SEDL National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools: [http://www.sedl.org/connections/about.html](http://www.sedl.org/connections/about.html)

**Federally Funded Resources:**

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