A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement, Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002

For educators, parents, and consultants asking for evidence that family engagement improves student achievement, this report provides some useful answers.

This synthesis of findings is divided into three sections. The first section, “About the Studies,” briefly describes why these 51 studies were selected and how the data was analyzed. The second section, “Synthesis of Research Studies,” provides findings and recommendations as a result of the data analysis. The third section, “The Research Studies,” provides a brief (1-2 pages) description of each study.

Although there is much to report my primary focus of interest was the subsection, “Studies on the Impact of Parent and Community Involvement on Student Achievement.” The key findings include:

- “Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children’s learning at home are linked to higher student achievement.”
- “The continuity of family involvement at home appears to have a protective effect on children as they progress through our complex educational system. The more families support their children’s learning and educational progress, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education.”
- “Families of all cultural backgrounds, education, and income levels encourage their children, talk to them about school, help them plan for higher education, and keep them focused on learning and homework. In other words, all families can, and often do, have a positive influence on their children’s learning.”
- “Parent and community involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement. To be effective, the form of involvement should be focused on improving achievement and be designed to engage families and students in developing specific knowledge and skills.”

These findings should be very encouraging to educators and families. The evidence affirms the importance of an effective home-school partnership.

The writers remind the readers that there are many factors that contribute to student success of which parental involvement is just one; and parental involvement alone is not enough to assure student achievement. Yet, student improvement seems to be enhanced when there is ongoing, meaningful parental involvement.

These studies provide a pattern for student success:

- Parental involvement needs to be a home-school relationship that focuses on student achievement and learning
- The home-school relationship is developed through face to face meetings and regular two-way communication by phone, email, or other workable method
- Parents need to know and want to know how to help their children at home
- Successful students feel support from family and from teachers and feel connected to the family, school, and community
- Successful students are encouraged and challenged by high expectations, clear goals, and conversations about college and college readiness

This synthesis is very useful and easy to read. It is not filled with tables and charts understandable only to statisticians. Rather the data is described and the findings are presented. The findings are provided in the context of the original study so there is a practical element to the synthesis. This is a valuable resource for the school wanting to develop a research-based parental involvement program.

Review, Skip Forsyth, 04/04/2010