7: PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Although limited largely to case studies, research has documented a wide range of programs that have expanded public schools' involvement with the communities in which they operate. Such programs face a variety of challenges that range from institutional rivalries to competition for scarce financial resources. Operated effectively, however, than can contribute to improved achievement by students living in poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Basic parental involvement programs should be enhanced to include multiple opportunities for formal and informal communication between school personnel and parents.
- Parental involvement programs should be developed that embrace the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, racial, and religious diversity of the parents.
- Parental involvement programs should be designed to be sensitive to the special needs of poor parents, single parents, parents with large families, and those families where both parents work outside of the home.
- Written materials should be provided in the language with which parents are the most familiar.
- Schools and other social organizations wishing to provide school-linked services should carefully consider the scope, funding needs, organizational and professional complexities, and types of services to be offered.
- Funding for new community involvement projects should be kept consistent and stable. The bigger and more complex the project, the greater the need for adequate funding.
- Extra-curricular programs should be kept vital to help foster strong parental involvement.
- Educational leaders and policy makers should be encouraged to reconceptualize the public school as a vital economic resource that must be nurtured.

7: PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

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The interplay between public schools, their respective communities, and child welfare has been an area of public policy concern for well over a century. From as early as the late 19th century, various educational and social reformers have sought to strengthen the ties between schools and communities in hopes of bolstering better outcomes for children, as well as building stronger, more functional communities.[1] Yet, many of the same problems reformers faced over a century ago stubbornly remain: low parental involvement, the deleterious effects of concentrated poverty, inappropriate pedagogy and policy, racial and ethnic economic isolation, dysfunctional families, and ineffectual political leadership.[2] Each issue can hinder an individual child's educational achievement, but the interaction of multiple factors can be devastating.[3]

This report seeks to map out this history and the contemporary research literature regarding the interaction of public schools, their communities, and student outcomes, especially academic achievement. It reviews some of the major consistencies within the research literature, particularly during the past 15 years. It also notes some of the major criticisms regarding school to community outreach, including some of the lingering paradoxes. This report pays particular attention to what reforms seem to work best with poor children and concludes with recommendations for the best choices in educational practice and policy making.

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY RESEARCH

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, educational and social reformers pushed for an expanded role for public education. Many were deeply concerned by the exploding numbers of poor and destitute children who seemed to overwhelm local schools, particularly in the nation's booming urban centers. Cities were also faced with an ever-enlarging immigrant population, many of whom had little education or economic resources.[4] In hopes of improving the lives of children, educators and social reformers sought to expand the mission of the public school. Not only would the public school educate, but it would also bathe, feed, and inoculate needy children. Their mission did not stop there: all children, many of whom were either immigrants themselves or children of recent immigrants, would be "Americanized." They would learn the dominant social, political, and cultural norms of mainstream – and at that time, largely Anglo – America.[5] Reformers of the era viewed the public school as a linchpin in the process of "child-saving."[6] By the 1910s, numerous city schools offered gyms, school nurses, playgrounds, shower facilities, and even school lunches.[7] Some locations offered adult education classes for parents, held typically at night, not only to build their own language skills and knowledge base, but also to learn new parenting skills. In other instances, teachers would visit their students' homes in hopes of fostering better communication between the school and parents, as well as building a consistency of academic and behavioral expectations. Urban districts began to use the "school newsletter" as a means of communication with parents and the public at large.[8]

These efforts to better link the schools with their communities were rooted in the late 19th century sociological notion of building "social ecology," or improving the overall environment in which children and their parents lived. For many children, their lives did improve. Public

schools not only ameliorated the harshest effects, but also offered children the promise of a way out of poverty. Attendance rates soared as immigrant children in particular streamed into the public schools. By 1908, a larger percentage of immigrant children attended public schools than did their "native-born" peers.[9]

These services came at costs that were both personal and fiscal, however. The personal costs were generally borne by those who were receiving the help. To become "Americanized" meant that children had to relinquish the cultural practices and norms from the "old country." In practical terms, it meant that many immigrant children were taught that their heritage (and by implication, their parents) were inferior. Accordingly, teachers and administrators treated immigrant parents with more than a whiff of condescension. As one educator explained:

> They must be *made* to understand what it is we are trying to do for the children. They must be *made* to realize that in forsaking the land of their birth, they were also forsaking the customs and traditions of that land; and they must be *made* to realize an obligation, in adopting a new country, to adopt the language and customs of that country.[10]

In addition to problematic relations between the schools and parents, both the textbooks and teachers could be hostile towards non-Anglo children, with more than a few hurling racial, ethnic, and religious slurs.[11] In 1903, reporter Adele Marie Shaw recounted that one elementary teacher bellowed at one child, "You dirty little Russian Jew, what are you doing?"[12]

Finally, the help tended to be imposed whether or not students and their parents believed they needed assistance.[13] The assumption of the era was that professional educators were far better prepared to assess the welfare of children than were their immigrant parents.

The greatest drawbacks to extending more services to "children at risk," though, were fiscal, and these financial drawbacks were rooted in the politics of the era. These efforts were subjected to intense scrutiny on the heels of the 1917 Russian Revolution, with some commentators noting that such social programs were dangerously "socialistic."[14] For years,

public education had been under the policy microscope regarding its seeming lack of fiscal accountability, possible political radicalism,[15] and instructional inefficiencies. Thanks to the churning political environment, much of the tax money for greater social services, which, in some places, was extensive and expensive, evaporated.[16] In hopes of maintaining political and fiscal support, public school leaders scrambled to deflect criticism, and many embraced the new "science" of public relations, touting public education's ever-increasing efficiency.[17] Until the late 1980s, efforts to do community outreach and communication to bolster student academic outcomes would become largely one-way –with information flowing only from the schools to the families.[18]

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES TODAY

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, researchers, educators, social service providers, and policy makers were alarmed at the rising number of children in crisis, particularly in poor urban areas. Many states had curtailed social service provisions to offset budget shortfalls. Additionally, the federal government had greatly reduced its level of fiscal involvement with poor children beginning in the early 1980s.[19] Concurrently, the number of children in poverty was rising. As researcher Joy Dryfoos observed in 1994:

> By 1991, more than fourteen million children – 22 percent of all children – lived in families below the poverty line, the highest number and rate since 1965. As in no other period of time, disadvantage shifted from the oldest people to the youngest. And those children living in mother-only households have become the most deprived of all, with more than 55 percent living in poverty.[20]

Such social and economic turbulence was adversely affecting many students and their academic achievement. This turbulence was also coupled with increased political concern regarding public education and its possible adverse effects on the nation's economic competitiveness.[21] Public schools leaders, community members, social service providers, policy

makers and researchers took a renewed interest in rebuilding the social ecology of local public schools in hopes of fostering better academic outcomes, and in turn, stabilizing the social environment—thus revitalizing a national economy.[22]

States and the federal government began to explore the notion of "systemic reform," or coordinating the various governmental policies that affect children in a more holistic fashion to improve both their current lives and their long-term life chances.[23] For education, and urban education in particular, this meant involving various branches of government in efforts to better link schools to the communities they serve.[24]

Many of these new reform efforts drew on the work of the sociologist James S. Coleman. In the early to mid-1980s, Coleman and his colleagues had studied the academic effectiveness of urban Catholic schools. He theorized that the reason Catholic schools seemed to generate better outcomes for their students was that these schools and their students enjoyed a high degree of "social capital." Coleman further theorized that these schools in their particular communities were "functional communities," because their members shared a high degree of what he called "intergenerational closure." Additionally, the communities and the schools shared a strong interest in the general welfare of the students. Parents knew each other and each other's children. The implications were that these schools functioned in relatively close-knit communities. Parents, school personnel, and community members cultured the relationships and shared norms (i.e. the social capital) that were critical to successful child rearing and schooling.[25]

There were criticisms of the Coleman studies, particularly regarding their possible utility and applicability for public schools. The critics noted three key differences between Catholic urban and public urban schools. First, Catholic schools tended to "cream" the academically strongest students (and their parents) away from the distressed urban schools. Additionally,

students who attended Catholic schools did so voluntarily, unlike many of their public school peers. Finally, Catholic schools were free to expel students who failed to conform to either academic or behavioral expectations.[26]

Nevertheless, researchers and policy makers began to explore the possibilities that public schools, in conjunction with other community and social service groups, could build, rebuild or even expand the social capital of their communities. Reformers also drew on the earlier efforts of Progressive-Era reformers to strengthen the social ecology of school neighborhoods. Subsequently, multiple and various blueprints were designed; all aimed at bringing various stakeholders together.[27]

FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS

By the early 1990s, well over 800 projects were aimed at fostering greater ties between schools and their communities.[28] States from California to New Jersey were experimenting with vastly expanded social service provision as well as experimenting with differing organizational structures, including interagency collaboration and full-service school programs. These terms, as well as school-linked services, have been used in the research literature. They describe efforts to bring various social service providers together within a formal organizational structure— sometimes sharing a building, typically a public school—to share staff, resources, and responsibilities. All were to better serve children, their parents, and the larger community.[29] In an age of continuing budget constraint, some early proponents of this approach argued that providers might even realize budgetary cost savings if the collaborating agencies could eliminate needless service duplication.[30]

These projects tended to be idiosyncratic in nature. As Joy Dryfoos noted in 1994, full-service schools, by design, were to be highly sensitive to the local contexts. There has been no

one model of a "full-service school." The disparate interagency collaborations have included

personnel from public schools, child protective services, juvenile justice agencies, mental health

agencies, public health departments, the medical system, as well as parents and other community

members.[31]

Most of the extant evaluation research of these projects has been in the form of single-

case or multi-case studies. However, common similarities across project sites include better

attendance rates, lower substance abuse, and lower dropout rates. Additionally, "[s]tudents,

parents, teachers, and school personnel report a high level of satisfaction with school clinics and

centers and particularly appreciate their accessibility, convenience, and caring attitude."[32]

Despite the encouraging signs, stubborn organizational and legal issues have been hard to

resolve in these expansive undertakings. Some of the most vexing issues have been those of

professional "turf," client confidentiality, and budgetary authority.[33] In the area of professional

turf, for example, some school counselors have felt threatened by the presence of social workers

from child protective services and were reluctant to share information.[34] Furthermore, child

protective agencies and the criminal justice system at times were barred by law from sharing

crucial information regarding children with school officials.[35] Finally, a number of collaborative

efforts got snarled in various budgetary directives, many of which demanded single, rather than

shared, lines of fiscal accountability.[36]

Another issue facing proponents of full-service schools has been maintaining consistent

funding. A mixture of state and federal funds and private foundation grants has paid for many of

these collaborative projects. These projects have been particularly vulnerable to shifting political

winds. For instance, the movement suffered a setback by the withdrawal of funding by one major

foundation. After a disappointing preliminary evaluation of an inter-organizational collaboration

in June of 1994, the Pew Charitable Trust withdrew from a highly ambitious 10-year, $60 million project dubbed The Children's Initiative. Pew concluded that to realize the positive changes envisioned by the initial project, even greater expansion of social service provision was needed. For the initiative to have even greater influence on children's lives, it was going to move into areas such as housing, employment, and drug abuse. It was already a large-scale and highly complex initiative that called for various service providers to fundamentally reconceptualize their professional roles and behaviors, while they continued to work in traditional bureaucratic environments. The weak initial evaluations regarding student outcomes in a political climate that had been hostile to tax-based social service provision made the project too politically risky for Pew to maintain its presence.[37]

Disappointing as this has been, the demise of Pew's Children's Initiative is congruent with what we know about educational reform. Historians David Tyack and Larry Cuban surveyed more than 100 years of educational and social reforms to determine which ones had staying power. They concluded the reforms that were institutionalized all had the following characteristics:

1)   The reforms were adaptable to local circumstances.

2)   Successful reforms were modest in approach and design.

3)   Policy makers and regulators solicited and incorporated continuous input from those who had to implement the reforms (teachers, administrators, parents, etc.).

4)   Successful reforms enjoyed strong and consistent political and fiscal support. Popular at the grassroots, these reforms encountered little opposition.

5)   Successful reforms were relatively easy to implement and maintain (for example, structural or programmatic add-ons—adding kindergarten programs, the

development of the junior high school, expanding the school lunch program to include a breakfast program, offering computer classes to parents after hours, etc.).[38]

Given these findings it is understandable that the Pew initiative was not sustainable. Yet, as Tyack and Cuban have demonstrated, there are effective reform efforts targeted at community building and parental outreach, which this report now explores.

SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS AT LINKING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Parental Involvement

In bolstering school community outreach, public school educators have used numerous strategies. Many of these are centered on increasing parental involvement in their children's education and school. As researchers Daniel J. McGrath and Peter J. Kuriloff observe:

> For policy makers, parent involvement in schools represents a method for, first, improving schools' services to families by making schools more accountable to parents; second, strengthening ties between schools and families traditionally underserved by schools; and, third, better serving students by taking advantage of parents' rich stores of knowledge about their children.[39]

Additionally, the research base regarding the efficacy of parental involvement is strong, and these findings have generally demonstrated that parental involvement can have positive effects on student academic achievement. Students whose parents are involved with their education tend to have fewer behavior problems in school, fewer absences, and higher rates of academic achievement and graduation than those students whose parents do not get involved.[40] Additionally, those students who are failing can improve dramatically if parental assistance is cultivated by school personnel. In particular, ethnic minority students or those with learning disabilities can enjoy significant benefits if their parents are involved with their schooling.[41]

Many public schools use the traditional methods of soliciting parental involvement: hosting the open house or "parents' night," soliciting parent volunteers to help work during a special event, maintaining a PTA/PTO, sending parents a school newsletter, using infrequent notes and phone calls, and of course, issuing a regular report card. While these efforts are a good start, they have significant limitations. First, the more traditional approaches to cultivating parental involvement can lead to parents being *guided* and sometimes manipulated by teachers and administrators. Parents are carefully steered away from voicing concerns around contentious professional issues like grading policies and teaching style. The second criticism is that the traditional forms of parental involvement tend to be *constrained*. By design, the information is to flow in one tightly controlled direction – from the school to the parents. Parents tend to be viewed as "non-professionals" and hence have limited value in shaping the larger policy issues of the school. The third criticism is that the traditional forms of parental involvement tend to be *representational,* since many contemporary parents cannot participate. The traditional forms assume a stable, two-parent family, with one parent (typically the mother) working full-time as a homemaker. Given that the vast majority of adults with children work outside of the home (whether they are parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.), only a few "representative" parents can participate. The parents who can participate tend to be white and middle- to upper-middle-class. And finally, the fourth criticism of the traditional forms of parental involvement is they expect parents to be *passive*. Parents are to receive information from the school, but the school does not seem to want much information from the parents.[42]

While the traditional forms of parental involvement do include some parents, there remains the potential to do more. Additionally, the traditional forms of parental involvement are strikingly ineffective at reaching out to families that are: (a) large, (b) headed by a single-parent

(usually female), (c) poor, (d) non-English speaking, (e) abusive, or (f) include parents and older siblings who dropped out of school.[43]

Experiments to Expand Participation

Recognizing the problems of the traditional forms, public educators have experimented with a variety of reforms to encourage greater parental participation. One of the more recent innovations is the "open school." In this approach, the school opens itself up to each member of the community and actively seeks their input. This has been called the "warts-and-all" approach, because community members get to see the school staff at their best, and possibly at their worst. Parents and other adults can drop in at any time of the day, to see how their children are doing, what else is going on within the school, and have meaningful conversations with teachers and educational leaders regarding their child's education. Contemporary parents and guardians may not have schedules or consistently reliable transportation that permit them to visit the school during a scheduled (and formal) meeting. The open school demands a fair measure on flexibility on the part of the school personnel, many who have been socialized to view "their" school as a pedagogical island, removed from external forces and pressures, including parents. Yet, an open school grants parents and the community greater and very real access. It also provides parents with a meaningful sense of ownership, not only of the school, but also of their children's education.[44]

Parental Education

Another reform aimed at boosting parental involvement is parental education. Some parents, particularly those who have had poor school experiences themselves, may need experiences as a co-learner, advocate, and decision-maker, so they can become their child's

educational advocate. Parent education programs encourage parents to become their children's resident teacher, as well as the critical caretaker and nurturer.[45]

For example, Norwood and her colleagues designed a model program of parental involvement through the University of Houston's Graduate School of Social Work and College of Education. They provided parent education to a school within the Houston public school system. The school had a high-percentage of students who were considered at risk for academic failure and came from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. All were African-American. Their parents were recruited to participate in an experimental parental education program that was focused on skills and that was also culturally and linguistically sensitive. Additionally, a sense of community among the researchers and participating parents was carefully cultivated, and the researchers took pains to blur distinctions between parents and the researchers. Participants were surveyed prior to the beginning of the program to determine what their needs and concerns were. Soliciting detailed input from parents also helped to establish ownership of the program by parents.[46]

The actual program focused on building parenting skills, as well as parents' teaching or coaching skills. Throughout the sessions, parents were invited to share their knowledge and experiences in raising their children. This helped to validate parents' knowledge and broadened the knowledge base of all participants. The parents also engaged in role-playing and various school- and home-related scenarios with Norwood and colleagues, so parents could practice their newly acquired skills.[47]

Six months after the program concluded, parents were asked to evaluate the program. All were very enthusiastic, and they had put their newly acquired skills immediately to work. As one woman explained:

Most parents just run up to the school, but she [the instructor] helped us to see there are two sides to every story. We did role-playing, one was the parent and one of us was the teacher. We also practiced how to ask teachers for the things we need. I used this when my little boy didn't have homework. I went to his teacher and she gave me some homework for him. (Ms. C)[48]

Another participant noted:

I felt the information on the parent-teacher conferences was very good. Now when I have to talk to my child's teacher, I am not as timid or afraid as I used to be. I have some say in his education. (Ms. W)[49]

The researchers then examined the subsequent academic achievement of these parents' children. They scored significantly higher on standardized measures of achievement, in math and reading, than did the children whose parents did not participate in the program. The degree of difference surprised Norwood and her colleagues, since they were expecting only modest academic gains at best.[50]

The Houston parental education program succeeded in large part because it was attentive to the needs and concerns of urban, minority parents, as well as being respectful of their backgrounds. Parents were treated with respect and their cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds honored. This result is consonant with other researchers' recommendations–that public school personnel who solicit parental involvement need be sensitive to the needs of an increasingly multicultural parent population to have greater and meaningful parental involvement with the schools.[51]

School-Based Management

Another parental involvement program that has been part of a larger school reform effort is school-based management (SBM). In this model, the authority for most decisions is delegated to the school site. In turn, the individual school establishes an SBM committee or council that is typically composed of teachers, parents, administrators, and perhaps, additional community

members. The idea behind the reform is that those closest to real students know what policies, programs and budget expenditures will serve them best. Hence, the SBM council is empowered to make most of the policy decisions that affect that specific school. The ultimate goal is to improve the decision-making process and empower those closest to children to such an extent that student achievement improves. The research regarding SBM's effectiveness in bolstering student achievement is conflicted, although it does seem to improve the morale of the teachers who participate.[52]

A final note is in order regarding some of the more overlooked and undervalued parental involvement programs. Extra-curricular offerings have been a traditional form of parental involvement, perhaps the most popular of all informal forms of parental involvement. These programs, which range from athletics, music, drama, and arts programs to various student interest clubs, have historically involved highly disparate students. In terms of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc., these activities have produced enthusiastic parental involvement, regardless of background. Additionally, members from the larger community tend to get involved, if only as spectators. Research indicates that extra-curricular activities promote student academic achievement, in that they inhibit students from dropping out. The direct influence on improving student achievement is more tenuous.[53] In many distressed urban areas, extra-curricular venues are most vulnerable to budget reductions. This may be unwise given the strong connections that appear to be generated by these activities among students, their families, the schools, and members of the larger community.

Community Development

A more recent notion of strengthening school, community, and parental interaction views the public school system as a critical economic resource. That is, like any other industry or

business, it provides both services and employment to individuals located within a certain geographic area.[54] Researcher Charles Kerchner argues that instead of viewing school systems as a sometimes-crushing municipal burden, cities should aggressively support their public schools.

> Schools build cities in two ways. They develop the economy, both indirectly by adding to a location's stock of human capital and directly through programs that enhance neighborhoods. Schools become part of a microeconomic policy. Schools also serve as agents for community development, the creation of cohesion and civic relations among neighbors.[55]

Kerchner theorizes that a public school system could greatly enhance a community's economic stability in four ways, by:

1) providing jobs for professional and service staff;

2) enhancing the human capital of the children in the community through quality education;

3) encouraging local businesses through targeted contracts for goods and services; and

4) enhancing property values while concurrently holding down property taxes.[56]

This economic vitality, in turn, can rebuild the social stability of the area. A stronger local economy reduces many of the social pathologies faced by urban areas.

Greater social and economic stability for parents also has a direct positive influence on student achievement, since the social capital of the area is enhanced. An additional benefit is that more people, those with and without children, will move to the area because of its relative economic health and growing social stability. When these new residents become involved in the services that the school district offers, such as concerts, plays, athletic events, computer classes, and the like, the community's social appeal is further enhanced.[57]

When Lawrence Picus and Jimmy Bryan examined the economic and fiscal influences

that the Los Angeles area school systems have on both the local and state economies, they

discovered public education in the LA region to be an enormous enterprise:

> In Los Angeles County, the school districts provide education for nearly 1.6 million
> children, spend almost $6.9 billion, and employ some 133,500 people. As a business
> concern, the Los Angeles County schools would rank 190th on the Fortune 500, larger
> than such companies as Northrop Grumman (192), Coca-Cola (196), Levi Strauss (198),
> and even Microsoft (219). On its own, the Los Angeles Unified School District
> (LAUSD), with its $4.9 billion budget, 55,767 employees, and 650,000 students, would
> rank 270 on the Fortune 500.[58]

Obviously, large urban school systems have a far greater economic influence on an area's

economy and possible social stability than many businesses—including professional sports

franchises.

A New Conceptual Lens

Viewing the public school system as a major community economic resource, as well as a

social service, may provide local and state educational policy makers with a new conceptual lens.

Public schools will no longer be seen as a never-ending drain on the community, but as a source

of the community's economic and social well-being. This vision of the public schools will also

enable community members to view the system as *critical* to the welfare of the local economy

and, therefore, a vital social institution. While there is much research to be done in this specific

area, these initial explorations do offer intriguing possibilities regarding building stronger links

between public schools, their communities, and student academic achievement.

WHAT CANNOT BE CONCLUDED FROM THE RESEARCH

This report has presented historical and contemporary overviews of the research

pertaining to schools, their communities, and student academic achievement. While much of this

research is stimulating and offers school personnel and policy makers various conceptual plans, a

basic problem in the research base is that it is almost entirely comprised of single or multi-case studies. This is not surprising given the degree of autonomy that some districts have in developing and implementing community outreach programs. Additionally, since public education is largely a state responsibility, there is great variation among the 50 states and Washington, DC. Fragmentation is a hallmark of the US educational system. Unfortunately, this makes conducting large scale, experimental studies most difficult. While case studies do provide us with some compelling insights and broad guidelines, they make specific and highly prescriptive recommendations difficult.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Public schools have been reaching out to parents and communities since their inception. With over 100 years of data, we know what programs can enhance student academic achievement. The challenge is to devise the right mixture of services and programs in organizational situations that are highly idiosyncratic.[59] As Joy Dryfoos notes, there is no model for social service provision.[60] This is congruent with educational historian David Tyack's observation that there is "no best system" for public education.[61] Yet there is enough information to permit informed decisions regarding what might be feasible to implement.

Despite the limitations of the case-study approach, the documented results of efforts to create deeper ties between schools and the communities in which they operate and which they serve warrant efforts to further enhance school-community relationships. The history of more than 100 years of research and experience in involving schools in community life points to several potential policy initiatives:

- Basic parental involvement programs should be enhanced to include multiple opportunities for formal and informal communication between school personnel and

parents. Open, engaged, mutual, and honest communication should be encouraged. As much as possible, public schools should move towards an *open*, or "warts and all," approach to school-community relations.

- Parental involvement programs should be developed that embrace the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, racial, and religious diversity of the parents.

- Parental involvement programs should be designed to be sensitive to the special needs of poor parents, single parents, parents with large families, and those families where both parents work outside of the home. This might mean providing transportation and child care for some, while planning meetings around work/home schedules for others.

- Written materials should be provided in the language with which parents are the most familiar.

- Schools and other social organizations wishing to provide school-linked services should carefully consider the scope, funding needs, organizational and professional complexities, and types of services to be offered. While perhaps not as compelling or intellectually stimulating, incremental types of school-linked services should be pursued if providers are dedicated to institutionalizing the project.[62]

- Funding for new community involvement projects should be kept consistent and stable. The bigger and more complex the project, the greater the need for adequate funding.

- Extra-curricular programs should be kept vital to help foster strong parental involvement.

- Educational leaders and policy makers should be encouraged to reconceptualize the public school as a vital economic resource that must be nurtured.

What Works Best with Poor Urban Children?

In addition to the above recommendations, programs particularly targeted to assist children and communities living in poverty should take into account the following principles:

- Programmatic offerings need to be stable, consistent, and long-lived. Poor urban children's lives are marked by chaos. Public schools and the services they provide may be the only stable "thing" in many children's lives.

- New services should be carefully expanded, ensuring they become institutionalized over time. For example, it might be advantageous to expand the free lunch program to include all students. Once this has been established and consistently maintained over several years, it might be time to include or expand a school breakfast program.

- Schools facing a budget shortfall should focus on maintaining extra-curricular activities that are relatively low cost and can serve broader numbers of students. This logic might make the choral program more appealing than the more expensive and litigation-prone football program.

- Parental education programs should focus on parents' knowledge and skills in child raising and work to build on this foundation. School personnel and other service providers must be aware of the parents' own needs and wishes for their children, and design programs so these are addressed.

- Parental education programs need to be sensitive to the racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds of participating parents. These programs must also attend to the realities that families in poverty confront. This might include offering transportation to the program and offering on-site child care, and even providing an evening meal for the families attending.

- City and educational leaders need to view the public school system as a foundation for community revitalization initiatives.

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9   Tyack, *The One Best System*, 244.

    Tyack cites U.S. Immigration Commission data. The "Foreign-born" category is an aggregate figure. Desegregated, students who were classified as "Russian Jew," "Southern Italian" and "Polish" had lower attendance rates than their "Native-born" peers. However, students who were classified as "German" and "Swedish" had dramatically higher attendance rates. Readers should be cautioned, however, that most U.S. students eventually dropped out of school. It was not until the 1950s, that over 50% of all students graduated from high school. Two other factors that drove increased attendance were the development of child labor and compulsory attendance laws, both of which, when enforced, also drove up attendance rates. However, these laws would be haphazardly enforced until the Great Depression.

10 Tyack, *The One Best System*, 231. Emphasis added.

11 Tyack, *The One Best System*, 237.

12 See Tyack, *The One Best System*; Anyon.

    D. Tyack and E. Hansot, *Managers of Virtue, Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: NY: Basic Books, 1982).

13 B. M. Franklin, "'Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed…': A Historical Commentary on the Carnegie Council's Turning Points," *Journal of Educational Policy* 5, no. 3 (1990): 265-272.

14 Tyack, *Health and Social Services*.

15 K. Rousmaniere, *City Teachers: Teaching and School Reform in Historical Perspective* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1997).

16 Joy Dryfoos observes that foundations continued to support experimentation in social service provision throughout the Depression-era. The most frequently cited example was the project located in Flint, Michigan, which provided after-school and summer recreation, and later health and nutrition services. Yet it is doubtful that such an effort would have survived without strong support from the Charles Mott Foundation. See Dryfoos, 30.

17 Callahan.

18 This does not imply that public educators and researchers were only concerned with the "marketing" of public education. But as Robert Crowson observed, "Community-relations proponents of the 1960s and 1970s recognized clearly the value of a greater opening of communications between home and school, and the benefits of parental involvement in the schools. Nevertheless, there was still an important sense of separation – a sense that in the interest of professionalism, the school must guard carefully an independence from the pressures and politics of the clientele." See:

    R. L. Crowson, *School-Community Relations, Under Reform* (Berkeley, CA: McCuthan Publishing, 1992), 31.

19 B. A. Jones, "Schools in the Community and Urban Context: Incorporating Collaboration and Empowerment," in *Investing in U.S. Schools: Directions for Educational Policy*, eds. Bruce Anthony Jones and Kathryn M. Borman (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1994), 5-23.

20 Dryfoos, 2.

21 C. A. Lugg, *For God and Country: Conservatism and American School Policy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

    J. Murphy, *Restructuring Schools: Capturing and Assessing the Phenomena* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1991).

22 R. L.Crowson and W. L. Boyd, "Coordinating Services for Children: Designing Arks for Storms and Seas Unknown," *American Journal of Education* 101, no. 2 (February 1993).

23 M. S. Smith and J. A. O'Day, "Systemic School Reform," in *The Politics of Curriculum and Testing*, eds. S. Fuhrman and B. Malen (Bristol, PA: Falmer Press, 1991). Since the 1990s, there have been numerous and conflicting definitions of "systemic reform." However, Smith and O'Day are the originators of the term.

24 Dryfoos.

    A. I. Melaville and M. J. Blank. *What It Takes: Structuring Interagency Partnerships to Connect Children and Families with Comprehensive Services* (Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium, January 1991).

    A. I. Melaville and M. J. Blank, *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), 1993).

25 See: J. S. Coleman, "Schools and the Communities They Serve," *Phi Delta Kappan* 66, no. 8 (April 1985).

    J. S. Coleman, "Families and schools," *Educational Researcher* 16, no. 6 (August-September 1987).

    J. S. Coleman, T. Hoffer and S. Kilgore, "Cognitive Outcomes in Public and Private Schools," *Sociology of Education* 55 (1982).

26 For an overview of the criticisms of Coleman's work, see Crowson, 108-109.

27 R. L. Crowson and W. L. Boyd, "Achieving Coordinated School-Linked Services: Facilitating Utilization of the Emerging Knowledge Base," *Educational Policy* 10, no. 2 (June 1996).

See Melaville and Blank, *What it Takes*, *Together We Can*; Dryfoos.

28 S. L. Kagan, *Integrating Services for Children and Families: Understanding the Past to Shape the Future* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

29 C. A. Lugg and W. L. Boyd, "Leadership for Collaboration: Reducing Risk and Fostering Resilience," *Phi Delta Kappan* 75, no. 3 (November 1993): 253-258.

30 Crowson and Boyd.

31 Dryfoos. More generally, see:

E. Schorr, *Within Our Reach* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1988).

S. L. Kagan, "Support systems for Children, Youths, Families, and Schools in Inner-City Situations," *Education and Urban Society* 29 (May 1997).

32 Dryfoos, 135.

33 Lugg and Boyd.

34 Dryfoos.

35 Lugg and Boyd.

36 *The Politics of Linking Schools and Social Services*, eds. L. Adler and S. Gardner, (Washington, DC: Falmer, 1974).

See also M. W. Kirst, J. E. Koppich and C. Kelley, "School-Linked Services and Chapter I: A New Approach to Improving Outcomes for Children." in *Rethinking Policy for At-Risk Students*, eds. K. K. Wong and M. C. Wang (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan, 1994).

37 C. Smrekar, "The Organizational and Political Threats to School-Linked Integrated Services," *Educational Policy* 12, no. 3 (May 1998).

J. Cibulka, "Toward an Interpretation of School, Family, and Community Connections: Policy Challenges," in *Coordination Among Schools, Families, and Communities: Prospects for Educational Reform*, eds. J. Cibulka and W. Kritek (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

Other large-scale social reform efforts have also generated disappointing or ambiguous results. See:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *The Path of Most Resistance: Reflections on Lessons Learned from New Futures* (Washington, DC: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1995).

38 Tyack and Cuban.

39 D. J. McGrath, P. J. Kuriloff, "'They're Going to Tear the Doors Off This Place': Upper-middle-class Parent School Involvement and the Educational Opportunities of Other People's Children," *Educational Policy* 13, no. 5 (November 1999).

40 Diane E. Karther and Frances Y. Lowden, "Fostering Effective Parent Involvement," *Contemporary Education* 69, no. 1 (Fall 1997).

Joyce L. Epstein, "Perspectives and Previews on Research and Policy for School, Family, and Community Partnerships," in *Family-school links: How Do They Affect Educational Outcomes?* eds. A. Booth and J. E Dunn (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996).

Natasha K. Bowen and Gary L. Bowen, "The Mediating Role of Educational Meaning in the Relationship Between Home Academic Culture and Academic Performance," *Family Relations* 47, no. 1 (January 1998).

41 L. Floyd, "Joining Hands: A Parental Involvement Program," *Urban Education* 33, no. 1 (March 1998).

Crowson, 195.

Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society, ed. N. Chavkin (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).

42 Crowson, 184-188.

K. Nakagawa, "Unthreading the Ties That Bind: Questioning the Discourse of Parent Involvement," *Educational Policy* 14, no. 4 (September 2000).

McGrath & Kuriloff.

A. G. Dworking and M. L. Townsend, "Teacher Burnout in the Face of Reform: Some Caveats in Breaking the Mold," in *Investing in U.S. Schools: Directions for Educational Policy*, eds. B. A. Jones and K. M. Borman (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1994), 81-83.

For a discussion on contemporary families, see S. Coontz*, The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997).

43 Karther and Lowden.

44 Crowson.

45 P. M. Norwood et al., "Contextualizing Parent Education Programs in Urban Schools: The Impact on Minority Parents and Students," *Urban Education* 32, no. 3 (September 1997).

see also J. Epstein, "What Principals Should Know About Parent Involvement," *Principal* 66 (1987).

46 Norwood, Atkinson, Teller and Saldana.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

Delpit; Nakagawa; Floyd.

52 *Handbook on Educational Research, 3rd Edition*, eds. S. Smith and P. K. Piele (Eugene, OR: ERIC Press, 1996).

53 J. W. Alspaugh, "The Relationship of School and Community Characteristics to High School Drop-out Rates," *The Clearing House* 71, no. 3 (January-February 1998).

J. K. Urice "Implications of the REAP Report on Advocacy," *Arts Education Policy Review* 102, no. 5 (May-June 2001).

A. Aprill, "Toward a Finer Description of the Connection Between Arts Education and Student Achievement," *Arts Education Policy Review* 102, no. 5 (May-June 2000).

54 C. T. Kerchner, "Education as a City's Basic Industry," *Education and Urban Society* 29, no. 4 (August 1997).

L. O. Picus and J. L. Bryan, "The Economic Impact of Public K-12 Education in the Los Angeles Region," *Education and Urban Society* 29, no. 4 (August 1997).

55 Kerchner.

56 Kerchner, 1997. He observes in a footnote that, "At the traditional real estate rule of thumb of $9/$1,000 in mortgage, the parent(s) in the 30% bracket contemplating $4,000 in private school tuition could afford an extra $75,000 for a house in order to send their children to a desirable public school."

57 Kerchner notes the converse is also true; witness the destruction of the Detroit public school system, which was followed by the hollowing out of the community. American suburbs are a positive example of a school district's influence on the community's economy.

58 Picus and Bryan.

59 Dryfoos.

60 Ibid.

61 Tyack, *The One Best System*.

62 Tyack and Cuban.