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Reframing Family Involvement in Education: Supporting Families to Support Educational Equity

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Reframing Family Involvement in Education: Supporting Families to Support Educational Equity

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“...bringing up children is the most important and most challenging task that most of us embark on and ... if children are to be given the start in life that they require, society must provide parents with sufficient support to enable them to fulfill their obligations with knowledge, understanding and enjoyment.” (Pugh, 1999)

Children learn everywhere. Parents and home environments, as children’s first teachers and first learning contexts, play pivotal roles in their children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development and educational trajectories. However, investments in promoting meaningful family involvement in learning have been few and inconsistent. Furthermore, when parents are included in the national dialogue about education reform, the tone is often one of blame, particularly for disadvantaged and ethnic minority families. These trends reflect, in part, a limited understanding of the numerous ways in which families support their children’s learning and limited recognition of the factors that support or constrain their involvement. In the context of intensive national focus on achievement gaps and education policy proposals, a more nuanced understanding of the roles and responsibilities of families is needed².

This research review addresses this need, reframing family involvement as part of a comprehensive system of learning supports in which both individual families and larger social structures share responsibility for children’s learning. As our review will describe, this reframing is driven by both steadily accumulating research and by the need for a broader national discussion about how to create research-based policies and interventions that include families and lead to greater educational equity.

We begin by laying out our redefinition of family involvement in education, highlighting the societal factors that constrain or enable families in their roles as educators and supporters of academic development and paying particular attention to the ways in which race, ethnicity, and social class appear to impact parenting and family involvement. We subsequently review decades of research and intervention studies on family support and involvement, addressing these questions: How do families support academic development and is such support related to achievement? Do interventions, surrogate arrangements, and alternative programs promote

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² Throughout this paper, the use of the term parents is used to refer to all family members and other adults closely involved in the child’s life, including grandparents, foster parents, extended family members, kinship networks, and family friends.

family involvement and support, and do they benefit children? What are the implications of this research for public policy, professional practice, and further research? In conclusion, we argue that adequate family support and involvement are critical contributors to students' educational success, and that the research definitely warrants including family involvement in policies to address achievement gaps and promote educational equity.

New Framework of Family Involvement in Learning

While we have understood for decades that parents play a critical role in their children's learning, recent advances in research and a changing educational climate necessitate that we develop a new framework of family involvement to inform practice, policy, and further research. The framework we propose here honors the historical literature and past conceptualizations while incorporating new findings, especially about family processes among traditionally understudied ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Before describing the three components of our family involvement framework, a brief historical overview of the role of families in education is warranted, particularly to highlight the increasing emphasis our society has placed on schools as the sole educators of children and thus, the relative lack of attention to family involvement in the educational arena today.

Research findings about the central role of parents in children's learning and educational trajectories from birth to adulthood are not a new development. In 1966, the Equality of Educational Opportunity study, more commonly known as the Coleman report, found that family background mattered more than school characteristics, provoking debate and prompting a new wave of research on the role of families³ (Coleman et al., 1966). In later decades, Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological theory highlighted the fact that children are not raised in a vacuum but rather are embedded within larger family, community, and societal contexts, which may be more or less replete with the concrete and emotional resources necessary for healthy development. More recently, research has found that early parenting practices are significant predictors of racial and socio-economic achievement gaps (Murnane, Willett, Bub & McCartney, 2006; Phillips, Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov & Crane, 1998) and that parenting matters more than other environmental factors, including early childcare arrangements (Belsky et al, 2007) and even schools (Luster & McAdoo, 1996; Steinberg, Bradford & Dornbusch, 1996).

Despite evidence that a phenomenon called gene-environment correlation (the genetically driven characteristics of children) does account for a part of the variability in children's academic and other development and behavioral genetics research that suggests genes that mark parents' most significant contributions to children's development (Harris, 1998; Rowe, 1994; Scarr, 1992), parental behavior is found to have a considerable independent effect on children (Plomin et al., 1999b; Rutter et al. 1999a; Ge et al., 1996). Related findings from experimental studies (Baumrind, 1993; van den Boom, 1994) suggest that, independent of gene-environment correlation, considerable parental behavior changes are associated with corresponding modifications in children's behavior. In short, both nature and nurture influence parenting and by

³ New statistical techniques have raised questions about the size of these effects (Borman, 2006), but the legacy of the report is still felt in research questions and recent findings about the role of families.

extension, children's development; in other words, parenting clearly does matter for children's growth and development (Collins et al., 2000; Maccoby, 1999)⁴.

Despite these findings, political and cultural attention to the centrality of the family's role has shifted over time, and the role of parents in education policy has waxed and waned (Fege, 2007). These shifts are part of a larger trend, as recent education reform discussions and policies have tended to focus exclusively on school factors such as improvements in instructional practices or reductions in school size, placing little or no emphasis on the contributions of non-school factors, including parenting and family involvement. This shift has been due in part to cultural changes and in part to shifting political ideologies.

On the cultural side, Coleman (1968) reminds us that in earlier centuries, families assumed responsibility for the welfare of their members from cradle to grave. He argues that "It was a welfare society, with each extended family serving as a welfare organization for its own members." Thus it was in the family's best interest to serve as a welfare organization for its own members, it was also to the family's interest to see that its members became productive. At the U.S. economy shifted from agrarian to industrial, however, this focus of developmental responsibility on the family for economic relations and commodity production became less central. Coleman argues that this shift led to the emergence of the public education, and the assignment of responsibility for learning essential to economic productivity shifted to the schools. For working class and under-resourced families, in particular, schools became the source of basic and formal education. For more privileged children, the family continued to be the source of support for the development of personal, political, and social competence. Still, there was little explicit awareness of the emerging relationship between these manifestations of affective development and the demands of movement along the educational trajectories of school and beyond.

On the political side, American society in recent decades has placed an increasingly large responsibility on schools for the academic, social, and moral education of children, particularly those from disadvantaged families (Wells, 2006). Wells (2006) attributes "the American public's love affair with education" (Silver & Silver, 1991) to a variety of factors including Americans' antipathy toward other forms of social welfare and an ideology of focusing on education to provide a "hand up" rather than a "hand out"; the growth of the "cultural deprivation" view of poverty and a belief in schools as the best way to combat it; and the civil rights movement's focus on educational access and school desegregation. All of these factors are tied into issues and beliefs about race and the confounding of race and poverty in America. The role of families in education has also shifted in response to changing political ideologies about the federal role in education, beliefs about families, and educational philosophies (Fege, 2007). Today's signature education policy, No Child Left Behind, focuses heavily on accountability, teacher and instructional quality, and school choice; there is little attention to families and other non-school supports for learning, and what attention there is focuses mainly on families as vehicles for school choice.

⁴ This assertion however, does not negate the importance of considering the effect of hereditary characteristics as mediators of parental influence.

Re-Conceptualizing Family Involvement

Although schools are currently held accountable for students' formal learning, the research evidence is clear that families influence learning in myriad critical ways. Family involvement includes parents' and caregivers' behaviors, practices, and attitudes as well as their involvement in and with the institutions where their children learn (e.g. schools, early childhood programs, out-of-school time activities). Understanding the complete range of such involvement types and strategies – and the full potential of the familial role in learning – requires a clear conceptualization of what family involvement is and how it supports learning. A key task of such a conceptualization is to recognize the roles and responsibilities of the many stakeholders, institutions, and social structures in families' lives, which enable or constrain their involvement.

Currently, school and national policies define family involvement narrowly, as in-school activities such as volunteering and parent committees. In contrast, researchers have proposed a variety of typologies and categories of family involvement strategies. Building off of this research base, we take a broad approach, viewing family involvement as a necessary, but not sufficient, part of a larger system of supports for children's learning and development. Research demonstrates that there is no single solution for low academic achievement. To be successful in school, children must have access to multiple supports, including enriching early childhood experiences, effective schools, out-of-school time programs, and nurturant families. These supports are not mutually exclusive; indeed, emerging research suggests that they can be more effective when they are intentionally connected to each other (Bouffard, Little, & Weiss, 2006; Harvard Family Research Project, 2005b).

This vision of comprehensive supports has been described by multiple terms, including Complementary Learning and Supplementary Education (Gordon, Bridglall & Meroe 2005; Harvard Family Research Project, 2005b). Today's growing national momentum for comprehensive supports builds on a long history of social science research demonstrating the role of multiple contextual influences on children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Sameroff, 1983; Sameroff & Chandler, 1975; Steinberg et al., 1996). It includes as plausible interventions community schools, extended school services, school-based parenting workshops and services, home visiting services, and school-based health services (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2004; Dryfoos, 1994; Rothman, 2007; Rothstein, 2004; Weiss & Klein, 2007).

Investments in such complementary learning approaches can add value in numerous ways, including maximizing resources, facilitating continuity, sharing outcome goals, and surrounding children with a network of supports so that they will not fall through the cracks. The multiple settings in a complementary learning system can build on and leverage each other. For example, emerging research shows that family involvement in after school and summer programs can promote and leverage family involvement in schools and at home (Chaplin & Capizzano, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, 2003).

Families are central to complementary/supplementary learning systems. Parents and other caregivers play a critical role in whether children participate in other learning experiences (Wimer et al., 2006; Kakli, Kreider, Little, Buck & Coffey, 2006; Little & Lauver, 2005), and they also mediate and scaffold those learning experiences (Gordon, 2005). In addition, complementary learning settings provide more opportunities and entry points for family

involvement and reduce or compensate for barriers to traditional forms of parent-school involvement. One of the benefits of complementary learning systems is to create redundancy. Most complex systems that achieve effectiveness and stability are characterized by redundancy – that is, systems in which all critical mechanisms have back-up or alternative components in case of failure in the primary system. Just as biological and mechanical systems routinely employ this principle, social systems – especially those involving developing children - require redundancy. At best, the components of a redundant system should complement each other; at the very least, they should serve a compensating function (Gordon, 2005).

In the context of a complementary learning system, our conceptualization of family involvement specifies that it occurs across contexts, across developmental stages, and as a function of shared responsibility among those who support children's learning.

Below, we describe each of these three components in more detail.

First, research demonstrates that family involvement occurs across contexts, not only in the home and the school, but in other complementary learning contexts, such as after-school programs, community centers, libraries, and faith-based institutions. Secondly, family involvement matters from birth to adulthood but varies in response to children's changing developmental needs (Caspe, Lopez & Wolos, 2006/2007; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill et al., 2004; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy & Weiss, 2007; Weiss, Caspe & Lopez, 2006). As children get older, parents and caregivers become less involved in instrumental support and supervision, but more involved in ways that promote autonomy and help launch children into the next stages of life (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Grolnick & Kurowski, Dunlap & Hevey 2000; Simon, 2004; McCaslin & Murdock, 1991). These changes are also responsive to the educational context, as many families feel less welcome in increasingly large and bureaucratic schools and less able to help with schoolwork as children get older (Eccles & Harold, 1993).

Thirdly, families, schools, and communities must co-construct and share responsibility for family involvement in children's learning. Co-constructing family involvement means that multiple stakeholders take an active part in and share responsibility for building relationships and partnerships. Co-constructed relationships are characterized by trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), shared values (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Dauber, 1991), ongoing, bidirectional communication (Eccles & Harold, 1993, 1996; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hill, 2001), and mutual respect (Lightfoot, 2003). Such relationships have benefits for parents and for children. For example, parents have described feeling that educators who conduct home visits are "like family," (Weiss, 1993) that the presence of trusted after-school providers can increase parents' comfort during parent-teacher conferences (Kakli et al., 2006) and better academic adjustment for children (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Lightfoot, 1978; Lopez, Kreider & Caspe, 2004; Weiss, Dearing, Mayer, Kreider & McCartney, 2005).

Such a framework of co-construction recognizes that families are part of a dynamic system that supports or constrains their involvement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Sameroff, 1983; Sameroff & Chandler, 1975). Social policies and structures affect the basic conditions of economic well-being (such as shelter, nourishment, and health care), which need to be in place for families to be supportive and for children to learn (Conger et al., 1992; McLoyd, 1998;

Rothstein, 2004). Schools influence family involvement via outreach, opportunities, and expectations (Sheldon, 2005; Simon, 2004), while community-based institutions such as early childhood and after-school programs provide additional entry points for families. Businesses impact involvement through schedule flexibility and time-off policies (Heymann & Earle, 2000) and by working with families to co-construct feasible involvement strategies even in the face of difficult work schedules (Weiss et al., 2003). Children are also agents of family involvement, via their invitations to parents, requests for help, and needs and skills (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Mutual Responsibility and Educational Equity

These research findings about the critical role of social structures in enabling or constraining involvement lead us to the conclusion that family involvement must be a shared and meaningful responsibility. Both families and larger social structures play active roles in building and sustaining families' support for children's learning. The society is responsible for making the political, financial, and social investments that promote families' capacities and opportunities to support their children's learning and development. In turn, families are responsible for providing the time, energy, and other resources that are within their means. Families need not do everything and need not all do the same things, but with adequate supports and incentives, all families can and should do something to support learning, even if it is as simple as asking: "what did you learn today?"

Framing family involvement as a shared responsibility is particularly relevant amidst political and media attention to achievement gaps and educational equity issues. Disadvantaged and minority children, who achieve lower, on average, than their more advantaged, White, and Asian-American peers, face a number of educational inequities that are the result of what Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) has called a compounding "educational debt" in America. They are more likely to attend under-resourced schools with less qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1997, 2004a, 2004b), less likely to participate in enriching out-of-school time experiences (Pedersen & Seidman, 2005; Wimer et al., 2006), and less likely to have access to physical and mental health services (Rothstein, 2004). In addition, disadvantaged and some ethnic minority parents also experience more barriers to supportive parenting and family involvement in education and are less likely to be involved in many ways (Stevenson & Baker 1987; Garcia-Coll & Chatman, 2005; Gordon et al., 2004; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003; Keith et al., 1998; Kohl, Lengua, McMahon & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2000; Lareau 1987; Moles, 1993).

In emphasizing both societal and familial responsibilities for children's learning, the framework of mutual responsibility moves away from the limitations of past approaches. It finds a balance between deficits-based approaches, which have tended to blame the victim and make value-judgments about effective parenting, and perspectives of "difference," which place sole responsibility on schools to adapt to the cultures and learning styles of disadvantaged children and make a "politically correct apology" (Gordon, 2005).

Ethnic and Socioeconomic Differences in the Predictors or Enablers of Family Involvement

Promoting and supporting involvement among all families requires that we generate a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of not only the family processes and associated outcomes for ethnic minority and socioeconomic groups, but also of the contextual factors that influence involvement. Existing research on normative characteristics of parenting is largely based on White, middle-class samples and emerging research has revealed some of the limitations of this research strategy. (For example, particular aspects of authoritative parenting are differentially distributed across racial and ethnic groups and are related to positive developmental outcomes for some groups but not others; Brody & Flor 1998; Okagaki & Frensch 1998; Steinberg, Dornbush & Brown 1992).

Historically, the use of deficit models in research on ethnic minority families has been endemic, as noted by Garcia Coll and colleagues (1996), McLoyd and Randolph (1985), and Demo and colleagues (2000). These models have characterized ethnic minority parenting practices as deficient rather than as “adaptive strategies responsive to unique environmental and historical demands” (Garcia Coll & Pachter 2002:3). This deficits model approach was further compounded by Lewis (1965), Moynihan (1965) and Rubel’s (1966) “findings” that the parenting practices of Mexicans, African Americans, and Puerto Ricans were “pathogenic and dysfunctional.” These findings, based on samples of low-income families with entrenched problems, were accepted without question and construed as representative of parenting characteristics within minority groups (Taylor, 2000). Baca-Zinn and Wells (2000) remind us that this deficits-based approach to examining parenting in ethnic and minority groups is based on the assumption that some childrearing practices are more effective or superior than others.

In contrast, research in the past few decades demonstrates movement away from a dysfunctional-based to a strengths-based approach that increasingly acknowledges, measures, and documents the particular contextual forces that affect racial/ethnic minority families (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan & Buriel, 1990; Ishii Kuntz, 2000; Ogbu, 1981; Taylor, 2000). Recent conceptual models designed to specifically examine ethnic minority parenting often focus on the effects of broader socio-cultural contexts (e.g., racism, segregation, poverty) on parenting practices (Belsky, 1984; Garcia Coll, 2000; Harrison et al., 1990; McAdoo, 1978; McLoyd, 1990; Ogbu, 1981). For example, research by McLoyd (1990) and McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo & Borquez (1994) exemplifies how variability in parenting strategies reflects the way that families react to the multiple stresses of poverty. Similarly, Jarret’s work (1995, 1997) identifies family processes that aim to bridge the African American community with the majority culture as a means of providing social mobility opportunities for youth living in neighborhoods with few resources (i.e., inadequate schools, housing, and municipal services) and many risks (i.e., crime, drugs, gangs, violence, etc.).

Contextual factors influencing parenting include the discontinuity between many ethnic minority parents’ *indigenous* cultural/social capital and *mainstream* culture and institutions (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Moll, 1994). Baca-Zinn and Wells (2000) identify social location/social class as another source of discontinuity for ethnic minority groups. These researchers and others (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Garcia Coll, 2000; Pachter, 2000) suggest that a minority person’s social location (shaped by racism, discrimination, prejudice and oppression) is typically

maintained by hegemonic institutions, policies and practices. This may shift, however incrementally, in light of the demographic changes occurring in the United States⁵.

Similarly, research on poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage has examined a number of contextual factors and barriers (Garcia-Coll & Chatman, 2005; Moles, 1993). Lack of economic capital constrains families' abilities to provide educational materials and activities. Disadvantaged families experience more logistical barriers, such as lack of transportation and schedule conflicts because low-income jobs afford less schedule flexibility, paid sick time, and paid vacation time (Moles, 1993; Garcia-Coll & Chatman, 2005; Heymann & Earle, 2000). Parents living in poverty or in economic stress also experience higher levels of emotional strain and mental health problems (McLoyd, 1990, 1998), which can impair their ability to engage with and support children and increase their likelihood of using harsh or punitive parenting practices (Conger et al., 1992; McLoyd, 1990, 1998; McLoyd et al., 1994; Jackson, Brooks-Gunn, Huang & Glassman, 2000; Elder, Eccles, Ardelt & Lord, 1995; Mistry, Vandewater & Huston, 2002; Crosnoe, Mistry, & Elder, 2002).

In addition, disadvantaged and ethnic minority families alike face another challenge: they do not have the same cultural and social capital that are valued by the dominant middle class society and, therefore, by schools (Bourdieu, 1987). As a result, disadvantaged families have less access to information about school policies, structures, and staff, and are therefore less likely to communicate with teachers, volunteer, act collectively in the face of problems, and know how to make educational decisions and help students learn at home (Horvat et al., 2003; Gordon et al., 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau, 1987; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Lareau (2003) found that social class differences in parents' cultural capital also influence children's cultural capital: working class parents' child-rearing philosophy of "the accomplishment of natural growth" did not include the academically-beneficial and school-endorsed activities (such as extracurricular activities, tutoring, and summer camp) that characterized middle class families' "concerted cultivation" philosophy. Strodtbeck (1964) calls this the "hidden curriculum of middle-class families."

These differences in social, cultural, and other forms of capital do not imply that disadvantaged and ethnic minority children and families are culturally deprived, rather that they have not been exposed to the practices, experiences, and values that are validated by the hegemonic culture (Gordon, Miller, & Rollack, 1986). In other words, "society has not equally prepared all segments of the population" (Gordon, 2005). This significantly impacts their ability to access necessary resources and relevant opportunities for their children. The irony of this self-perpetuating cycle is that the children most in need of educational capital are least likely to have access to it. Indeed, many families whose children are most at-risk of educational failure have neither the access to non-school learning supports, nor the experience to know that they matter, nor the child-rearing philosophies that support them (Gordon, 2005; Lareau, 2003).

⁵ The minority population (Hispanics, non-Hispanic African Americans, Asians, and Native Americans) represented 16% of the population in 1970, increased to 27% in 1998, and is projected to increase to about half of the US population by 2050 (Council on Economic Advisors 1998).

For these and other reasons, poor and other socioeconomically disadvantaged families are significantly less likely to be involved in learning at home and school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Keith et al., 1998; Kohl et al., 2000; Lareau, 1987). Research on ethnic differences in family involvement is mixed (a finding that may be due in part to the confounding of race and socioeconomic status in American society), finding that ethnic groups vary in the types of involvement they provide and the mechanisms of those strategies' effects on children's learning (Keith et al, 1998; Chao, 1994, 1996; Mau, 1995; Diamond, Wang, & Gomez, 2004; Hill et al., 2004; Hill & Craft, 2003). Both cultural and structural factors make it more comfortable and feasible to be involved in certain contexts (e.g. in the home versus in the school building).

Applying the Framework

These findings about the role of contextual factors in family involvement underscore the importance of a framework of mutual responsibility for understanding and promoting family involvement policies and further research. This framework is supported by several other strands of research. First, research consistently demonstrates that families from all backgrounds report a desire to be involved, want their children to do well in school, and hope that their children will achieve a better occupational status than they themselves have attained (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Moles, 1993). Second, research demonstrates that outreach from school, district, and community leaders is associated with higher levels of family involvement (Sheldon, 2005; Simon, 2004). Third, some studies find that when disadvantaged parents do get involved, children benefit even more from this involvement than their middle class peers (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins & Weiss, 2006; Schulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005). Although further study is needed, these findings give us reason to believe that parents may become involved if they have access to appropriate supports and incentives, and that their children may benefit.

This emphasis on mutual responsibility underlies our framing of family involvement as it occurs across contexts, across developmental stages, and as co-constructed, and is essential for interpreting the existing research on family involvement, which we describe below.

Family Support of Academic Development and How Such Support Relates to Achievement?

Using our redefinition of family involvement in a more contextual way, what we are calling the "*complementary learning system to support parent involvement,*" this section reviews research on the benefits of family involvement in learning from birth to adulthood. As described below, these findings have increased our understanding of how family involvement in an array of settings, institutions, and relationships – including early childhood programs, schools, communities, and afterschool programs – contributes to children's learning and development, and they have also underscored both the benefits and challenges for minority and low-income families.

This section focuses on findings from naturalistic studies, which examine how parents choose to be involved (outside of structured programs or policies), while the subsequent section

focuses on programs and interventions. For the sake of clarity, we have organized this section into seven categories: parental responsiveness and emotional support⁶, cognitive stimulation in the home, academic socialization, providing structure and support for learning, building home-school connections, school-governance and decision-making, and involvement in supplementary/complementary learning settings. However, we know that constellations of multiple family behaviors and practices contribute to learning, and thus we do not mean to suggest that these behaviors occur in isolation. Consistent with our theoretical conceptualization, and with other literature reviews and meta-analyses (Caspe et al., 2006/07; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Kreider et al., 2007; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006), we find that family support and involvement matter across the developmental span, across learning contexts, and across a wide range of family involvement processes, and that contextual factors contribute to, constrain or enable these processes.

Parental Responsiveness and Emotional Support

Beginning at birth, parents and other caregivers support learning by engaging with their children in informal interactions that are warm and emotionally supportive. In early childhood, parents' responsiveness fosters the social, emotional, and cognitive building blocks of learning (Bowlby, 1969; Tronick, Als & Brazelton, 1980; Trevarthan, 1977). During middle childhood and adolescence, emotional support, trust, and open communication are associated with academic expectations and identity, positive behaviors, and academic achievement (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Morrison, Rimm-Kauffman, & Pianta, 2003; Simpson, 2001; Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005).

Baumrind and others' research on the combination of emotional responsiveness, demandingness, and control suggest that children achieve higher when their parents and caregivers are authoritative (highly responsive and demanding with low levels of intrusive and punitive behaviors) rather than authoritarian (highly restrictive and controlling with low levels of warmth and responsiveness). However, more recent research has highlighted the important role of culture in effective parenting approaches. African-American children and adolescents appear to benefit more from a style that is "more demanding and less acquiescent to child demands" (Mandara, 2006); some researchers suggest that the authoritarian style that is most adaptive for these groups (Lamborn, Dornbusch & Steinberg, 1996; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch & Darling, 1992; Steinberg et al., 1996), but others have recently suggested that the most adaptive pattern for African-Americans is qualitatively different from the classic authoritarian/authoritative distinction – that is, it is warm but strict, without the harsh or punitive aspects of the authoritarian style (Mandara, 2006).

Research has also demonstrated that parental capacity for emotional support is influenced by families' life contexts. For example, research findings that families experiencing economic hardship may be more likely to engage in harsh or punitive parenting practices can be explained in part by an increased likelihood of mental health problems (Conger et al., 1992; Crosnoe et al., 2002; Elder et al., 1995; Jackson et al., 2000; McLoyd, 1990, 1998; McLoyd et al., 1994; Mistry et al., 2002).

⁶ Here we refer to parents or primary caregivers

Cognitive Stimulation in the Home

Children and adolescents who live in cognitively stimulating home environments, which include books and educational materials, adult-child discussions, interactive play, and other learning experiences, develop stronger academic skills and demonstrate higher achievement (e.g. Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2001; Cunha & Heckman, 2006; Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002; Foster, Lambert, & Abbott-Shim, 2005; Nord, Lennon, Liu, et al., 1999; Tamis-Lemonda, Shannon, Cabrera & Lamb, 2004). A linguistically-rich home environment in early childhood is particularly important. The number of words used, the complexity of speech, shared book-reading, and interactive storytelling are related to later cognitive and linguistic development (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991; Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2001; Hart & Risely, 1995; Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pelligrini, 1995; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Given these benefits, findings that children from poor and working class families are exposed to far fewer words in early childhood (Hart & Risley, 1995) and less interactive conversations in middle childhood (Lareau, 2003) have received significant attention in the media and academic communities.

Academic Socialization

When children perceive that their families value education, they demonstrate higher motivation, perceived competence, expectations, and effort (Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg, 2001; Marjoribanks, 1997; Sands & Plunkett, 2005; Eastman, 1988; Seginer, 1983). Children also demonstrate more adaptive academic behaviors when their families convey messages about competence, the malleability of intelligence, and the role of curiosity in learning (Leibham, Alexander, Johnson, Neitzel, & Reis-Henrie, 2005; Bouffard & Hill, 2005; Frome & Eccles, 1998; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2000).

While families from different cultures have different beliefs about the appropriate role of schools in their own and their children's lives (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Chao, 1996; Garcia-Coll & Chatman, 2005; Moles, 1993), all families convey their values, both subtly and directly. Across ages and cultural groups, parents and caregivers report having high educational expectations for their children, and these expectations are a particularly strong predictor of achievement, which may provide a buffer for at-risk youth (Fan & Chan, 2001; Catsambis, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Spera, 2006; Trusty, 2003; Zhan, 2006; Ceballo, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Hill et al, 2004).

One of the ways that families convey their values and expectations is through discussion and dialogue (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg, 2001; Jeynes, 2005; Hong & Ho, 2005), which are associated with a range of positive academic outcomes (Catsambis, 2001; Desimone, 1999; Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Keith et al., 1998; Sui-Chu & Wilms, 1996; Trusty, 1999; Ma, 1999, 2001; Fan & Chen; McNeal, 1999). Supportive educational discussions are especially critical during adolescence, as teenagers face increased social and academic pressures and important life decisions (Hill et al., 2004; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Kreider et al., 2007).

Providing Structure and Support for Learning

When families create regular routines, eat dinner with their children, limit TV-watching, monitor activities, and manage learning activities, children demonstrate better academic outcomes (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw & Liddell, 2006; Bradley & Caldwell, 1976; Clark, 1983; Fantuzzo, McWayne & Perry, 2004; Rankin & Quane, 2002; Spera, 2006; Taylor, 1996; Taylor & Lopez, 2005). Monitoring is related to supervision and evolves according to the child's developmental phase. Parents and caregivers usually practice more vigilance with younger children, while they tend to focus on knowing what the child is doing and with whom he is doing it as he gets older (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005). Although too many rules may be perceived as controlling, an optimal amount of monitoring helps parents and caregivers know when to intervene and is associated with academic benefits (Rodriguez, 2002; Catsambis, 2001; Falbo, Lein, & Amador, 2001; Sartor & Youniss, 2002; Rankin & Quane, 2002; Simons-Morton & Crump, 2003; Spera, 2006). However, the effects of monitoring and rule-setting may vary according to child and contextual characteristics. For example, youth living in dangerous neighborhoods appear to benefit most from strict rules and limit-setting (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, & Elder, 1999).

Similarly, the effects of homework involvement vary, based on the child's age and specific parental behaviors (Cooper & Valentine, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato & Walker, 2001). Homework involvement is related to positive outcomes when it supports children's autonomy, self-management, and self-regulatory skills, and when parents use a positive and mastery-oriented tone (Cooper et al., 2000; Pomerantz, Ng, & Wang, 2006; Pomerantz, Wang, & Florrie, 2005; Xu, 2004; Xu & Corno, 2003). However, involvement that is perceived as controlling, intrusive, or indicative of low competence – particularly during adolescence - is related to negative outcomes (Pomerantz & Eaton, 2000; Cooper et al., 2001; Hill, 2007). As many as two-thirds of parents engage in some inappropriate form of homework involvement (Cooper et al., 2000), and many parents – especially parents of adolescents and parents with low levels of educational attainment - feel insecure about their ability to help with homework (Eccles & Harold, 1993). These findings underscore the need for parents to learn how to appropriately scaffold their children's skills (Casper et al., 2006/07).

Building Home-School Connections

From pre-school through high school, positive family-school relationships promote information-sharing, convey to children the importance of education, and increase children's educational expectations and achievement (Falbo et al., 2001; Rodriguez, 2002; Steinberg et al., 1996; Trusty, 1999). Family-school communication is particularly beneficial for academic outcomes – especially when it is ongoing, bidirectional, and focused on progress as well as problems (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Anguiano, 2004; Catsambis, 2001; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morrison, 2006). In some cases, researchers have found negative relationships between communication and achievement, however, most of these negative findings have diminished or disappeared after controlling for problem-based communication and children's academic or behavioral problems (Catsambis, 2001; Desimone, 1999; Sui-Chu & Wilms, 1996). Research also demonstrates that contextual factors, such as time, language, and logistical constraints play a role in whether and how often positive communication occurs. Families of lower socioeconomic status are particularly unlikely to have ongoing contact with schools (Kohl et al., 2000; Lareau, 2003; Stevenson & Baker, 1987), yet they are more likely to

be contacted when problems arise (Lareau, 2003). New communication technologies, such as voicemail and email, seek to reduce some of these barriers (Bauch, 1989, 2000; Bouffard, 2006).

Family involvement at the school, including attendance at conferences and involvement in school activities, equips families with information to make educational decisions, provides a venue for families to demonstrate their support and advocate for children, and is associated with positive academic outcomes (Hill & Taylor 2004; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan & Moon-Ho et al., 2005; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow & Fendrich, 1999; Jeynes, 2005; Barnard, 2004; Dearing et al., 2006). Involvement at school is predicted by a combination of invitations, convenient opportunities, parental self-efficacy, and parents' beliefs about their appropriate role in educating their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), which vary across cultures (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Chao, 1996; Garcia-Coll & Chatman, 2005; Moles, 1993). When families do get involved at school, those who have traditionally felt marginalized can gain voice and presence. For example, in some recent studies, many African-American parents have reported that motivations for getting involved in the school building include showing that they value education, monitoring teachers, and establishing their authority (Diamond & Gomez, 2004).

School-Governance and Decision-Making

Although research is not conclusive on whether students benefit from family participation in school governance (e.g. committees, councils, PTA's, and PTO's), these activities can promote mutual responsibility for family involvement, promote other forms of involvement, build families' social networks, and give voice to historically under-represented families. For example, minority representation on school councils is related to greater parental satisfaction and student achievement among minority families and to greater minority representation on the school staff (Marschall, 2006). These findings may have implications for reducing the exclusion that many minority and low-income families experience relative to school leadership, decision making, practices and policies. Such exclusion is reinforced by the types of social and cultural capital that are most valued and rewarded by schools.

Education organizing refers to collective family involvement efforts among traditionally marginalized community members in order to promote school accountability and educational equity (Lopez, 2003; Warren, 2005; Fruchter & Gray, 2006; Mediratta & Fruchter, 2001). Although there have been few rigorous studies of the impact of these efforts, a recent six-year mixed-methods study of seven diverse community organizing programs found several positive outcomes, including increased family engagement and involvement, school climate and policies, and student achievement, engagement, and behavior (Mediratta et al., 2008). In addition, several other qualitative studies suggest small, positive improvements as a result of such community organizing programs, including better school environments and more resources, greater student access to supplemental programs, and higher student achievement (Gold & Simon, 2002; Mediratta, 2004; National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002; Mediratta & Karp, 2003; Shirley, 1997; Warren, 2005; PICO National network; n.d.).

Involvement in Supplementary/Complementary Learning Settings

Early childhood programs are the most critical complementary/supplementary education settings during the early years. When they foster mutually constructed involvement among

families, early childhood providers and kindergarten teachers facilitate educational transitions from pre-school to elementary school, establish long-term involvement patterns for parents, and promote children's language, social, motor, and basic academic skills (Downer & Mendez, 2005; Marcon, 1999; Mantzicopoulos, 2003; Izzo et al., 1999; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen & Sekino et al., 2004; Kreider, 2001; Ou, 2005; Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999; Rimm-Kauffman & Pianta, 2000; Fantuzzo, 2004). Educators play a central role in this process. For example, when kindergarten teachers involve parents and other stakeholders before school starts in the fall, parents initiate more involvement and children have higher achievement at the end of the school year, especially for low- and middle-income children (Schulting et al., 2005).

As children proceed into middle childhood and adolescence, increasing involvement in after school programs (such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls' Clubs) and other extracurricular activities, such as sports and arts lessons, is associated with increases in families' social capital, knowledge about the education system, and involvement in school⁷ (Lareau, 2003; U.S. DoE, 2003; Vandell et al., 2005). Similarly, family involvement in summer programs, which seek to reduce summer learning loss experienced by many disadvantaged students (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001; Burkam, Ready, Lee & LoGerfo, 2004; Downey, von Hippel & Broh, 2004; Heyns, 1978), is related to more literacy involvement at home (Chaplin, & Capizzano, 2006). There is also emerging evidence of benefits from family involvement in college preparation (Auerbach, 2004; Trusty, 1999).

Do Interventions, Programs, and Surrogate Arrangements Promote Family Involvement and Support: Do They Benefit Children?

As the previous section makes clear, research on families in their natural settings demonstrate the many ways in which families contribute to learning. The critical question that follows is whether interventions and programs can demonstrably promote involvement and thereby support educational achievement, particularly for those children whose families who face the most constraints and thus are least likely to be involved. Although investments in interventions have been limited, there is evidence to suggest that carefully designed interventions can promote family involvement and increase children's academic performance, and thus are warranted.

Interventions targeting family involvement take a range of approaches: some focus specifically on increasing family educational involvement, while others include family involvement as part of more comprehensive programs with other ultimate goals (such as reduction in aggressive behavior). In this section, we organize our review according to our redefinition of family involvement, beginning with interventions across age groups, proceeding to interventions across contexts, and ending with interventions that promote mutual responsibility for involvement⁸.

⁷ In fact, family involvement is recognized as one of the standards for high quality OST programs (Vandell et al 2005).

⁸ Due to space constraints, we do not attempt to cite every intervention study conducted to date, but rather to provide an overview of major evaluations, previous reviews, and notable studies.

As described in more detail below, these interventions have demonstrated small but significant effects on children's and families' outcomes. The effect sizes (often in the .20 range) are similar to effect sizes for class size reduction and other interventions that are widely considered to be successful (McCartney & Dearing, 2002; Lipsey & Wilson, 1993). In fact, these studies may underestimate the true impact of family involvement interventions, if they are reflective of many social science studies (Cooper, Dorr, & Bettencourt, 1995). Furthermore, there is emerging evidence that the most at-risk families benefit most (Layzer, Goodson, Bernstein, & Price, 2001; Fuligni, Brooks-Gunn, & Berlin, 2003).

Interventions Across Ages

Consistent with findings that effective family involvement practices change across ages, interventions utilize different approaches and strategies during different developmental periods. Family interventions have been most common during early childhood, using various combinations of home-based, center-based, and family-literacy approaches. Family interventions during middle childhood and adolescence, which have been relatively rare to date, tend to target specific family involvement activities, such as family involvement in homework, college preparation, and prevention of conduct problems.⁹

Early Childhood Interventions

Many early childhood parenting programs were created as part of the family support movement, which began during the 1960's War on Poverty and have evolved over the decades to the present (Lopez & Caspe, in press). Family support programs build the capacity of at-risk parents to support their children's development, providing services only to parents, to parents via their involvement in educational services for children, or a combination of the two -- often referred to as the "two generation approach" (Smith, 1995; Lopez & Caspe, in press). One of the most common family support approaches is home visiting [note: are "home visits" an example of the "two generational approach"?], in which a trained parent educator provides parent training, health services, referrals to social service agencies, and other services in families' homes (Sweet & Applebaum, 2004). As many as 400,000 families currently receive home visiting services and in 2001, at least 37 states had state-based programs for at-risk families (Weiss & Klein, 2007).

Meta-analyses and reviews of family support and home visiting interventions have found small but statistically significant effects on family processes and child outcomes, including cognitive and academic development (Layzer et al., 2001; Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Gomby, 2003; Daro, 2006; Wasserman, 2006; Weiss & Klein, 2007; Sweet & Applebaum 2004), with stronger effects for "two generation" approaches (Smith, 1995; Yoshikawa, 1995). Home visiting programs are more likely to have positive effects on parenting processes, the home environment, and outcomes for parents rather than on children's outcomes, but some programs are associated with children's cognitive development and school readiness, particularly if the program delivery

⁹ More comprehensive initiatives, such as school reform efforts, school and district policies, and community organizing have also included families, but few of these programs have been rigorously evaluated, especially in relation to their family components.

approaches emphasize children's learning and combine both center- and home-based services (Administration for Children, Youth, & Families, 2002).

Center-based early childhood programs also promote family involvement in a variety of ways, including family events, family resource rooms, and opportunities for families to be employed as classroom aides and teachers. Research on the benefits of early childhood education programs for children's learning is extensive, and suggests that a combination of center- and home-based approaches is most beneficial for children and families (Kagan, 2007; Gomby, 2003, Daro, 2006, Wasserman, 2006; Brooks-Gunn, Berlin, Fuligni & Leventhal, 2000). Findings (from Early Head Start and other programs) that these combined approaches are more effective than center-based-only services (e.g. Love et al., 2005) suggest that families play an important role.

However, relatively few studies have examined the specific role of family involvement in learning in early childhood programs (Brooks-Gunn et al, 2000), and research to date has been mixed. Some studies have found that family involvement has long-term effects on children's academic progress, including higher achievement, less need for remedial education and special education, lower rates of grade retention, and high school completion (Barnett, 1995; Reynolds, Temple, Ou, et al 2007). On the other hand, research findings from Head Start, the oldest federally-funded pre-school program for low-income children, are more equivocal. Although parents who participate in Head Start were more likely to engage with children in reading and enriching activities, families demonstrated few changes over time. Additionally, Head Start graduates differed in very small ways from the comparison group during the kindergarten transition and remained academically behind their more advantaged peers (Ramey et al., 2000; Puma et al., 2005).

Interventions that specifically promote family involvement in reading and literacy during early childhood have demonstrated more evidence of success. Interactive reading interventions have had positive impacts on children's vocabulary, story comprehension, storytelling skills, and academic gains (e.g. Sénéchal, Thomas & Monker et al, 1995; Sénéchal, 1997; Jordan, Snow & Porsche, 2000), and may have the greatest benefits for children who start out with low skills (Jordan et al., 2000). One of the most common and effective models is the "dialogic" reading approach, in which adults use a series of hierarchical questioning techniques while reading with children (see Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, for a review). However, research on family literacy programs – which combine literacy training for parents and children – is more mixed (Caspe, 2003; Hannon, 1999). While some studies have reported positive outcomes (e.g. see Brizius & Foster, 1993), the national Even Start evaluation reported disappointing findings (Ricciuti, St. Pierre, Lee, Parsad, & Rimdzius, 2004; St.Pierre et al., 2003). Furthermore, few studies have examined differences between family literacy programs and services offered to parents or children alone and several reviews have cited the need for more rigorous research (Caspe, 2000; Hannon, 1999; Nickse, 1993).

Middle Childhood and Adolescence Interventions

Unlike those applied in early childhood, interventions during middle childhood and adolescence have focused more on family involvement in education than on supportive parenting more generally. Meta-analyses and reviews find that a range of programs have small but

significant effects on both family involvement and student achievement (Erion, 2006; Nye, Turner, & Schwarz, 2006; Jeynes, 2005; Jeynes, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002, Walker-James & Partee; Caspe & Lopez, 2006). Meta-analyses find that programs that teach families how to help children with learning activities at home (e.g. shared reading, supplemental math activities, and parental academic instruction) have highly significant effects on achievement (Nye et al., 2006; Erion, 2006). Programs that train families in how to be appropriately and effectively involved in their children's homework, most of which have used moderately rigorous evaluation designs, have found positive effects on families' supportive involvement, increases in the time children spend on homework, higher homework accuracy, and higher grades (Van Voorhis, 2003; Balli, Demo & Wedman, 1998; Bailey, 2006; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). There is also some evidence of benefits from programs that target family-school relationships on families' social networks, parent-child closeness, family involvement in education, and children's social and academic outcomes (Kratochwill, McDonald & Levin, 2003; Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Bear-Tibbetts & Demaray 2004; McDonald et al., 2006; also see Caspe & Lopez, 2006 for a review).

In addition, some programs to prevent and treat conduct and behavioral problems include training in supportive parenting and family involvement. Several studies find that these programs have a positive impact on the children's cognitive outcomes and achievement, as well as social and behavioral skills (Cocoron & Dattalo, 2006; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2004; Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2004). In most cases, the specific contribution of the family component has not been evaluated separately. However, one study found that changes in parental behavior partially mediated the relationship between program participation and decreases in children's oppositional and aggressive behavior (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2002b). These findings suggest that family components can be an important part of comprehensive interventions and that more research is warranted to examine the potential value-added of family involvement in interventions to promote learning, social skills, and other developmental outcomes. *Interventions Across Contexts*

Evidence is emerging that family involvement in complementary/supplementary learning settings – not only as part of the early childhood programs already mentioned, but also within after-school and summer programs for older children - is related to higher achievement, academic skills, and family involvement in school (Furstenberg et al., 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2003).¹⁰ A national evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool program, which...found that children's participation was associated with higher family involvement in the school (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). A rigorous evaluation of a summer learning program found that participating families read more frequently with children and encouraged reading more than non-participating families (Chaplin & Capizzano, 2006). In another evaluation, parents who participated in workshops and home visits as part of an afterschool program for Mexican immigrant youth reported increases over two years in the quality and frequency of family-school contact, parental engagement in school activities, and children's academic achievement (Riggs, 2006).

¹⁰ Some small-scale studies suggest that family-centered school drop-out prevention and college preparation programs are also associated with positive outcomes (e.g. Gándara, 2002; Vidano & Sahafi, 2004), but few have been rigorously evaluated to date.

These findings underscore an important point about our framing of family involvement within complementary/supplementary learning: family involvement in one context appears to promote and leverage family involvement in other contexts. These findings provide early evidence that building connections across learning contexts can leverage all contexts' potential in their efforts to support children's learning. They also suggest an important area for future research and efforts to link children and families with multiple learning opportunities and supports. Reflecting such findings, out-of-school time programs are increasingly including family involvement in their definitions of quality. A large-scale evaluation of afterschool programs in New York state found that strong family involvement is one of the features common to the highest-performing programs (Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005), and a recent scan of quality standards found that over half included family or community involvement/partnerships (Harvard Family Research Project, 2005a).

Interventions Promoting Mutual Responsibility for Family Involvement

As we have emphasized throughout this paper, all stakeholders must share responsibility for family involvement, and families are more likely to be involved when educators reach out to them. Although most programs have focused on families as the point of intervention, those that have targeted teachers, administrators, and the structure of the education system have reported promising findings.

A series of small-scale evaluations using non-experimental and quasi-experimental methods suggest that both teacher training program and school districts that emphasize how to engage families can increase both teachers' outreach practices and families' likelihood of involvement (see Epstein, 2005 for a review). Several studies have found that it is possible for such programs to also change parents' role construction, self efficacy, and social capital (Sheldon, 2002; Drummond & Stipek 2004; McDonald et al., 2006; see also Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005), which are predictors of involvement.

Policies also appear to play a role in promoting involvement. For example, as part of the decentralization of the Chicago Public Schools in 1988, schools are now governed by site-based Local School Councils (LSC), which are composed of a majority of parents, as well as community members, teachers, and principals. A recent study of this power-sharing structure found that higher Latino representation on the LSCs was associated with more school efforts to involve families, higher cultural and community awareness among teachers, and higher achievement among Latino students (Marschall, 2006).

Although more research is needed to explain why some interventions work better than others (e.g. see neutral findings from Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002), the existing evidence suggests that there is value-added from programs and policies targeting the educational system. There is also evidence that such programs and policies are needed. Research on families' reports about schools show that there is only a moderate amount of outreach to parents to involve them in these interventions (Carey, Lewis, & Farris, 1998; Chen, 2001; Vaden-Kiernan, 2005), and it may not be as effective as it could be. For example, although most kindergarten teachers reach out to families (Pianta et al., 1999), most of this contact occurs only after school has started (Pianta et al., 1999). Of greatest concern, disadvantaged and minority families report receiving less outreach, despite educators' reports of equal outreach to all families

(Carey et al., 1998; Chen, 2001; Marschall, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2006; Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005). Although it is not clear whether this discrepancy in perception is due to actual differences, it is likely to have consequences for family-school relationships and involvement. Programs and policies to address school outreach can strengthen involvement in these situations and across the board, particularly when they are culturally appropriate and responsive, employ an assets-based approach, and honor the strengths and contributions of diverse families (Gomby, 2005; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992; Paratore, Melzi & Krol-Sinclair, 1999; Rodríguez-Brown, 2004).

Themes Across Intervention Studies

Across ages, settings, and types, family involvement interventions have demonstrated small but significant effects, and have surfaced a few common themes. First, there is emerging evidence that the most at-risk families benefit most (Layzer et al., 2001; Fuligni et al., 2003). Secondly, intervention sites that rate higher in quality and model fidelity are more likely to achieve positive results (Kalafat, Illback, & Sanders, 2007; Raikes et al., 2006). In fact, variation in quality across sites may help to explain the mixed results of several national evaluations¹¹. Thirdly, when parents participate with higher “dosage” and intensity – that is, more frequently or for longer periods of time – and are more actively engaged, children and families appear to benefit more (Berlin, O’Neal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Raikes et al., 2006, St. Pierre, et al., 1995; Erion, 2006; Liaw, Meisels, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995)¹².

Despite these encouraging findings, researchers have pointed out that changing parenting and family involvement are complex processes, which may take multiple generations (Phillips et al., 1998) and require significant investments in quality and sustainability (Kreider, 2005; Brooks-Gunn, Berlin & Fuligni, 2000). Investments are not only needed for the interventions themselves, but also for evaluating the efficacy of implementation and for building the knowledge base. To date, the quantity and quality of evaluation studies have been limited (Mattingly, Prislun, McKenzie, Rodriguez & Kayzar, 2003), due in part to a lack of financial commitment and also to methodological issues. For instance, one challenge is the “contamination” or “radiation” effect common to many interventions, in which elements of the program reach the control group, leading to underestimation of program impact. In some cases, the value-added of family involvement within more comprehensive programs is not evaluated, and in other cases, the family component has been eliminated from the program altogether due to budget limitations (D. Weikart, personal communication, Feb. 12, 1992).

¹¹ For example, a national evaluation of the federally-funded Even Start family literacy program found positive effects on the home literacy environment (e.g. number of books in the home), but no sustained effects on children’s literacy or cognitive outcomes. The investigators attribute the findings in part to wide diversity among program sites, the fact that approximately one-third of control group families also received other education services, and the fact that families did not take full advantage of the program’s services (St.Pierre et al., 2003).

¹² Dosage and engagement have been studied in relatively few programs. Those studies that have examined the issue have found a positive association in home visiting, comprehensive family support, and interactive homework programs.

Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Research clearly demonstrates the benefits of family involvement in children’s learning and development from birth through high school and across the multiple contexts of home, school, community, and structured out-of-school experiences. Furthermore, evidence is mounting that programs and policies – when high-quality and sustained – can improve family involvement with return on investment in the form of children’s achievement and well-being. Today more than ever, children need knowledgeable and capable parent figures who are committed to their education and to supporting it to the best of their ability. In an age of complex social structures and information overload, this means orchestrating children’s learning experiences when they are young and helping them to manage and be responsible for their own learning as they get older. These findings make the case for investing in policies and initiatives that promote and support family involvement at the local, state, and national levels as a key to truly leaving no child behind. The questions now facing the field are how best to invest in fostering family involvement in policy and practice and how to do so in ways that ensure educational equity.

This section addresses next steps and promising approaches for turning the research-based knowledge outlined above into policy and practice. First, we argue for a set of research-based principles that should underlie and guide effective policies and initiatives, with a focus on fostering shared responsibility for family involvement in order to promote educational equity. Secondly, we illustrate examples of “best bets,” or promising demonstration programs and policies at the local, state, and national levels that embody these principles. Finally, we highlight a set of challenges and critical issues facing policymakers, leading practitioners, and researchers as they move forward. Research and past initiatives suggest that it will be crucial to address these issues in order to ensure equity and effectiveness – that is, to ensure both that family involvement is equally distributed and that it demonstrably contributes to children’s learning and development.

Essential Principles for Promoting Family Involvement with Equity and Effectiveness

In the context of a prominent national discourse about achievement gaps and educational equity, we underline recent research findings that socioeconomically disadvantaged children – who face multiple educational risks – appear to benefit most from family involvement (Dearing et al, 2006; Schulting et al., 2005). However, from birth through adolescence, disadvantaged families are less likely to be involved in supporting learning at home, in the school, and in the community (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Keith et al., 1998; Kohl et al., 2000; Lareau, 1987). On average, they are less likely to have the social and cultural capital that match schools’ values and that convey the importance of and mechanisms for involvement. They are also more likely to face multiple logistical and resource barriers to involvement; and are less likely to have invitations, opportunities, and supports for involvement.

Taken together, these trends have important implications for educational equity, because differences in family involvement may precipitate or exacerbate unequal educational opportunities and outcomes. Indeed, research by Ferguson (2007) and others suggests that early parenting practices and behaviors play a role in establishing achievement gaps, and various high-

profile figures in the field of education and beyond have recently raised similar issues in public debates and publications (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Crew, 2007; Ferguson, 2007).

If we take seriously the notion of educational equity, then policies and other investments must address differences in involvement across families from birth through adolescence and help to level the playing field. Certainly, parents and other family members must play an active role in and take responsibility for this process. However, in order to enable and expect involvement among disadvantaged families without blame or stigma, policies must address affordances, opportunities, and supports for involvement. In other words, all parties must share responsibility for family involvement.

Rudy Crew, Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, articulates and operationalizes this need for mutual responsibility in his work and writes about it in a recent book: “To absolve parents of responsibility for their children is patronizing. If I believe that all kids can learn, I also believe that all parents can teach” (Crew, 2007: p. 156). Based on his experiences in urban schools, he believes that the vast majority of parents – rich and poor alike – want to support their children’s learning, but many poor parents do not know how to do it effectively. To address this gap, he believes that schools and communities must help “Supply parents” become “Demand parents:”

For instance, he writes:

Sometimes immigrants, very often poor and powerless and easily abused, Supply Parents often feel like outsiders in the very schools that are supposed to be serving them... No one’s letting them into the knowledge core of the system, the things you need to know to make the school work for you, nor are they asking. ... We don’t see their cultural value, their point of leverage, whatever currency or cachet they may bring (Crew, 2007); p. 154).

In contrast, Crew (2007) writes that demand parents “demand things from their schools because they understand that they are indeed owed something and it is their responsibility to get it for their children” (p. 155). Demand parents, who are not necessarily pushy but view themselves as “educational consumers,” are more likely to elicit responses from educators.

Given this structure, Crew (2007) believes that schools must help marginalized parents find a way to “play the game” and become Demand parents. In turn, parents are ultimately responsible for building relationships and consistency between home and school, and schools can and should demand things of them, including knowledge of how their children are doing, doing the basic things that are proven to help children learn, and communicating with schools when children encounter problems.

This circle of shared responsibility is a key component of our reconceptualization of family involvement, along with viewing family involvement from birth through adolescence and across all of the contexts in which children and youth live. Building off this reconceptualization

and targeting the goal of educational equity, we propose a set of four essential principles that should underlie future policy and other investments¹³.

1. *Policies and other investments must approach family involvement as a shared and meaningful responsibility across different sectors of the society.* Social, cultural, and political factors play essential roles in enabling or constraining involvement. Policies must therefore be designed to support and enable all families – especially disadvantaged families - to build and leverage their assets, abilities, and opportunities to support their children’s learning. Firstly, this means that social policies must establish an adequate and level floor for all families – that is, a minimum standard of living (including food, shelter, and other basic resources) that is needed in order for families to meet their children’s other needs, including intellectual and social development. Secondly, it means that family involvement policies and initiatives must include intentional roles for schools, businesses, higher education, communities, and other institutions, all of which create the affordances, opportunities, and incentives for involvement. Thirdly, it means that families must in turn be expected to support their children’s learning within their means and abilities.

2. *Family involvement must be understood as necessary but not sufficient for educational success.* While family involvement is clearly important for school success, it is not a “magic bullet.” Children and youth need access to many opportunities to learn; for example, research demonstrates the benefits of high-quality early childhood programs (Fuligni et al., 2003; Kagan, 2007; Weiss & Klein, 2007) and out-of-school time opportunities (Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Little & Harris, 2003; Wimer, 2006). In an age of increasing demands for complex skills and global competition, children need these multiple opportunities to develop “21st century skills” (Levy & Murnane, 1996) and the well-rounded development that Gordon & Bridglall (2007) refer to as intellectual competence.

Just as siloed instructional reforms fail to live up to their potential, so too will family involvement if it is disconnected from other educational needs and supports. Instead, family involvement policies and initiatives should operate from a complementary learning/ supplementary education perspective. That is, they should include families as part of connected systems of learning supports, which intentionally integrate families and schools with out-of-school time programs, early childhood opportunities, cultural and community institutions, businesses, higher education, and others. Connecting these institutions and settings can provide more entry points and opportunities for family involvement; facilitate continuity; make family involvement a mainstreamed and sustained effort; and make investments more efficient and therefore more effective.

3. *Family involvement efforts should operate from a developmental perspective and promote continuous involvement.* Policies and initiatives should not only promote involvement at multiple ages and time points, but should intentionally approach children and families from a developmental perspective. That is, they should be designed to intentionally build family

¹³ These principles are based on and adapted from Bouffard & Weiss (2008), *Family Involvement Redefined: Families and Educational Success within a Complementary Learning Framework*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

involvement as a continuous process that grows and evolves as children mature. Inherent in this perspective are a critical role for families across educational transitions, a commitment to engaging families early and often, and an effort to building on and leveraging earlier family involvement efforts.

4. *Family involvement efforts should be systemic and sustained.* To date, many family involvement efforts have been programmatic interventions, with short terms and small scopes. However, it follows logically from the previous three principles - and from the research base - that new investments in family involvement should take a more systemic approach. New initiatives need to move beyond siloed school- or community-based programs to efforts that build family involvement into the fabric of schools and communities. Furthermore, there is a need to create more coherence and connectedness across local, state, and national policies and initiatives.

Promising Family Involvement Investments

Although meaningful investments in family involvement have been limited historically, promising initiatives and policies are developing in communities, states, and at the federal level, which embody the essential principles of a comprehensive/supplemental approach to involving families that we described above. In this section, we present “existence proof” of such family involvement policies and systems. These examples demonstrate that systemic family involvement efforts are possible and practical; highlight promising approaches and their potential benefits; and provide ideas and models. These examples approach family involvement as a continuous pathway that helps children succeed in school and life from birth to post-secondary education and beyond. Continued documentation and evaluation of these and other initiatives will be an important step for turning research into implementation, knowledge, and future innovation.

Promising Initiatives at the Local Level

The potential of local-level initiatives lies in their ability to have a direct, immediate relationship with and impact on families. We highlight here several strategies that school districts, cities, and counties are using to leverage policies, services, and other resources.

Incorporating Family Involvement into the Fabric of the School District – In Miami-Dade County, Superintendent Rudy Crew is working to operationalize his vision of Connected Schools, in which families and communities are an integral part of the education system. Believing that schools and communities “must be connected in the intimate, functional way the heart works within our bodies, constantly receiving and producing and ultimately proving that we’re alive” (ps. 88-89), Crew stresses the need for a common interest in and responsibility for schools across the community. To this end, he has created numerous formalized partnerships with community organizations and stakeholders, including a big role for parents. Going beyond traditional notions of involvement and making intentional efforts to develop “Demand parents,” Crew established the Parent Academy, a multi-faceted and community-wide initiative that helps parents learn about their roles, rights, responsibilities, and opportunities to support learning. Crew describes the approach this way: “we’re walking out halfway and extending an institutional hand ... we’re making a big, wide bridge to connect [parents] to us, with handrails so they feel

safe, and we've put it close to home, in their neighborhood, their churches, and their community centers" (p. 165).

To date, the Parent Academy has worked with community partners to reach over 85,000 parents through workshops, educational and cultural events, resource sharing, and referrals on a wide variety of topics.

Integrating Families into City and County Prevention and Intervention Services - The Jacksonville Children's Commission (JCC) was formed by bringing together the city's existing children's services and funding streams under one umbrella, and now works to support and coordinate a city-wide system of care from birth through adolescence. Family involvement is a core principle of this work, and JCC's approach of coordinating family support services across ages and time makes it unique. Building on a history of early childhood parent services, JCC is working to integrate family involvement into community events and institutions, after-school programs, and an evolving full service schools initiative, with the goal of engaging and building family involvement over time. Overall, JCC's efforts convey the message that family involvement is necessary throughout a child's development.

Integrating Families into Coordinated Learning Systems - Complementary learning efforts are developing in many forms at the city and county level. These range along a continuum of complexity, with promising and innovative approaches evident at all points along the continuum. At the more simple end of the continuum are initiatives that build strong connections between one or two contexts. For example, After-School CollegeEd, a program created by The After-School Corporation (TASC), the College Board, and the Partnership for Afterschool Education (PASE), connects families, schools, afterschool, and higher education to help students and their families plan for college. Another example is Generación Diez (G-10), an after-school program for Latino youth that builds intentional connections among families, schools, and community health agencies through home visits and other opportunities for parents, most of whom do not speak English and cannot communicate with school teachers. (For more information on both of these initiatives, see *The Evaluation Exchange*, XII, 1 & 2, Fall 2006.)

At the more complex end of the continuum are initiatives that include families as part of a comprehensive system of supports. Many of these models coordinate and leverage existing community efforts. Building Bright Futures (BBF) in Omaha, Nebraska is a prime example. Created in 2007 by Mayor Mike Fahey, local philanthropists, and a group of concerned citizens, [note: is BBF privately funded or is in part of the city's budget/infrastructure?] BBF aligns educational support systems from birth through college, because it believes that children require on-going, continuous support to achieve its ultimate goals of educational and life success in adolescence and adulthood. To operationalize this philosophy, BBF supports public-private partnerships and brings together diverse community stakeholders – including parents, businesses, higher education, and faith based institutions – into six task forces that address strands such as early childhood, career awareness, behavioral health, and after-school mentoring and tutoring.

Another, less common, model creates a new set of coordinated supports for families and children. A seminal example is the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), which is working to change the odds for children and families in a 60-block zone in central Harlem. HCZ's goals and strategy target family stability, opportunities for employment, decent and affordable housing,

youth development activities for adolescents, and a quality education for children and parents. Several of HCZ's initiatives stress the role of families, including: Baby College, a nine-week series of workshops offered to parents of children between the ages of 0-3; The Family Empowerment Program, which provides home-based supportive counseling, as well as individual and family therapy, a parenting group and an anger management group; and The Promise Academy, a charter school enrolling students in grades K – 12 students. Parents and children continue in and proceed through these programs as they develop; HCZ's component programs are designed as a system that serves children and families continuously and comprehensively over time.

Marshalling the Resources of Parents through Community Organizing - Community organizing is a powerful way for parents and other citizens to develop and leverage collective leadership. Many community organizing efforts' goals have targeted change in local education systems, and parents have a loud and often powerful voice in these efforts. The Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), based on the northwest side of Chicago, has been a leader in community organizing for over 45 years and has engaged in many successful education organizing efforts. In addition to advocating for local school improvement, LSNA has created several programs that help parents learn to support their children's learning while also developing the skills to be employed as educators within the school and the community. When parents are trained to become tutors, mentors, literacy ambassadors, and certified teachers, children benefit from the extra help and support and parents' increased involvement, schools benefit from an engaged workforce that is reflective of the population it serves, and parents benefit from empowerment, knowledge, and continued educational and career development. This system takes the meaning of continuous and systemic family involvement to a new level, by incorporating the parents' own personal development.

Creating Economic Incentives – In an effort to help break the cycle of poverty and increase economic opportunity in New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration recently unveiled a new initiative called *Opportunity NYC*, the nation's first conditional cash transfer program. This privately funded pilot initiative (based upon successful models of conditional cash transfer programs worldwide) is meant to improve and support a family's education, health, and employment status by providing cash incentives to parents and children in six of New York's most impoverished communities. It consists of three discrete pilot programs – family-focused, adult-focused, and child-focused. As part of the family-focused component, families can earn \$25 per month for attending parent-teacher conferences; \$50 for obtaining a library card; and \$25 - \$50 if their children maintain 95 percent school attendance. As part of the child-focused component, families can also earn \$300-\$600 for improvement in student test scores, \$400 for graduation, and additional cash incentives for credits completed and taking the PSAT exam. The pilot program will be evaluated using a random assignment design.

Promising Initiatives at the State Level

While local efforts are clearly needed to reach individual parents, leadership at the state level is needed to support, sustain, and coordinate local efforts, and to maintain visibility and momentum for family involvement with state leaders, agencies, and organizations. A recent federal audit underscores the need to improve state-level efforts, finding that the majority of states are not meeting existing federal mandates for family involvement (U.S. Department of

Education, year?). Below we describe some promising models for building statewide leadership for family involvement.

Committing to Family Involvement within State-level Complementary Learning Systems - Whereas local-level complementary learning efforts tend to align services, state-level complementary learning efforts often work at a broader level, linking state policies, funding, and other resources. As an example, the nonprofit Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFE) is working to coordinate multiple educational and social services across the state of Nebraska “built on the belief that the best outcomes are achieved by investing in the continuum of childhood including early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence.” As part of its efforts to unite and leverage partners statewide, NCFE intentionally integrates family involvement with other initiatives. One example is a partnership between the Nebraska State Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC), the state’s 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) out-of-school time programs, and the state’s C.S. Mott Foundation-supported afterschool network. NCFE also connects families, schools, and after-school programs through its Community Learning Center Network, which supports integrated family-school-community support centers, and also promotes statewide policy, funding, public awareness, and quality programs for family-school-community partnerships. Bringing early childhood into the equation, NCFE also supports the Nebraska Early Childhood Coalition, a statewide unified voice for early childhood care and policy, which includes a prominent role for families.

Coordinating Family Involvement Efforts Across the State – Children’s councils, cabinets, and commissions represent promising approaches to connecting multiple actors, organizations, and efforts at the state-level. P-16 and P-20 councils promote an integrated and continuous education system from pre-school through early adulthood and represent an opportunity to engage other agencies and stakeholders from child- and family-focused sectors outside of the school system. If P-20 councils make family involvement a priority, they have the potential to bring family involvement to a larger state-wide table and to integrate families into efforts to educate the whole child.

State Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, illustrate another model for coordinating state efforts. In 2006, PIRC made an important shift from primarily providing direct services to also becoming statewide leaders, who build capacity for family involvement in a systemic and sustained way. One of the major strategies is convening representatives from Title I, the State Education Agency, the state PTA, and other family involvement stakeholders and leaders. The Iowa State PIRC illustrates this approach. The Iowa State PIRC is a partnership between three influential and highly visible organizations: the School Administrators of Iowa (the professional association for superintendents and principals), the Iowa Department of Education (DOE), and Area Education Agency 267 (one of the state’s publicly-funded intermediary agencies that provide support and technical assistance to school districts). Because of these partnerships, the PIRC has been able to reach and get buy-in from leaders at all levels. Its staff work with Title I school improvement staff, superintendents, school boards, principals, teachers, educators and administrators in training, families, and many others to make parental involvement a regular and ongoing part of these stakeholders’ work.

Establishing and Maintaining Standards and Accountability - Increasingly, states are adopting family involvement standards, with some states (such as Kansas) adopting standards from national organizations while others (such as Kentucky) develop their own. Kentucky has a long history of leadership in family involvement and continues to break ground with a recent report. In “The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle,” the Commissioner's Parents Advisory Council (CPAC), a statewide group of family involvement leaders that advises the commissioner, delineates six overarching goals for family involvement, a set of detailed recommendations, and a set of benchmarks for assessing progress. These accountability provisions and guidelines represent a major step forward. Early indications are that the report is receiving active consideration at the state level, with the Department of Education beginning to incorporate the assessment guidelines into its school audit process.

Promising Initiatives at the National Level

To ensure both commitment to and adequate support for comprehensive family involvement, the state and local initiatives mentioned above should be reinforced by investments at the national level. These include federal legislation, programs, and funding streams such as those described below.

Dedicated Funding for Family Involvement - Dedicated federal funding streams for family involvement programs at the state and local level can ensure that the potential and benefits of family involvement do not get lost amid other priorities and reforms. The primary existing federal funding stream is the National Parent Information and Resource Centers program, described above. A major contribution of the PIRC program is a mandated commitment to evaluation and continued knowledge development. With support from external evaluators and leadership from the National PIRC Coordination Center (a partnership between Harvard Family Research Project, SEDL, and the U.S. Department of Education), the PIRCs are engaged in a continuous cycle of knowledge development and use, not only for the program but also for the field.

Creating Legislation that Connects and Aligns Families with Other Learning Supports - Several recent bills in the U.S. Congress address the need to move beyond existing siloed legislation to more connected and aligned approaches. These approaches take steps toward a vision of family involvement as part of complementary learning (that is, across ages and contexts) and toward embodying our four essential principles for policy (family involvement as a shared and meaningful responsibility, as necessary but not sufficient, as a developmental process, and as a systemic and sustained commitment).

The recently passed Full-Service Community Schools Act is a promising step toward integrating funding and serves for children and families. It provides funding for districts and states to create full-service community schools, which integrate educational, family, out-of-school time, health, and other comprehensive services through partnerships with community-based organizations. Families are a critical part of the community schools approach, and this legislation represents an important attempt to include them in holistic approaches to learning.

Other recently proposed bills have the potential to help build continuous and connected family involvement as well. The Keeping PACE Act (Keeping Parents and Communities

Engaged), introduced in the Senate in May 2007, is a proposed amendment to NCLB that mandates that schools use Title I funds to hire Parent and Community Outreach Coordinators to improve family involvement in failing schools. The Education Begins at Home Act, first proposed in 2005 and reintroduced in May 2007, provides funding for home visitation programs, to provide parent support and education as a strategy for enhancing early education and establishing a foundation for learning. To realize the true potential of this bill and build family involvement as a continuous and sustained process, we propose that Congress expand it to create an intentional link between families, home visiting services, and preschools.

Challenges and Future Directions

While the initiatives described above represent promising avenues for moving forward, policymakers, educators, and others still contend with a limited – and limiting – definition of family involvement. Traditional notions of family involvement as occurring only within school walls and only in early and middle childhood perpetuate ongoing challenges for the field, including policy and program development, training and professional development, and research and evaluation. We highlight here some of these challenges and describe how broadening the concept of family involvement within a complementary learning framework can drive progress and future innovation.

- While increasing attention to family involvement in policy, educational practice, and communities, it is essential to avoid the magic bullet syndrome. Addressing this challenge will necessitate the embedding of family involvement within complementary learning/supplementary education approaches.
- Building policy supports and scaffolding for family involvement within a complementary learning framework poses challenges of its own. Child and family legislation spans a range of bills, departments, and agencies, and is currently siloed and disconnected. To align and coordinate policies, one potential strategy is to begin with an audit of current legislation, in order to identify gaps and opportunities for creating more connected and coherent policies.
- As new initiatives to build family involvement within a complementary learning framework evolve, their comprehensive and complex nature will likely lead to challenges with sustainability and scale. To understand and address issues of cost, access, and equity, more documentation and research, including cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses, are needed at all stages of development.
- A lack of training for teachers, administrators, and other professionals continues to limit well-intentioned efforts to promote family involvement. Very few educator training programs require or even offer relevant courses (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997) despite the fact that new teachers report working with families to be their biggest challenge (Markow, & Martin, 2005). Building family involvement within a complementary learning framework necessitates increasing training and professional development opportunities not only for educators, but also for parent educators, out-of-school time providers, and other professionals who work with families.

- To determine promising approaches and next steps, conducting and utilizing evaluation in meaningful ways is essential. Although decades of correlational research demonstrate benefits of family involvement, more and higher quality evaluations of interventions and initiatives are needed to elucidate both the potential benefit of these investments for learning and educational success, and for building knowledge about how to create effective initiatives. Evaluations need to grapple with challenging but essential questions about whether and how initiatives promote continuous and sustained family involvement over time and whether they improve academic performance and close achievement gaps. A particularly complex, but important, issue relates to the specific value-added of family involvement components of larger complementary learning and reform efforts. Answering these questions will help policymakers better target resources.
- As they design new policies and initiatives, field leaders will have to address the public debate about providing targeted versus universal services. Ensuring equity will mean ensuring support and opportunities for the families who need it most, in order to establish a solid and level foundation for their children’s learning, in a way that does not alienate – and indeed includes – a diverse range of community, education, business, and other stakeholders.

Together, research and a growing public dialogue about the parental role in education make clear that addressing these challenges in policy, practice, and research is worthwhile. If we are serious about ensuring educational equity, we cannot afford *not* to invest in parents in sustained and systemic ways. In the words of Rudy Crew, “We can build a new sort of educational structure in America, but we need Demand Parents to breathe life into it.”

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