



NCPIE Update

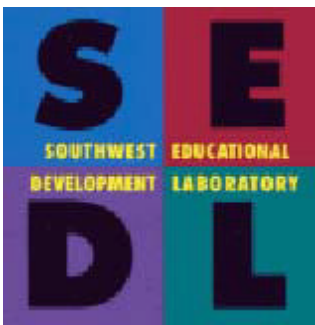
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National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education
3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91-A
Fairfax, VA 22030
703-359-8973
Fax 703-359-0972
www.ncpie.org

Translating Research Into Practice

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory: Connecting schools, families, and communities



At our September 26th meeting Amy Averett, a Program Specialist with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) presented the findings of the Family and Community Connections with Schools Research Synthesis. Based on Amy's presentation, this research synthesis identifies emerging key issues in the field of family and community connections with schools. The SEDL team reviewed and examined more than 160 literature items written between 1995-2001. From that review the following four issues

emerged:

1. Clarifying the concept of family and community connections with schools.

This issue examines the challenges of defining what is meant by family and community connections with schools due to the many different types of connections, the differences in stakeholder perceptions about the roles of educators, family, and community members and the bias toward school definitions of family and community involvement. It also identifies the need for

culturally relevant definitions.

2. Defining and measuring the outcomes of family and community connections with schools.

SEDL's review of this issue is a discussion of how the relationship between family and community connections to specific outcomes is not always direct or linear (that there are varying factors affecting that relationship). It also examines the tension that exists between broader definitions of outcomes and an emphasis on academic achievement.

3. Addressing research limitations in the field.

This issue points to a bias toward the study of school-based involvement and its impact on academic achievement. The study found that there is a lack of conceptual models to be used in research, the disconnect between outcome and process research, the limited ability of standard research methods to fully study these connections, and specifically the need for more research and evaluation of current practices in school-community connections.

4. Addressing critical practice areas of family and community connections with schools.

SEDL's review found that there are several areas in need of more research. They include involving families from increasingly diverse communities, involving families and community support to student transitions throughout the education system, and considering community and full-service schools as a promising model for family and community connections with schools. SEDL points out that it is important to clarify that these practice areas also have a research agenda, which is to generate a solid research-base for the development of procedural knowledge that can guide the work of policymakers and practitioners in schools, families and communities in each one of the these areas.

SEDL's review found two overarching themes in the literature that seemed to cut across the issues as major challenges to the field. The first theme is a bias toward school-centric definitions, practices and policies that limit the possibilities of family and community connections with schools. Second is the need for more sound and rigorous research in all areas of the field that further explains what these connections look like, how they can be done effectively and what their outcomes are for the benefit of students. As Amy shared with the group, it is SEDL's belief that more evaluations of current practice are needed to continue to generate evidence about the importance and need for family and community connections with schools and their impact on student success.

Among the many other products that SEDL has developed, Amy talked about the Creating Collaborative Action Teams toolkit, which schools and their surrounding communities can use to build partnerships at the local level. This toolkit and the other products developed by SEDL can be a catalyst for school reform, help in the development of comprehensive service delivery, build parent leadership, and address

other issues requiring partnerships.

SEDL is a private, not-for-profit education research and development corporation based in Austin, Texas. For more than 30 years, SEDL has developed research-based products and delivered them to people working in classrooms, communities, and state and local education agencies to improve outcomes for children. SEDL is one of ten Regional Educational Laboratories in the United States, funded by the U. S. Department of Education.

For more information on the Families and Community Connections with Schools-Emerging Issues research synthesis and other products developed by SEDL, please visit their website at www.sedl.org or contact Amy Averett via e-mail at aaverett@sedl.org.

National Coalition for Family Involvement in Education and the American Youth Policy Forum Invite you to a Lunchtime Forum "Every Child Counts: Citizens Tackle the Achievement Gap in Louisville, Ky." Friday, November 2, 2001 from 11:45am-2:00pm

Thirty years ago, the dual systems of Louisville City and Jefferson County merged under court order for the purpose of racial integration. Now, the Jefferson County public schools (JCPS) commands a national reputation as an integrated urban school system that works. There is, however, a troubling achievement gap between White and African American students.

Local parent and citizen activists, working with the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, an independent citizen group that promotes improved education across Kentucky, decided to tackle the problem. With funding from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, they set up a Community Accountability Team (CAT) to explore district achievement data and press the district for better results in the middle grades.

First, they held a community meeting with school district staff to look at the data. The magnitude of the Black-White achievement gap became obvious immediately. Then CAT did a shadowing study of five middle schools to learn more. The result: Every Child Counts, a thoughtful and readable report, that identifies the reasons for the gap.

Now, CAT members are meeting with middle school councils, community groups, and civic leaders to share the data and the report's findings. Some of the recommendations have provoked controversy, particularly those around "de-tracking" the schools. This forum is the third in the Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform series highlighting the importance of parent and community engagement in education reform and renewal. At this forum a panel of community activists and leaders in education reform will discuss how they engaged the community in painful discussions about the quality of its schools.

Questions to be addressed include: "What did the data show about the achievement gap?" "How has the CAT team engaged the community in this work?" "How did they persuade

the district to cooperate?" "What were the reactions in the community to the report?"
"What remains to be done?"

Anne T. Henderson, coauthor of Urgent Message will provide an overview of parent and community engagement across the country and a discuss the significance of the work in Louisville.

The Panel from Kentucky will include: Lynn Rippy, director of the Community Accountability Team, and Beverly Raimondo, director of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, a program of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky.

This forum is the third in the AYPF/NCPIE Urgent Message series. The next, on December 7th, will be a panel from the national study on Community Organizing for School Reform, just completed by the Institute for Education and Social Policy.

The National Community Education Association Presents: "A Beacon For All Ages"

The NCEA 36th Annual Conference
Nov 17th - 19th
Charleston, South Carolina

Visit www.ncea.com to register on-line or to find out more about this two and a half day conference that hosts the largest national gathering of community educators.

Register now to learn about the latest issues, model programs and best practices used to design comprehensive community programs in the 21st Century

If you work to improve education, health and social services, cultural and recreational opportunities for all members of your community -- from infants to seniors -- this conference is for you.

October is the Month of the Young Adolescent

NCPIE is one of the sponsors of the fifth annual celebration of the Month of the Young Adolescent. This month-long celebration of youth is annually initiated by the National Middle School Association as a national collaborative effort of education, health, and youth oriented organizations who come together to focus on the needs of this very important age range, ages 10-15. Four key messages will be promoted throughout the month of October. They are:

1. The importance of parents being knowledgeable about young adolescents and being actively involved in their lives;
2. The understanding that healthy bodies plus healthy minds equal healthy young adolescents;

3. The realization that the education young adolescents experience during this formative period of life will, in large measure, determine the future of all citizens; and
4. The knowledge that every young adolescent should have the opportunity to pursue his or her dreams and aspirations, and post-secondary education should be a possibility for all.

NCPIE invites you to join with us throughout the month of October in giving attention to and focusing on the developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents and how these impact parenting practices, health conditions, and educational programs for the young adolescent age group.

Additional information can be found at the National Middle School Association web-site at www.nmsa.org.

Upcoming NCPIE Meetings and Presentations

October 31st

9:00 a.m. - Noon

NEA Building

Conference Room A

Join us to hear Adrian Lewis and her colleagues tell us about the New York Urban League Citywide Parent Engagement Initiative, an initiative funded by the NYC Board of Education.

Now in its 2nd year, the New York Urban League, in partnership with ASPIRA of New York, The United Federation of Teachers and the United Parents Association on New York City, Inc. has raised public awareness of School Leadership Teams among a significant number of NYC residents, particularly among parents of public school children.

Come hear about this unique example of school-community-parent collaborations focused on school governance and the role of parents on school decision-making teams.

FAPE Update

The Families and Advocates Partnership for Education Project (FAPE) at PACER Center has nine new papers on special education and other issues affecting children and young adults with disabilities. The handouts have been reviewed and approved by the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Projects and provide information for parents, educators, and advocates in a brief, easy-to-read format. Single copies are free to parents. They are \$1.50 each for professionals and others (to cover postage) or .50 each if more than 10 of each title are ordered.

The handouts are:

- "Functional Behavioral Assessment and Positive Interventions: What Parents Need to Know"
- "Assistive Technology for Infants and Toddlers"
- "1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments Increase Access to Technology for Students"
- "Schoolwide Behavior Programs"
- "Facts-on-Hand: Acronyms and Agencies"
- "Facts-on-Hand: Acronyms and the Law"
- "Facts-on-Hand: Acronyms and Special Education"
- "Facts-on-Hand: Informed Parent Consent"
- "Facts-on-Hand: Prior Written Notice"
- "Research Brief: Regional Intervention Program"
- "Promising Practices: Teaching Students to Self Manage Behavior."

The FAPE Project links families, advocates, and self advocates to communicate the focus of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To obtain the handouts, call PACER at (952) 838-9000 or visit the web-site at www.fape.org. The FAPE site is also linked to the PACER web-site at www.pacer.org.

NCPIE is a core partner in the FAPE project.

Keeping the conversation going

Many of you have done a wonderful job creating special sections on your web sites to help families, schools and communities address the terror and terrorism of September 11th.

As time passes and the trauma subsides, other critical issues have or will come about - issues around ethnic, religious and cultural stereotyping; dealing with discrimination against Muslim and other immigrant communities; or, understanding the geopolitical cross currents of Central Asia are just a few. Knowing how to address these issues in the future is critical. We were stunned and became silent all unprepared when the terrorists struck, and many silent, not knowing how to talk about it or help our children talk about

it.

With that in mind, below is a (partial) list of resources that help promote a community dialogue and provide guidance to a productive conversation when discussing tough issues and questions.

- Study Circles Resource Center, www.studycircles.org, has a discussion guide titled: Facing the Future: How Should We Respond to the Attack on Our Nation?
- The United Way is directing members to its Community Impact Agenda, with specific suggestions, strategies and targeted results on what can be done to strengthen communities. Access this information via: <http://national.unitedway.org/agenda/index.cfm>
- Richard Harwood of the Harwood Institute and Pew Center for Civic Journalism cautions against poll-driven decisions and urges taking time and giving ourselves room to think. Visit www.theharwoodgroup.com/barometer/msnbc-polling.htm to access this information.
- Daniel Yankelovich summarizes the operating principles of community dialogue in "The Magic of Dialogue" found at www.nonprofitquarterly.org/collaboration/yankelovich.php.
- Global Peace Services-USA (GPS-USA) is a movement to create a professional peace service by promoting education and skills-training for men and women based on a philosophy of active nonviolence. Visit them at www.globalpeaceservices.org
- The National Peace Foundation, www.nationalpeace.org is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit, membership organization with approximately 8,000 members nationwide.