

Engaging Families to Improve School Climate



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Family Engagement and School Climate



School Climate –

The enduring quality of organizational life that captures the distinctive tone or atmosphere of a school (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000)

Academic Rigor and Intensity
Order and Discipline
Teacher Empowerment and Affiliation
Perceptions of Safety
Relationships

Partnership Climate



The extent to which schools and families perceive each other to be part of a *shared community* that supports and values education, and the degree to which schools and families *work together* to support student learning

The National Network of Partnership Schools



Capacity Building

- Technical assistance

Research-Based

- Research-to-practice
- Practice-to-research

NNPS Members



138 District Members

1257 School Members

32 States & Canada

39 States, CA, & AUS

**48% of students
eligible for Free
and reduced-price
meals**

28.9% Large Urban

78.0% Title I Funded

63.9% Elem. Schools

10.1% K-8 Schools

13.5% Middle Schools

9.1% High Schools

Effective Family Engagement



SYSTEMIC & ORGANIZED

FOCUS ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

IMPROVE EQUITY IN SCHOOLS

A Systemic Approach



Schools are more likely to persist in their work to engage families when these efforts are supported by district leaders

- **Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon (2011)**

School programs are more likely to improve when they receive more district support for school, family, and community partnerships

- **Sheldon (2005, 2007)**
- **Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon (2011)**

The NNPS District Program



**District-level
Organization**

**District-level
Facilitation**

- Create awareness
- Align program & policy
- Guide learning and program development
- Share knowledge
- Celebrate milestones
- Document progress and evaluation outcomes

The NNPS School Program



PROGRAM COMPONENTS:

- **Action Team for Partnerships (ATP)**
- **Annual Plans**
- **Six Types of Involvement**
- **Program Evaluation**

NNPS Program Components

- **Action Team for Partnerships**

- Annual Plans

- Six Types of Involvement

- Program Evaluation

- Team members

- 2 teachers, 2 parents
- Administrator
- Community member
- 2 Students (high school)

- Connection with school improvement team

- Monthly meetings

- Review school goals; Plan, coordinate, and implement partnership activities

NNPS Program Components

- Action Team for Partnerships
- **Annual Plans**
- Six Types of Involvement
- Program Evaluation
- Aligned with school improvement goals
- Focused on student outcomes
 - 2 Academic Goals
 - 1 Non-Academic Goal
 - **Welcoming Climate**
- Diverse strategies to engage family members

NNPS Program Components

- Action Team for Partnerships
- Annual Plans
- **Six Types of Involvement**
- Program Evaluation

Type 1: Parenting

Type 2: Communication

Type 3: Volunteering

Type 4: Learning at Home

Type 5: Decision Making

Type 6: Community
Connections

Attending to Challenges



Parenting

- **Enable families to share information with schools**
- **Provide information to *all* families who want it or who need it**

Communication

- **Clear and understandable**
- **easy-to-use two-way channels**
- **Ideas from families about the design and content of communications**



Parent Forum

Improve
Climate

Parenting

Transition to
Middle School

Connections
Among Parents

Francis Howell Middle School St. Charles, MO

- “Are Everyone else’s parent REALLY Letting them do that?”
- Discussion group
- Middle and feeder elementary school families, teachers, principal
- Topics: bullying, friendships, peer pressure, technology, organization skills

Attending to Challenges



Volunteering

- **Flexible schedules for volunteers and events for working parents**
- **Match time and talents with school needs**
- **Recognize volunteers for assistance at school and in other locations**

Learning at Home

- **Design homework for which students discuss important class work and ideas with their families**
- **Communicate with families ways they can monitor and support learning**



Parent Surveys

Improve
Climate

Increase
Volunteering

Two-way
Communication

Evaluation

Edison Elementary School Kennewick, WA

- Mailed to families
- Return at or by family math night
- Collected information about:
family needs and interests,
ideas to improve communication,
talents and time for volunteering
- Ruffled local hockey tickets

Attending to Challenges



Decision Making

- **Include leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school**
- **Offer training so parent leaders can develop skills to serve as representatives**

Community Connections

- **Inform all families and students about community programs and services**
- **Solve problems of turf, funds, goals, and find places for collaboration**



Clean-A-Thon

Improve
Climate

Community
Connections

Futures Academy No. 37 Buffalo, NY

- Annual spring cleaning of school and neighborhood
- Community collaboration:
Educators, families, & students
University of Buffalo students,
firefighters, city trash collection
- Carnival at nearby park afterward

NNPS Program Components

- Action Team for Partnerships
 - Annual Plans
 - Six Types of Involvement
 - **Program Evaluation**
- Annual progress on program implementation
 - UPDATE Surveys
 - End-of-year Evaluation
 - Event evaluations
 - Exit surveys
 - School climate surveys to families

Research on Climate



- **Student reports of partnership climate predicted family monitoring and help with homework**
- **ATP reports of partnership climate predicted higher math achievement test performance**

Research on Climate



- **A comprehensive approach to school, family, and community partnerships predicted stronger partnership climate**
- **Stronger partnership program predicted lower use of disciplinary actions from one year to the next**



NATIONAL NETWORK OF

Partnership Schools

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY



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A Brief Overview of the School Development Program

James P. Comer, M.D., M.P.H.
Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry, Yale Child Study Center

Yale SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



The Purpose of Family Involvement in School

- **Development and learning are inextricably linked**
- **Thus, the school and family should be working together to promote development in order to facilitate learning**
- **In some cases the school will need to help overcome underdevelopment**

The Development and Learning Dynamic

- Caretaker-child interactions, in a supportive environment, promote a positive emotional attachment and bond.
- Children identify with, imitate, and utilize or internalize many attitudes, values, and ways of expression modeled by caretakers.
- Caretakers in turn mediate child growth and development along many developmental pathways; six most related to responsible expressive behavior and academic learning—physical, including brain growth and development; social-interactive; psycho-emotional; moral-ethical; linguistic, receptive and expressive; cognitive-intellectual;
- With intentional guidance of child toward self-regulation and channeling of energies into adaptive learning, work and play.

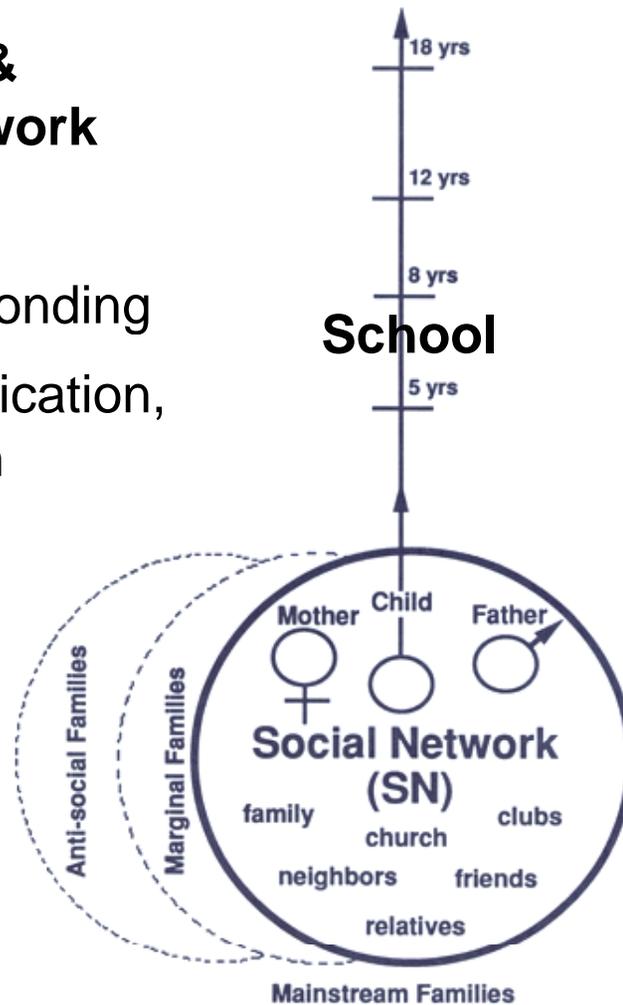
Development in Primary Family Network

Family & Social Network

Interactions

Attachment & Bonding

Imitation, Identification,
& Internalization



Developmental Pathways

Physical (including brain)

Social-Interactive

Psycho-Emotional

Moral-Ethical

Linguistic

Cognitive-Intellectual

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An Ineffective School Environment

Non-goal-directed leadership

No plan

Ineffective communication

Confusion

Rancor

Parents alienated

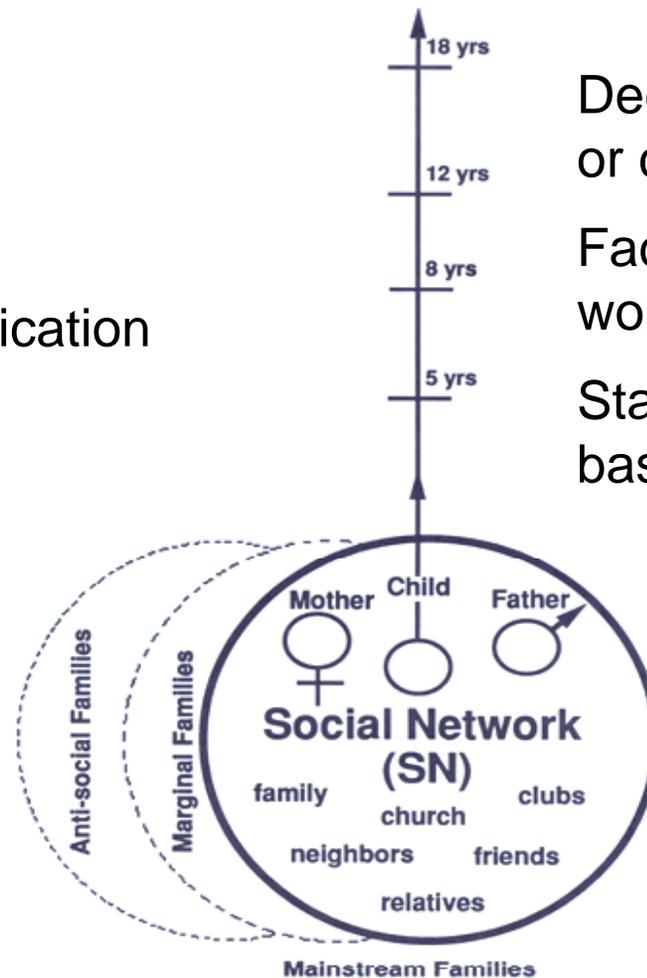
Staff frustrated by lack of parental support

Decisions made by power or coercion

Factions and cliques not working together

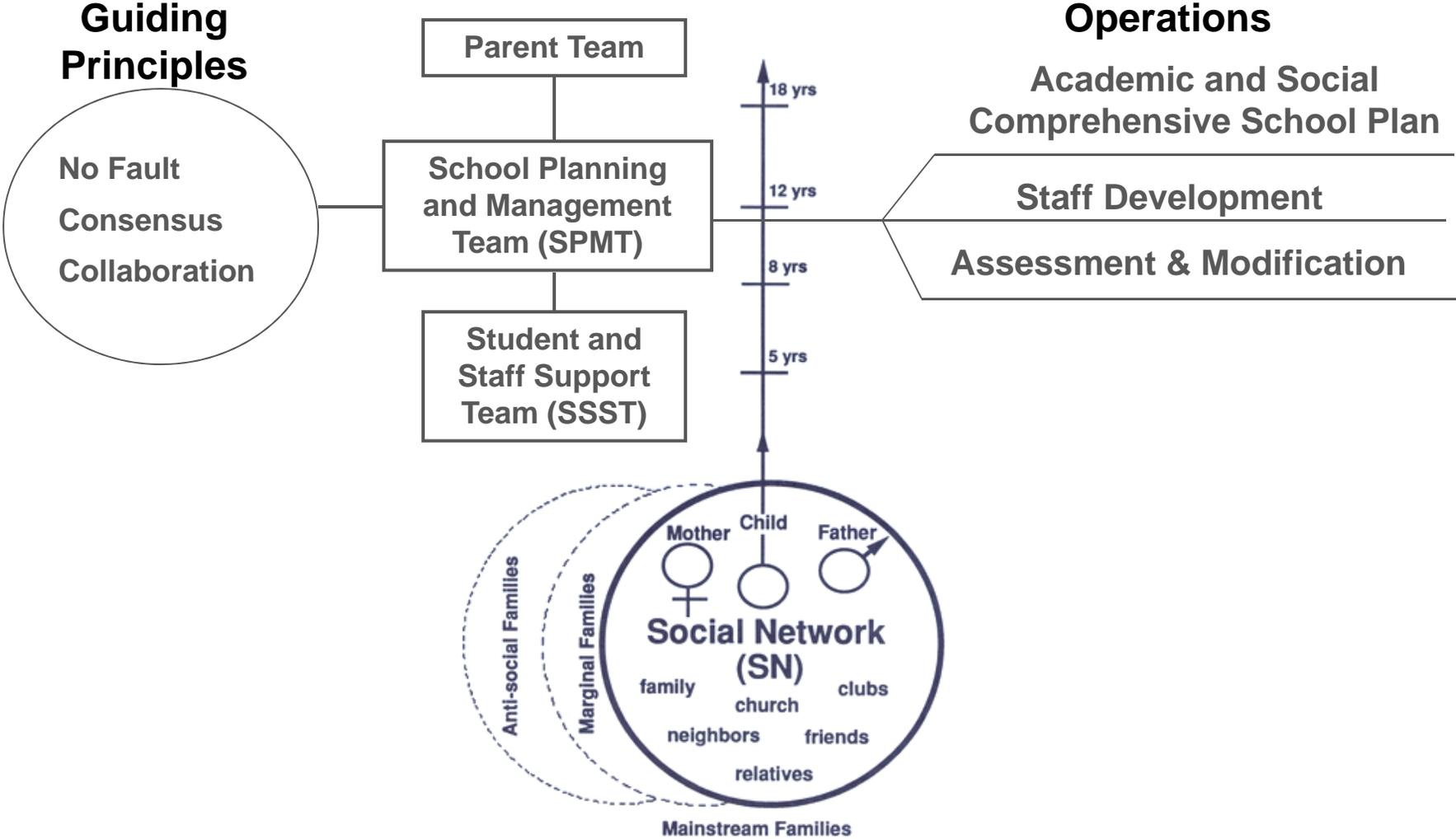
Staff development not based on school needs

Support staff—social workers, psychologists, etc.—working in fragmented, non-collaborative way



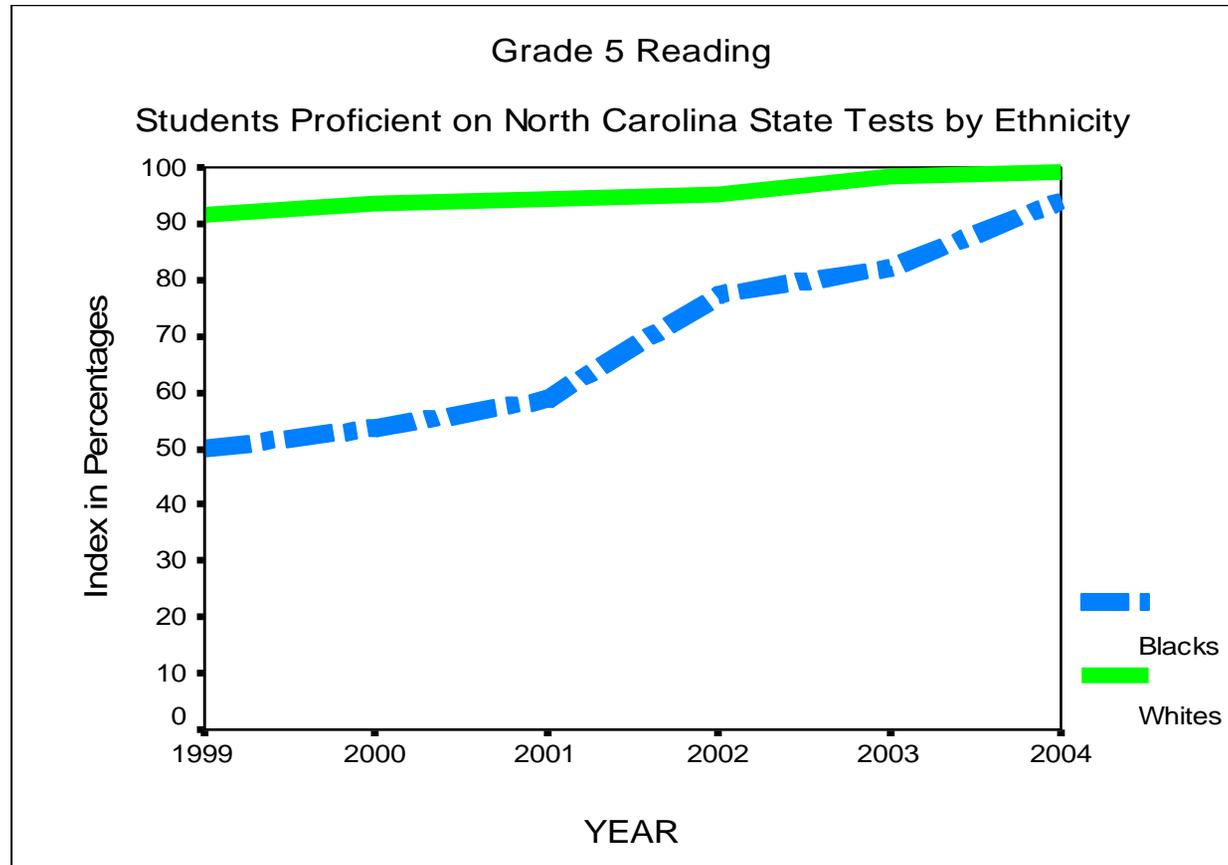
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School Transformation

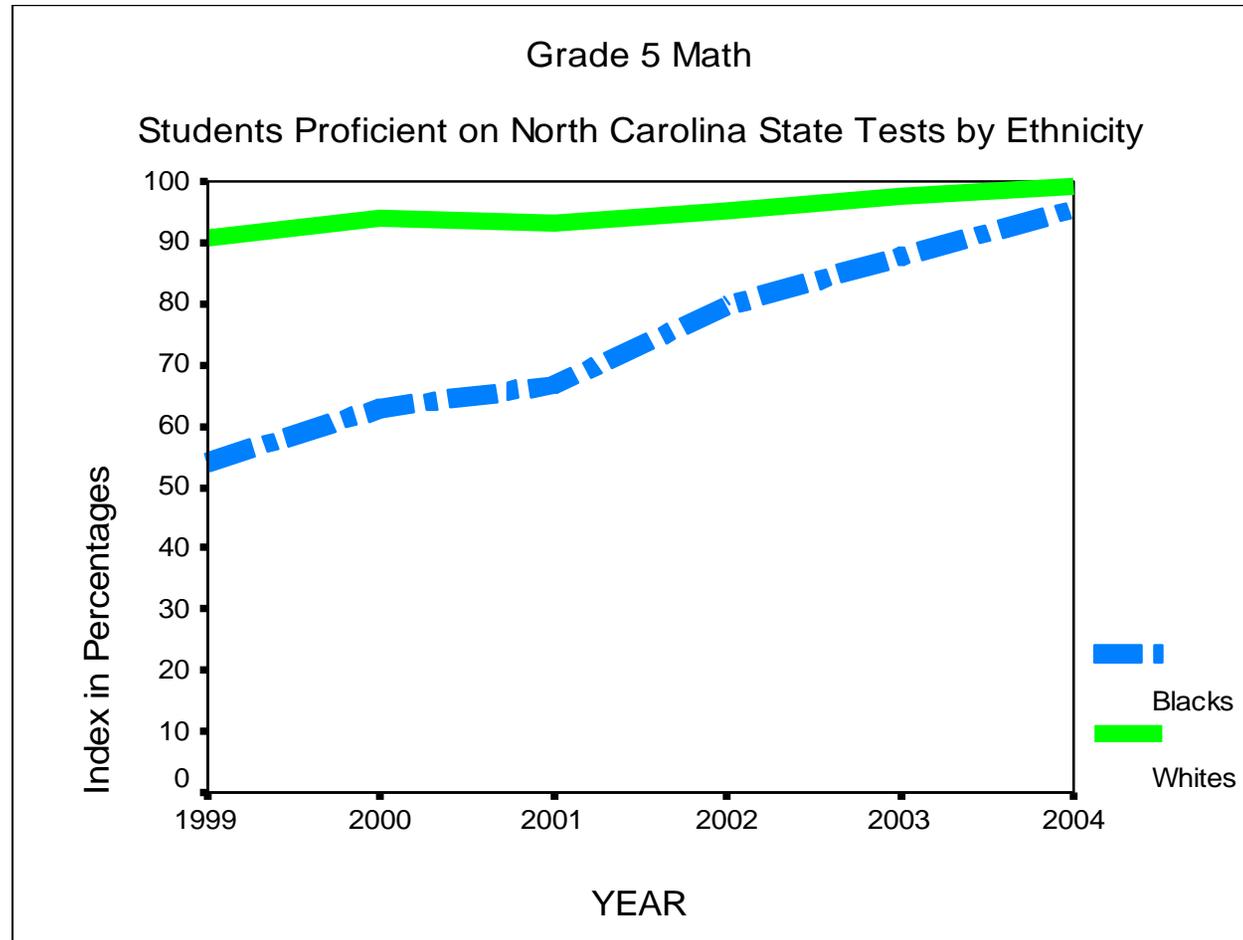


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Asheville City Schools Asheville, North Carolina



Asheville City Schools Asheville, North Carolina



Character Outcomes

Caring

Perseverance

Citizenship

Respect

Fairness

Responsibility

Integrity

Self-Discipline

Overall Outcomes

- **Much improved academic achievement and behavior**
- **Students on the way to becoming successful workers, family members, and citizens**



For more information about the
Comer School Development Program, go to:

medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/comer
www.youtube.com/comersdp