

# Chapter 8: Family and Community Engagement

## 8.1 Family-School-Community Partnerships

Over fifty-five years of research indicate the importance of Families, Schools, and Communities Partnering (FSCP) for student learning. National data shows that students gain academically, as well as behaviorally, when families and school staff work together to support student success. Current and notable research findings include that:

- Parent-Community Ties is one of five “essential elements” of school improvement.
- Students have better attendance and higher reading comprehension scores when schools conduct home visits.
- School-initiated, specific family participation programs - such as shared reading, homework checking, and teamed two-way communication -are significantly and positively related to academic achievement for students at all levels.

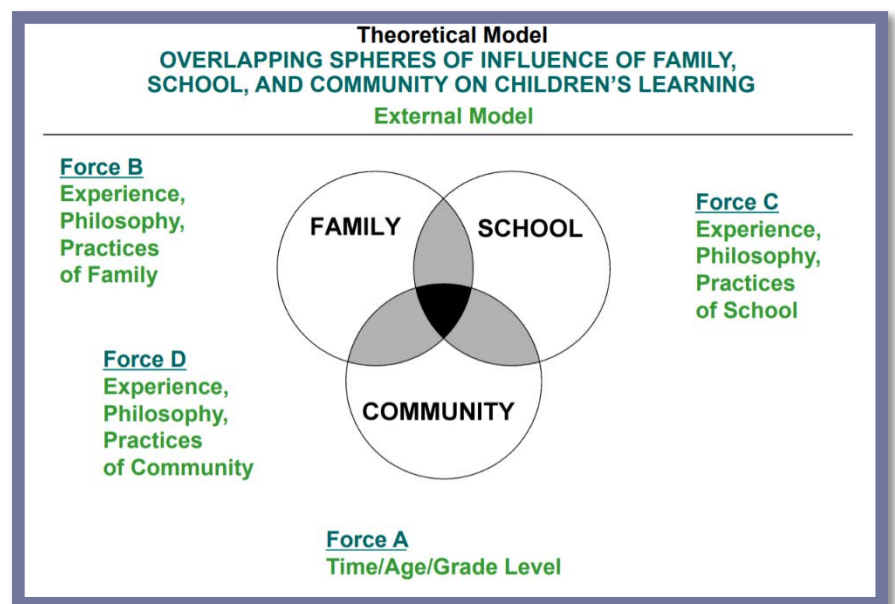
Initiated through HB08-1384, the [Teaching and Learning Conditions in Colorado](http://www.cde.state.co.us/tlcc) (TLCC) ([www.cde.state.co.us/tlcc](http://www.cde.state.co.us/tlcc)), formerly known as TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning) Colorado, is a statewide, confidential survey intended to support school, district, and state improvement planning, as well as research and policy. Every year that teachers and administrators have completed the survey, participants indicate that one of the teaching conditions with the strongest connection to high student achievement and growth is *Community Support and Involvement*.

These data findings show that perhaps the greatest challenge surrounding FSCP is not *whether* they impact student achievement. Rather, the greater challenge is *what* is needed for high quality partnership structures and *how* to sustain and embed through structures in established organization. This chapter includes information about the components of a comprehensive partnership structure that can support student learning, as well as promising partnership practices for schools to reach out and involve *every* family to support *every* student.

### Getting Started—A Research Base

Dr. Joyce Epstein, a leading researcher and advocate for family-school-community partnerships, developed the [Overlapping Spheres of Influence](http://iapr.unl.edu/videos/ppts/1_Epstein.pdf) found at [iapr.unl.edu/videos/ppts/1\\_Epstein.pdf](http://iapr.unl.edu/videos/ppts/1_Epstein.pdf) as a theoretical model to better explain partnership structures in schools.

This model suggests that the experiences, philosophies, and practices of families, schools, and communities determine the extent to which the three groups collaborate to improve student outcomes.



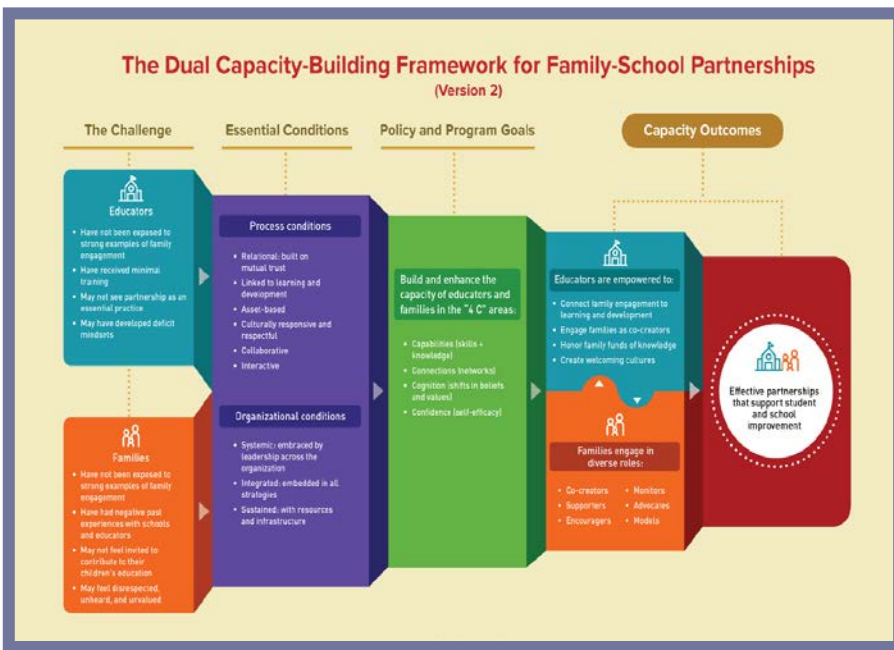
As such, school staff may choose to honestly and openly discuss the following four core beliefs to determine whether they are “ready for partnerships:”

- All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.
- All parents have the capacity to support their children’s learning.
- Parents and school staff should be equal partners.
- The responsibility for building partnerships between school and home rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.

These four core beliefs allow school staff, as well as families, to identify starting points for partnerships. For some schools, a starting point may be to gain principal buy-in. For another school, a starting point may be to create a more welcoming climate of partnerships. Regardless of the identified starting points, FSCP structures are most effective when they are genuine, meaningful, and relevant for all stakeholders involved.



**The Dual Capacity-Building Framework**



In 2014, U.S. Department of Education worked with researchers and practitioners to identify what is needed to move from “ineffective” to “effective” partnerships. Researchers at Harvard University recently updated the Dual Capacity-Building Framework to reflect the most current trends in FSCP. This framework outlines the opportunity conditions, as well as program and policy goals to help build the capacity of both school staff and families to have productive partnerships. A more detailed explanation of the framework and examples of how schools are putting it in practice can be found at [Dual Capacity \(www.dualcapacity.org/\)](http://www.dualcapacity.org/).









### 8.3 A Parent's Right to Decline ELD Services

When parents/guardians respond *NO* to all HLS questions and educators notice evidence of a primary or home language other than English, the student should be tested using W-APT/WIDA Screener. A parent may decline ELD services but cannot decline the English learner designation if the district has made that decision based on state guidelines. If a student is not identified as an English learner, they are not eligible for ELD services.

Parent refusal of ELD services does not dismiss the district/school from providing a meaningful and equitable education for identified EL students.

Families of identified EL students have the right to decline ELD services for their child with a full understanding of the EL child's rights, the range of services available to the child, and the benefits of such services. Districts/Schools must document all parent refusals and access to grade level content and standards must still be provided. A meaningful and equitable education may include, but is not limited to, further assessing the student's English Language Proficiency (ELP); notifying the student's parent about his or her child's lack of progress, and encouraging him or her to opt the child into EL programs and services; and providing supports for the student's language acquisition, such as offering professional development in second language acquisition to the student's core curriculum teachers. The ELP assessment, ACCESS for ELLs, must be administered to all identified Non-English Proficient (NEP) and Limited English Proficient (LEP), including those students whose family has declined ELD services.

For more tools and resources for [Serving ELs Who Opt Out of EL programs](#) visit the OELA Toolkit, Chapter 7 at [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html)

### 8.4 Putting it All Together

Family-school-community partnerships are an essential component of school improvement and, more important, student success. Moving from ineffective to effective partnerships is a team effort. As the old Chinese proverb states, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." Change does not happen overnight, yet the impact of FSCP is strong indisputable when implemented intentionally. In sum, remember the following ingredients are helpful for school based FSCP:

- **Create an action team.** Similar to a school leadership team or accountability committee, an action team assists in developing and implementing family and community partnerships. The action team may assess current practices, organize new options, implement activities, engage in a continuous improvement process, and maintain ongoing communication with the staff.
- **Establish firm foundations for actions.** Parent involvement practices should be based on widely accepted good practices or recommendations/requirements in Colorado State law and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.
- **Provide PD for district and school staff.** Several regulations require PD for staff working with parents concerning communication with families, working effectively with families, planning and implementing a volunteer program, increasing family support for learning, and strategies for increasing family involvement. In addition, the action team members may need training in the areas of collaborative teaming and decision-making.
- **Develop a framework that includes the six types of parent involvement and look for models that exemplify these types.** There should be activities that represent all types of parent involvement, in a comprehensive program of involvement inclusive of the six types rather than an isolated series of events and activities.
- **Examine current practices.** Conduct a needs assessment to determine where practices are strong, where improvement is needed, and where additional practices should be incorporated.
- **Develop a three-year action outline for partnership development.** This allows a school/district to focus on the big picture. Many activities may require multiple years for full actualization. The three-year outline has the benefit of indicating how all family and community connections are integrated into a coherent program.

- **Write a one-year plan.** Focus on the first year of work; delineate specific activities that will be started, improved, or maintained and indicate who is responsible, timelines, costs, and evaluation measures.
- **Obtain funds and other support.** Consider using federal, state or local funds support parent involvement activities, such as Title I, Title III, ELPA funding. In addition, consider the use of time as a resource for teams to meet and for teachers to communicate or conference with parents.
- **Enlist staff, parents, students, and communities to help program implementation.** Do not overburden existing personnel with the demands of parent involvement; one person cannot effectively mount a comprehensive program. Consider the untapped resources that may be available in the community or outside agencies.
- **Evaluate implementation and results.** Find appropriate ways to evaluate parent involvement effectiveness may be challenging, but it is necessary.
- **Conduct annual celebrations and report progress to participants.** Acknowledge the work of all of those involved in the parent involvement program. Year-end celebrations are helpful, but more frequent ones maintain enthusiasm and encourage people to continue the work. Regardless of their frequency, celebrations provide opportunities to communicate progress, solve problems and do additional planning.
- **Continue working toward comprehensive and positive partnerships.** Partnerships mature over time, so consider their development a process. Despite the proverbial challenges inherent in sustaining any relationship long term, the benefits are well worth it!

**Additional References and Resources can be found at:**

[Title I Parent and Family Engagement Purpose and Policy](http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ti/parents)

([www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ti/parents](http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ti/parents))

[Title III Purpose and Program Requirements](http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/tiii/index)

([www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/tiii/index](http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/tiii/index))

[Family and Community Engagement](http://www.ed.gov/parent-and-family-engagement)

([www.ed.gov/parent-and-family-engagement](http://www.ed.gov/parent-and-family-engagement))

[OELA English Learner Toolkit](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/eltoolkit.pdf)

([www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/eltoolkit.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/eltoolkit.pdf))

(See Appendix G)



# Appendix G

## Social and Academic Language

	SOCIAL LANGUAGE (SL)	ACADEMIC LANGUAGE (AL)	
		SCHOOL NAVIGATIONAL LANGUAGE (SNL)	CURRICULUM CONTENT LANGUAGE (CCL)
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To communicate with family, friends and others in everyday, social situations.	To communicate to teachers and peers in a broad school setting (incl. classroom management).	To communicate to teachers and peers about the content of instruction (incl. lesson materials, textbooks, test, etc.).
<b>FORMALITY</b>	Informal. Hallmarks: incomplete sentences, contractions, restricted vocabulary, contextualized language, restricted variety of genre (mainly narrative).	Informal and formal. Hallmarks: combination of contextualized and decontextualized language.	Formal. Hallmarks: precise use of language/terminology, complete and complex sentences, lexical diversity, decontextualized referents, variety of genres (narrative and expository).
<b>CONTEXT OF USE (SETTING)</b>	Home. Peer group. Out-of-school activities.	School non-instructional time (homeroom, lunchroom, and playground). School instructional time (focused on classroom management; personal relationships).	School instructional time (focused on concept learning). Note: some out-of-school activities at home or with peers may focus on concept learning and thus may include hallmarks of CCL (incl. pre-school level).
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	I took it [= the trash] out before [= before dinner]; Where's the shop?	I need you all to be facing this way before we begin; Where is your 3rd period English class located?	First, the stamen forms at the center of the flower; Describe the traits of the main characters.
<b>CONTEXT OF ACQUISITION</b>	Acquired without explicit instruction.	Largely acquired without explicit instruction, unless student is EL.	Acquired with and without explicit instruction. EL students especially, may need explicit instruction.
<b>MODALITY</b>	Predominantly oral language.	Predominantly oral language.	Both oral and written language.





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		SCHOOL NAVIGATIONAL LANGUAGE (SNL)	CURRICULUM CONTENT LANGUAGE (CCL)
<b>TEACHER EXPECTATIONS</b>	Students will come to school already proficient unless the student is EL.	Students will readily learn these language skills unless the student is an EL student.	All students will need to acquire linguistic and pragmatic skills for both general use (cutting across disciplines) and specialized within a discipline. Some teachers will hold students accountable for use of “precise” CCL, others and even the same teachers at other times will allow informal/ imprecise uses.
<b>GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS</b>	More sophisticated uses of language to solve disputes and participate as good citizens. For EL students ELD level should be considered (e.g., new to the U.S. and at the beginning level will differ from a student who is younger but at a higher ELD level).	More sophisticated uses of language. Teachers assume prior grades have prepared student to acquire the language (incl. reading and writing) necessary to take notes, read directions, etc. Redesignated EL students are expected to be able to cope with language demands of the classroom interaction.	More sophisticated uses of language. Higher grades rely on students having learned CCL of prior grades and rely on their reading ability to access and engage with the curriculum and on their writing ability to display or assess their learning. Redesignated EL students are expected to be able to cope with language demands of instruction.

Source: *Academic English: Interactions Between Student and Language*.

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Presented at the 2007 CREATE conference.

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