
SCALING UP: School-Family-Community Partnerships

CRESPAR RESEARCHERS IN THE SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM ARE DEDICATED TO HELPING SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE TO ESTABLISH PROGRAMS OF PARTNERSHIPS AND USE EFFECTIVE PROCESSES AND PRACTICES TO INVOLVE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES. THE RESEARCHERS ARE ENGAGED IN CARRYING OUT AND STUDYING THE RESULTS OF TWO SCALING UP OPERATIONS: (1) THE SCALING UP OF THE USE OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS OF PARTNERSHIP FROM A FEW SCHOOLS IN A LARGE DISTRICT TO ALL SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT; AND (2) THE SCALING UP OF THE USE OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS OF PARTNERSHIP IN SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE NATION.

The researchers have developed, over the past decade, a school, family, and community partnership program that schools can use to develop comprehensive programs and effective practices. The approach includes:

- **a theoretical base that describes overlapping spheres of influence.**

There are responsibilities for promoting children's learning and development that are shared by schools, families, and communities, and they need to be working together on them;

- **a framework of six types of involvement derived from the theory that grew from research and that helps explain the theory.** Educators, families, and community members participate in helping families with parenting and child-rearing skills (Type 1); communicating about school

programs and children's progress (Type 2); promoting family involvement as volunteers (Type 3); involving families with children in academic activities at home (Type 4); promoting family involvement in school decision-making processes (Type 5); and obtaining resources and services from the community (Type 6).

- **in each school, an Action Team for School-Family-Community Partnerships that guides the development and implementation of a program of activities addressing the six major types of involvement.**

The Action Team consists of at least six members including teachers, parents, and administrators, and may also include counselors, students (in high schools), and community members. In each school, the Action Team inventories the school's present practices of involvement, identifies what's worth continuing and what isn't, creates a three-year outline of goals, objectives, and (based on their inventory) ways to maintain, improve, or add partnership practices, and then writes a detailed one-year action plan describing activities for the first year and how they will be carried out and evaluated.

A basic premise is that all schools will implement these components, but the partnership activities actually carried out under the six types will vary, depending on each school's needs, interests, and goals.

Implementations of this approach for school-family-community partnerships in many elementary, middle, and high schools have produced a number of outcomes: improved student attendance and achievements; increased communications with high-poverty urban parents; increased parental

participation in school activities; more parents working with their children at home on schoolwork (with beneficial effects on student learning and attitudes); and others. The research shows that this is an effective approach. Can it be scaled up so that eventually a critical mass of schools throughout the nation are not only using the framework but also producing the intended benefits?

Districtwide Scaling Up: School-Family-Community Partnerships

A districtwide scaling up of this program in the Baltimore City Public Schools is occurring incrementally but purposefully, adding a significant number of schools in the district each year until all schools in the district are using the program.

CRESPAR school-family-community partnership researchers and staff (Joyce Epstein, Mavis Sanders, Karen Clark Salinas, Beth Simon) are engaged in carrying out this incremental approach with Baltimore City administrators, teachers, parents, and facilitators. Baltimore's participation began in 1987 with a pilot project in eight elementary and middle schools. In 1992, the more fully developed program was replicated in fifteen schools. In 1994, twenty-four elementary and middle schools in Baltimore's southern region began implementation; in 1995, twenty-five elementary and middle schools in the northwest region also began using the program; now, in the 1996-97 school year, a total of 80 schools in three geographic areas of Baltimore City are developing and carrying out school-family-community partnerships using the program. The researchers estimate scaling up to 150-175 schools for the

1997-98 school year, covering all six geographic areas in Baltimore City.

Epstein and Sanders, documenting the scale-up, have noted some basic features that facilitate the process of moving the program into districtwide use.

Schools and the district need to be able to document positive results. Sanders examined the program's activities and effects in case studies of six schools, four elementary and two middle. She found that the schools were setting up appropriate action teams that were actively addressing all six types of school-family-community partnerships, including partnerships that linked to the curriculum and student learning and the ability of families to assist in student learning. Empirical analyses by Epstein and others of data collected by the state (Maryland) on attendance and achievement are showing early effects on these outcomes that are linked to the partnership activity.

The model is schoolwide and structured to be replicable. The schools examined by Sanders noted that much of their success in developing stronger connections with their families and communities was due to the structure of the action teams (which makes the program a schoolwide effort involving almost everyone) and the application of the framework of six types of involvement (which structured the work of the Teams as they designed and carried out their activities).

A full-time facilitator assists schools in their development and implementation of the model. Each geographic region using the model in Baltimore has assigned a full-time facilitator to work with up to 30 schools on their programs of partnership. The facilitators meet at least monthly to assist each school and respond on call to special needs for assistance. They also meet monthly with CRESPAR researchers to review progress and discuss problems. Schools examined by Sanders affirmed the importance of the facilitator in supporting and helping them carry out their work.

Schools receive or get basic funding to conduct their activities. The work of the action team and the implementation of activities requires some expenditures that need to be available in a specified budget for partnerships. In Baltimore in 1996-97, the State of Maryland (also a partner in this program) provided many schools with a small amount of funding to support their partnership activities. Schools also carve out a budget from Title I, Title VI, PTA, or other sources.

Support networks provide interaction, communication, and support among schools and geographic areas, and link local efforts to national efforts. School action teams from each geographic area share best practices, problems and solutions, and plans for further progress at quarterly cluster meetings for groups

of schools and at end-of-year celebration workshops for all schools in the region. In addition, the Baltimore City Public Schools district and each individual school are members of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools.

Nationwide Scaling Up: School-Family-Community Partnerships

The nationwide scaling up of the school-family-community partnerships program is being conducted through the formation of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools, which invites membership by state departments of education, districts, and individual schools, and provides them with the guidance, materials, and professional development needed to develop the program at state, district, and school levels.

NATIONWIDE SCALE-UP OF PARTNERSHIP-2000 SCHOOLS — AT A GLANCE —

The CRESPAR research team finds that major advances have been made by some state members, some districts, and many individual schools as implementation of the model becomes national in scope. Examples include:

State Level. The state leaders of the Maryland Partnership-2000 Initiative conducted an RFP that gives \$5000 to each of the eight districts and \$1000 to over 50 schools' Action Teams for School, Family, and Community Partnerships to conduct the activities planned as members of the Network. Ohio has initiated a large RFP process to award planning grants and to provide training for over 200 schools that join the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools for 1997-98 and start their work on comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships. The schools are slated to receive \$500, with options for about 40 demonstration/implementation grants later on.

District Level. Sacramento has invited its next fifteen schools to join the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools, and provided training for their Action Teams. Three districts and 23 schools will form a consortium in the Ypsilanti, Michigan area in collaboration with professors from Eastern Michigan University, creating important university-school partnerships in that area.

School Level. School Action Teams in the 555 partnership schools are developing and implementing numerous activities that address all six types of partnership. For example, a Connecticut school runs a Family Connection program that addresses student writing skills and parent-child interactions; a Florida school is promoting interactive homework.

The Network was initiated in 1996, and attracted about 280 members for the 1996-97 school year. The membership for the 1997-98 school year will include eight states, about 50 districts, and over 650 schools (some of whose districts and states are also members). Other schools, districts, and states are in the process of completing membership forms for the 1997-98 school year.

States, districts, and schools that join the Network are provided with manuals, certificates, newsletters, training workshops, collections of best practices, e-mail and web site assistance, and opportunities to participate in research projects. In turn, the states, districts, and schools have a buy-in process — they commit in writing to funding their staff of facilitators and partnership activities, to reporting year-end progress, and to implementing the components of the program (Action Teams working with the six types of partnership) as specified.

Factors that Support National Scale-Up for School-Family-Community Partnerships

The factors cited in the Baltimore City district scaling up process all apply to scaling up on a national level — the need to show results, the need for a program that is structured to be replicable and which includes materials that support its use, the need for district facilitators to work with schools, the need for basic funding, and the need for local and national support networks.

CRESPAR researchers Simon, Epstein, Sanders, and Salinas, analyzing data gathered from the first 222 schools enrolled in the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools, found a number of other factors related to the national scaling up of the program.

- The program can reach diverse schools. Socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic composition of Partnership-2000 schools covered a wide range.

POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE SCALING UP OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

CRESPAR researchers and their colleagues have drawn some implications about what kinds of federal, state, and local policies would be helpful in achieving scale-up, and thus improving academic achievement and other outcomes for students placed at risk. Some of these implications are presented in the following four publications.

Reforming State and Federal Policies to Support Adoption of Proven Practices (Robert Slavin), *Educational Researcher*, December 1996. This article argues that state and federal policies, in order to achieve school reform, need to support change in classroom practice in the use of more effective instructional methods. Policies need to address how school staffs can be enabled to make informed choices among proven, replicable alternative programs; how the development and evaluation of programs capable of meeting national goals can be funded; how funds provided to schools can be tied to the adoption of effective practices; and how local capacities can be built to identify, support, and evaluate innovative programs. The article concludes that state and federal policies must be directed toward putting in teachers' hands the tools they need to enable all children to meet the demanding standards required by our society, our economy, and our political leadership.

Design Competitions: A Proposal for a New Federal Role in Educational Research and Development (Robert Slavin), *Educational Researcher*, January/February 1997. This article proposes a radically different approach to educational research and development to supplement the Office of Educational Research and Improvement's (OERI's) existing centers and field-initiated studies. The approach emphasizes design competitions, in which the U.S. Department of Education specifies a competition to produce effective designs for improving education, and funds a select number of proposals to design, pilot, and formatively evaluate such programs. The process is similar to that implemented by the New American Schools.

Title I Implications for Comprehensive School-Family-Community Partnerships: Using Theory and Research to Realize the Potential (Joyce Epstein and John Hollifield), *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, Vol. I, No. 3. This article reviews and interprets Title I's requirements for parent and community involvement in both schoolwide programs and targeted assistance schools, summarizes recent research on the effects of school-family partnerships, and describes two major research-based comprehensive programs.

Impediments to Reform: An Analysis of Destabilizing Issues in Ten Promising Programs (Eugene Schaffer, Pamela Nesselrodt, and Sam Stringfield), Arlington VA: Educational Research Service, 1997. This publication alerts policy makers and practitioners to areas identified by research as potential impediments to the successful implementation of effective programs and practices, and suggests strategies and policies for overcoming these impediments.

- Elementary schools joining the partnership have stronger initial programs than do middle and high schools, and schools that serve poorer students have weaker programs initially. All schools, however, can progress from their starting points to strengthen their connections with families and communities.

- Direct district assistance to schools is more important than district policies for enabling schools to develop strong programs. In short, districts need to do

more than say that they support partnerships; they need to provide their schools with funding and facilitation.

- Schools and districts that use some of their funding to establish a paid coordinator position for the program at their school are able to implement stronger programs.

The national support network — the Network of Partnership 2000 Schools — is the primary national scaling up mechanism for helping schools, districts, and state departments of education

develop, implement, and scale up positive and permanent programs of school, family, and community partnerships. ■