

# SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES

## **MODELS OF PARENT-SCHOOL- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **The Coalition for Community Schools ([www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org))**

The Coalition for Community Schools focuses on connecting community members to the school to support students and connecting students to the community to learn and contribute in a relevant and meaningful context. The organization supports the thesis of this book that schools and parents cannot do it alone. Connecting students and families to resources and information that help them meet family needs is an important goal of community schools, as is supporting parents in their parenting role. The goal is also for public community schools, as centers for lifelong learning, to be open to all in the community 7 days a week. The organization focuses on allowing students to become caring people and citizens and to know that the community supports them and their families in their academic, social, emotional, and physical development. Research on the organization's Web site identifies five conditions necessary for learning. Community schools strive to make these conditions a reality for students.

### **The Comer School Development Project ([info.med.yale.edu/comer/](mailto:info.med.yale.edu/comer/))**

The Comer School Development Project is schools that are modeled after Dr. James Comer's Six Developmental Pathways and focuses on creating learning

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: This is just a sample of resources and not meant to be a comprehensive list. Each reference also contains many additional resources on more-specific topics. Quotations are taken from the Web sites.

environments that foster a child's physical, cognitive, psychological, language, social, and ethical development. It also is based on the belief that "all children are entitled to the opportunity to reach their highest potential." It involves a school planning and management team that includes school administrators, teachers, support staff, and parents. It also includes a student and staff support team, including the principal, school counselors, social workers, school nurses, and anyone supporting the student's development. This team connects everyone concerned with the resources needed internally and externally to support students. The parent team focuses on getting parents to support the school activities. Parents also provide representatives for the management team. This model also works with school districts to get support from everyone involved. Like the caring process described in *Developing Caring Relationships Among Parents, Children, Schools, and Communities*, the Comer Model is based on a collaborative decision-making process rather than a traditional, top-down process.

### **The Developmental Studies Center ([www.devstu.org](http://www.devstu.org))**

The Developmental Studies Center is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1980 to facilitate children's academic, ethical, and social development. From its Web site, we read that "students who feel connected to their school perform better and are less likely to engage in problem behaviors." This K–6, research-based, caring school community program is nationally recognized and "focuses on strengthening students' connectedness to school—an important element for increasing academic motivation and achievement and for reducing drug use, violence, and delinquency." The center has a whole library of excellent books on caring that can be integrated into any school reading program. It has also developed after-school programs that focus on building caring communities. It has homeside activities for every grade that involve asking meaningful questions of any family member (parent, grandparent, sibling, relative) about family history and so on. The goal is to enhance rapport between teachers and families, to help teachers understand more about home values, and to help families understand more about what is going on in school discussions and activities on the topic as well.

### **The Institute for Responsive Education Parent Leadership Program ([www.responsiveeducation.org/parentExchange.html](http://www.responsiveeducation.org/parentExchange.html))**

The focus of the Parent Leadership Program is to expand networking for parents and provide opportunities for parent leadership development. It provides conferences, newsletters, and stories of best practices via several methods. The leadership programs can result in certification in leadership either for community

and political change or for school parent involvement activities. Resources and training materials are available on the Web site.

### **The School of the 21st Century ([www.yale.edu/21c](http://www.yale.edu/21c))**

The School of the 21st Century began in 1988 under the leadership of Dr. Edward Zigler and was implemented nationally under the direction of Dr. Matia Finn-Stevenson. The model has six guiding principles: First, schools work to develop supportive environments to involve parents in planning for their children. (The program works to meet the diverse needs of families as well.) Second, all children should have access to high-quality child care. Third, families are free to choose these services. Fourth, like the Comer Schools, the focus is on the total development of the child. The fifth and sixth principles call for high-quality programs throughout a child's education and professional development and support of staff.

### **The Study Circles ([www.studycircles.org](http://www.studycircles.org))**

Study Circles, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, involve community engagement focused on dialogue. The goal is to bring people with diverse views together to brainstorm solutions to community problems. Parents, teachers, students, business owners, and others are involved. The planning process involves representatives from all constituencies meeting to decide on the problem to be discussed and the facilitators and then usually planning a meeting a week for 4 weeks of 2 hours each or 2 half-days. Several study circles of 10–12 people in a community meet simultaneously. Time is spent getting to know each other, becoming familiar with all sides of the issue, searching for theoretical perspectives to inform the discussion, and then summarizing all ideas to solve a problem. Then no more than 2 weeks later, representatives meet to develop an action forum to move forward.

### **The Tellin' Stories Project ([www.teachingforchange.org](http://www.teachingforchange.org); see menu under Programs)**

The Tellin' Stories Project is a program of Teaching for Change that uses stories as a way to connect families, schools, and communities, resulting in action plans that often enhance not only academic achievement but also the social environment of neighborhoods and communities. Parents are encouraged to work with schools to redefine the school vision and work collaboratively for positive change. Parents learn skills to allow them to analyze school climate, school agendas, and so forth. Parents also are involved in cross-city parent leadership training.

## **RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH PARENTS**

### **The Beach Center on Disability ([www.beachcenter.org/](http://www.beachcenter.org/))**

This is one sample of an excellent organization designed to support parents and practitioners caring for children with disabilities and their families. The site offers a newsletter on family support; a consensus statement on families; up-to-date research; materials on diversity concerns; links to non-English Web sites on disability; and information on disability policy, family quality of life, self-determination, parent discussion boards, real stories, useful materials for parents on how to collaborate more effectively with professionals, and more.

### **The Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships ([www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm))**

The mission of this Center is to conduct and disseminate research, development, and policy analyses that produce new and useful knowledge and practices that help families, educators, and members of communities work together to improve schools, strengthen families, and enhance student learning and development. . . . Current projects include the development of and research on the Center's National Network of Partnership Schools. This Network guides school, district, and state leaders, and teams of educators, parents, and others to improve school, family, and community partnerships.

The center has also collaborated with scholars in 40 other nations researching school-home-community partnerships.

### **The Child Welfare League of America "Creating Parent-Rich Communities" Initiative ([www.cwla.org/parenting/cprc.htm](http://www.cwla.org/parenting/cprc.htm))**

The Child Welfare League of America's "Creating Parent-Rich Communities" Initiative provides a wealth of information on how to support parents and families of children from birth through age 20. As noted on the Web site,

A parenting-rich community is aware of how systems affect parents and their children. The community takes responsibility for building on its strengths and remedying its weaknesses to build a comprehensive support network that nurtures parents and helps all children thrive. Public policy decisions on such topics as economic development, zoning, education, and social, recreational,

and cultural services are made with an understanding of their effects on parents and their parenting role. It is a community where supporting parents in the wonderful, difficult, and challenging task of raising children is seen as fundamental to the community's social and economic well-being.

Thanks to Child Welfare League's multiyear project, we now have a Web site with "resources, tools, and information parents and other leaders can use to assess their communities and bring about changes to improve the lives of children by supporting parents and caregivers." As the league sees children's problems as systemic, its efforts to engage the community in supporting parents and families is vital to this initiative. The Web site provides lists of organizations, research, data, surveys, and resources for professionals and parents covering a broad array of topics, including supporting parents of children with special needs, adoptive parents, parents with developmental disabilities or mental illness, grandparents, parents with substance abuse problems, single and stepparents, and more.

**Minnesota Department of Education Early Childhood Family Education ([children.state.mn.us/mde/Learning\\_Support/Early\\_Learning\\_Services/Early\\_Childhood\\_Programs/Early\\_Childhood\\_Family\\_Education/index.html](http://children.state.mn.us/mde/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/Early_Childhood_Programs/Early_Childhood_Family_Education/index.html))**

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a program for all Minnesota families with children between the ages of birth to kindergarten entrance. The program is offered through Minnesota public schools. ECFE is based on the idea that the family provides a child's first and most significant learning environment and parents are a child's first and most important teachers. ECFE works to strengthen families. ECFE's goal is to enhance the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for their child's learning and growth.

Review the Web site to see how ECFE collaborates with community organizations to make parenting education and support normative and accessible to parents.

**Family Focus ([www.family-focus.org/about/index.htm](http://www.family-focus.org/about/index.htm))**

The mission of Family Focus is to promote the well being of children from birth by supporting and strengthening their families in and with their communities. Family Focus offers innovative, community-based programs that help parents gain confidence and competence as the primary educators of their children. Family Focus has seven centers throughout the Chicago area. These centers are models for family support programs throughout the nation.

Thirty years ago Bernice Weissbourd founded this organization, and it is known for its creative and strengths-based approach to family support. Some services include parent-to-parent support and mentoring, parent education, afterschool programming, information and referral, and family advocacy.

### **Family Information Services ([www.familyinfoserv.com](http://www.familyinfoserv.com))**

This organization was founded in 1989 by Dr. Joan Comeau to support professionals who work with families in schools, social service or community agencies, churches, and so forth. It provides an Online Parent & Family Educator's Resource Library of print-ready, research-based materials related to parenting, child and youth development, marriage and family relationships, and more. Interviews with authors and other experts are also provided for practitioners. Educators can get an institutional subscription, opening up these excellent resources to students and new professionals. This "practitioner-friendly" information has been found to be invaluable by teachers and other professionals working with children, youth, and families.

### **Head Start Information and Publication Center: Parent Involvement ([www.headstartinfo.org/infocenter/guides/pr\\_intro.htm](http://www.headstartinfo.org/infocenter/guides/pr_intro.htm))**

The Head Start Information and Publication Center: Parent Involvement site provides resources on communities and associations working collaboratively to support young children and their parents. The site also has many resources on appreciative inquiry; advocacy; how parents can support child development, health, mental health, and so on; family-parent involvement; support for home culture and diversity; and support for children with special needs. There is also much information for practitioners on how to engage parents. This Web site emphasizes the importance of marshaling community support on behalf of children and their families.

### **Imagine Chicago ([www.imaginechicago.org/home.html](http://www.imaginechicago.org/home.html))**

Imagine Chicago

is a non-profit organization that helps people develop their imagination as city creators. It offers everyone, especially young people, the opportunity to invest themselves in the city's future. Imagine Chicago works in partnership with individuals and local organizations; schools, museums, churches, businesses, and community groups. Together, they design and implement innovative civic projects that build meaningful connections across generations and cultures and have lasting institutional and community impact. Imagine Chicago encourages

individuals and organizations to focus constructively on their capacities and opportunities to make a difference as they: understand what is, imagine what can be, and create what will be.

This model has been replicated nationally and internationally.

### **The Family Involvement Network of Educators ([www.finenetwork.org](http://www.finenetwork.org))**

The Family Involvement Network of Educators is a national network of more than 5,000 people all working toward enhancing relationships in the family-school-community. Started by the Harvard Family Research Project in 2000, this site has been a place for educators to support each other in their work on behalf of students and families. It is a virtual meeting place for educators, community leaders, parent leaders, undergraduate and graduate students, researchers, and school and community professionals. Examples of new initiatives, research, case studies for learning, and new developments are posted. Monthly e-mails provide lists of the latest research, publications, conferences, and more. Members are invited to write essays in answer to timely questions posed by the coordinators of the site.

### **The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education ([www.ncpie.org/](http://www.ncpie.org/))**

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education is “a coalition of major education, community, public service, and advocacy organizations working to create meaningful family-school partnerships in every school in America.” The organization was founded in 1980 and provides resources, research reviews, and information on important legislation and serves constituents “as a visible representative for strong parent and family involvement initiatives at the national level.” The Web site has separate lists of resources for diverse groups of parents, educators, administrators, and teachers. It also has several action briefs related to No Child Left Behind and other legislation affecting families and schools.

### **The National Parenting Education Network ([www.npen.org](http://www.npen.org))**

This Web site contains the history of our efforts to advance the field of parenting education and support. It includes contacts, by state, who are working to support parent educators. It identifies the competencies needed to be effective in this professional role. Lists of programs, degrees, certificates, and licensures in Parenting Education in the United States are provided. Articles and news in the field are added regularly.

### **The Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute ([www.puckett.org](http://www.puckett.org))**

The Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute was founded by Drs. Carl Dunst and Carol Trivette more than a decade ago to support practitioners and parents in their efforts to support children's development. Their goal was to find better ways for research to be accessible and inform family support practices. Their Web site shares their many initiatives, be they assets-based practices with Native American children and their families or helping children learn in natural environments in the home and community. Their practice is also based on the goal of helping children and adults be active participants in their own learning. Their work is informed by adult learning principles and best practices. They have also written about what ideal help for family empowerment should look like.

### **The Parent Teacher's Association ([www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org))**

The mission of the Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) is

To support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children; To assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children; To encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation.

The PTA's purpose is to promote children's welfare by raising standards of living and by guaranteeing that laws are in place to care for and protect children. They are also concerned with serving as a bridge between parents and teachers in schools. The PTA is increasing efforts to "recognize and reinforce the significance of ethnic minority leaders' roles in PTA, and to create more opportunities for ethnic minority leaders to connect, share, and galvanize efforts."

### **Parenting UK ([www.parenting-forum.org.uk/about.asp](http://www.parenting-forum.org.uk/about.asp))**

From the Web site we read that this organization "enables parents, prospective parents and those in a parenting role to improve their understanding of their own and their children's personal, social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs and the context in which family life takes place. This enhances family life and the contribution which families make to society. The Parenting Education & Support Forum supports a model which promotes respectful and empowering attitudes and which values parents' unique knowledge of their own children." The principles the organization draws on are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, an understanding of parenting as a lifelong learning process, an



understanding of the diversity of parents, and an understanding that “bringing up children should be seen in the wider context of health, employment, housing, family income and support services, and non-parental care.” This Web site, like that of the National Parenting Education Network in the United States, focuses on standards for the practice and training of professionals doing parenting education and support, informing members of new developments in the field, sponsoring conferences, and doing advocacy to support efforts of parents and those supporting parents. Resources include training materials, evaluations of initiatives, and publications on developing multiagency networks for supporting families.

### **Prepare Tomorrow’s Parents ([www.preparetomorrowparents.org](http://www.preparetomorrowparents.org))**

Prepare Tomorrow’s Parents was founded in 1995 by Suzy Garfinkle Chevrier, a parent concerned that children were often not prepared for the most important role in their lives.

Prepare Tomorrow’s Parents’ vision is a society in which parenting is a valued occupation undertaken only by prepared adults, to help assure that every child is well-nurtured, emotionally healthy and capable of reaching his or her full potential. The organization’s mission is to promote and facilitate the learning of parenting, nurturing and relationship skills as an essential curriculum element in grades pre K–12 and through community organizations and other settings. Preparing young people to become caring, competent parents may be the single most effective way to prevent child abuse and other violence, increase mental health, ensure school preparedness, and achieve academic success for future generations.

Chapter 9 in *Developing Caring Relationships Among Parents, Children, Schools, and Communities* reviews research to support this claim. The Web site provides a rationale for the program, support materials for teachers, testimonials, and an advocacy manual.

### **The Search Institute ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org))**

The Search Institute has as its goal the provision of research, leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote the healthy growth of children, families, and communities. It has identified 40 developmental assets (positive experiences and personal qualities) that children need to grow and thrive. It has identified the support parents and especially minority parents need to build bridges to community resources for their children and families. The institute has launched a special Web site, MVParents.org, to support and inform parents as to how to stay connected to

their children. The Web site addresses concerns of parents of children of all ages, including concerns about substance abuse and school performance, and especially concerns that arise in adolescence, which is a time parents often feel isolated from the support they need.

**The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Mental Health Information Center ([www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/child/childhealth.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/child/childhealth.asp))**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Mental Health Information Center includes a child, adolescent, and family branch that focuses on strengths- and community-based approaches to meeting the mental health needs of children, youth, and their families.

**The Tufts Child & Family WebGuide ([www.cfw.tufts.edu](http://www.cfw.tufts.edu))**

The Tufts Child & Family WebGuide was created by Nancy Martland and Fred Rothbaum and

examines a site's publisher, credentials of the authors, documentation of content, regularity of maintenance and ease of use. Sites selected for listing on The WebGuide are grouped in topics of greatest interest to parents, such as learning disabilities, behavior problems, obesity, etc.; visitors can browse by topic, by key words, or by age ranges to find annotated listings of sites offering trustworthy information on a particular topic. (Martland & Rothbaum, 2006)

Martland and Rothbaum also recommend *Your Child*, from the University of Michigan Health Care System ([www.med.umich.edu/1libr/yourchild](http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/yourchild)), which provides not only good information for parents and professionals but also many links to sites that have been researched for credibility and trustworthiness.