



Family and Community: A Resesarch Synthesis

**Wenzhong (Eric) Yang and My Lien
Michigan State University**

Introduction:

Research indicates that when schools, families, and communities work together to support learning, children achieve higher educational outcomes (Epstein, 1995). Parents who support and encourage their children to learn at home contribute greatly to their children's academic success. In recent years, more and more US schools have included the family and community in the schooling process. Chinese schools are beginning to learn more about the benefits of family and community involvement. Epstein identified and presented six important types of school-family-community involvement, which was the basis of the National Parent Teacher Association's (PTA) standards for family involvement, adopted in 1997 (Lunenburg et al., 2002). These types are summarized here:

Principle 1. Parenting: Families must provide for the health and safety of children, and maintain a home environment that encourages learning and good behavior in school. Schools provide training and information to help families understand their children's development and how to support the changes they undergo.

Principle 2. Communicating: Schools must reach out to families with information about school programs and student progress. Communication must be in forms that families find understandable and useful.

Principle 3. Volunteering: Parents can make significant contributions to the environment and work of a school. Schools can build upon this community resource by creating flexible schedules, so more parents can participate.

Principle 4. Learning at Home: Helping children with homework remains an important aspect of parental involvement. However, parental assistance could be improved with professional guidance and support from school faculty and administration.

Principle 5. Decision-making: Schools can give parents meaningful roles in the school decision-making process, and provide parents with training and information so they can make the most of those opportunities.

Principle 6. Collaboration with the Community: Schools can help families gain access to support services offered by other agencies, such as healthcare, cultural events, tutoring services, and after-school child-care programs.

Summary

Research on school-family-community involvement has demonstrated that students whose parents and significant other adults are actively involved in their learning are more likely to be successful in school (Sanders et al., 2002). Americans have developed standards to encourage greater family and community involvement in schools and have benefit a lot from such involvement, while Chinese schools are beginning to learn from the benefit.