

C H A P T E R 2

Theories and Models for Family Involvement in Schools

Contributing Authors

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Parents love their children, and if the teacher feels this same love, then parents are your friends. Be casual, be off-handed, be cold toward the child and parents can never work closely with you . . . to touch the child is to touch the parent. To praise the child is to praise the parent. To criticize the child is to hit at the parent. The two are two, but the two are one.

—James T. Hymes (1974)

As you begin your teaching career with a commitment to having a strong family involvement program, you may look for ideas, activities, or strategies to help you reach this goal. However, before you begin collecting a list of ideas, it is important to examine some of the foundational concepts underlying the idea of family involvement. Theories, along with models built on theory and research, can guide you in creating a cohesive family involvement approach for your own use. As you read this chapter, consider these questions:

- How is a “family” defined, beyond the legal definition?
- How does a family operate as a system? What are some implications of this family system theory in terms of my family involvement practices?
- How do the home, the community, society, culture, and the time period in which children live influence their learning and development?

Family Support Strategies and Standards Promoting Collaborative Practices

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We can no longer afford to neglect families at risk. Investing in families is an investment in our future.

—Walter Cronkite (1994)

In Chapter 2, you learned about a number of theories or approaches to being partners with families in educating their children. However, some families may have myriad needs that prevent them from embracing an active role in their child’s education. With support from the school and alternative involvement strategies offered, these families may be able to help their children successfully learn and achieve in school. This chapter will examine ways that schools can strengthen families, so that they can best support their children’s healthy development and, ultimately, their success in school. We will also look at a variety of national standards that family involvement practices are based on and consider how you can apply those standards as a teacher. As you examine these ideas, think about these questions:

- Why do all families, regardless of income, status, language, race, or ethnicity, require support to help their children learn in school?
- How can the principles of family support help me reach and work more effectively with diverse families to ensure student success?
- How can schools engage in partnerships with community agencies to best provide support services to families?