



Impact of Community Relationships

“The local school is an integral part of the fabric of its community. Each is a mirror unto the other; the success of one entity is naturally reflected in the other.”

(Johnson. 2004. p.4)

Children develop in a variety of different settings and contexts. These environments are not isolated from each other, and benefits that occur in one setting often trickle out to other settings, like ripples in water.

The benefits that children experience when families are engaged in children’s education spill over into the rest of the community as well.

Benefits through Enhanced Education

It is well-established that school-family partnerships greatly enrich the quality of education that children receive. Family involvement not only increases school achievement and attendance, but it also promotes healthy attitude and behaviour in students. Research suggests that greater cooperation between home, school, and the community results in lower rates of discipline and improved behaviour (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). These outcomes extend into the community through lower rate of violence and criminal activity among young people.

Benefits through Social Connections

When families are involved in education, they benefit directly from more meaningful social connections and a greater sense of belonging. Studies show that these benefits spill over to other community members, creating strong social networks that span the entire community.

Involvement in children’s education creates opportunities for social interaction and enriches interpersonal relationships among families in the community. As one researcher stated, “Quality public schools are schools where the parents in the neighborhood are getting involved. And when parents in the neighborhood get involved, that creates a social network and social capital that builds a strong neighborhood” (Badger, 2012, par. 11).

“With parenting, there is an obvious connection between education and broader community issues. The community finances the education system and instills general attitudes about the role and value of education that affect students’ attitudes toward learning. The schools also rely on the community to reinforce the lessons and values they teach” (Linden, 2010, p.64).

When neighbours get to know each other through family events and activities at their local school, they form bonds and develop trust that “can form the basis for a shared identity” (Neal & Neal, 2012, p.474). This leads to a greater sense of belonging within the community, and creates a sense of shared responsibility for safety and well-being of everyone in it (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education [NCPPIE], n.d.).



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When schools work together with the community, the results are positive. There are benefits for many: children, families, teachers, the school community and larger community as a whole benefit when they're connected. It's simple. The more connected we are, the better we are able to keep our communities safe.

“Community engagement process(es) bring people together. These processes can enable collective change (changing attitudes, building social capital, etc.) and create movement in communities. Good community engagement will build agreement around issues and create momentum for communities to address local issues. This includes achieving outcomes and creating solutions to community needs” (Tamarack, n.d.).

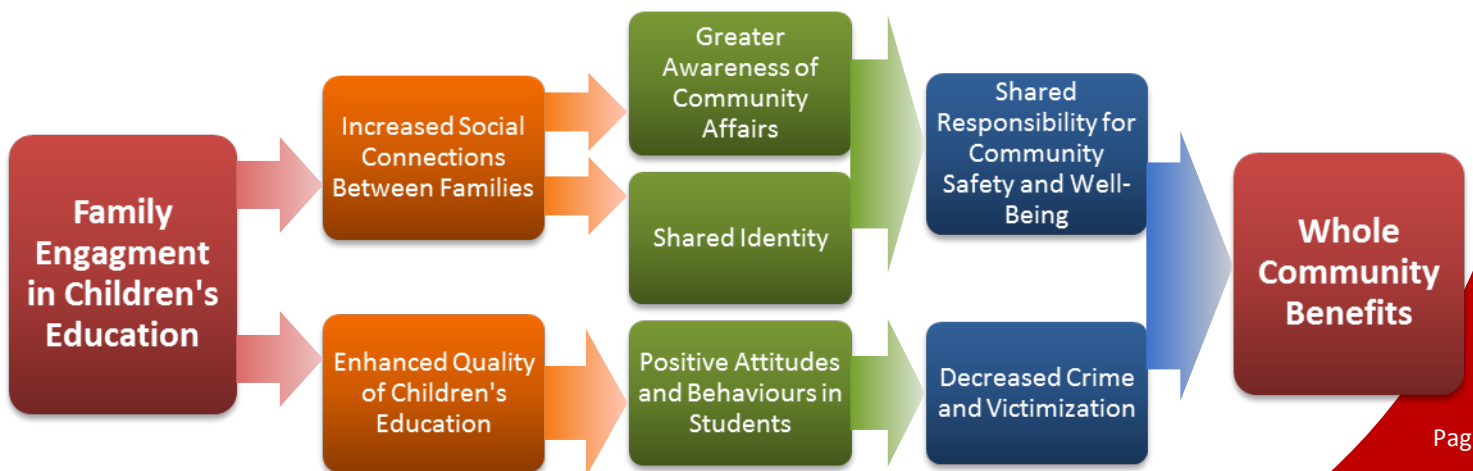
What is **social capital**? It's the benefit of a collective group of people working together towards a common goal. When the larger community works together with the school in partnership, better outcomes for children and families, schools and communities will follow.

Studies show that school and community relationships have positive results on students stretched across all racial, socioeconomic, and education backgrounds.

“When we change from a school sense to a more parent sense type of engagement strategy, it means really thinking about how to support families in what they are already doing at home. When family engagement and community involvement is linked to learning, we see improvement, emphasizing the importance of trust in building and sustaining these relationships. It's all about the relationship,” (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2012).

“These partnerships create shared responsibility for the well being of children, families, and schools by all members of the community,” (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, n.d.) Children and families feel empowered and motivated to make a difference in their community because they witness how their actions can have a positive influence on those around them.

Relationship Between Family Engagement and Benefits to the Community





References and Further Reading:

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