

The Community of the School

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Editors

**Sam Redding
and
Lori G. Thomas**

Foreword

Joyce L. Epstein

Published by the

Academic Development Institute

ISBN 0-9710077-0-5

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Printed in the United States of America

Business and Editorial Office

Academic Development Institute
121 N. Kickapoo Street
Lincoln, IL 62656
Phone: 217-732-6462
Fax: 217-732-3696
E-mail: editor@adi.org
Website: www.adi.org

Text/Layout Design

Darla K. Hamilton

Cover Design

Scott Fulk

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“There is no better place to create a community of caring than in our schools – the heart of our future.”

Patricia G·ndara

Preface

The Community of the School commemorates the first ten years of publication of the *School Community Journal*. Since the first issue appeared in 1991, the journal has held that the hope for American education lies in the cooperative pursuits of people intimately attached to their schools. To this image of the school *as* a community, the *School Community Journal* is devoted.

The school is often discussed in terms of its relationship to the community, suggesting that the school is something apart from community. In fact, the school exists within a mosaic of overlapping communities and is, itself, capable of functioning as a community.

A community is a group of people associated with one another who share some common values. Geography does not make community, nor does membership nor casual affiliation. When the school functions *as* a community rather than *in* a community, its constituents (students, parents, teachers, staff) associate with one another and share common values about the education of children.

At the root, members of the school community assume responsibility for one another. *Those* children become *our* children, and parents are not external agents but full partners in the education of their children and of each other's children. Teachers are not isolated practitioners of pedagogy, but professionals integrated into the web of community and buoyed by common purpose.

It is our hope that *The Community of the School* will contribute to a sense of common cause for all members of school communities in order to distribute the load as well as the joy of caring.

Acknowledgments

We owe a great debt to three members of our National Advisory Board, now deceased, who gave so much to our cause in advice, support, and credibility: Ralph Tyler, James S. Coleman, and Margaret C. Wang. We also wish to thank the Laboratory for Student Success and its directors—Margaret C. Wang and JoAnn Manning—for their tutelage and encouragement in our research and publishing.

Sam Redding and Lori G. Thomas
Lincoln, Illinois
March, 2001

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Foreword

In ten years, Sam Redding and his editorial staff, advisors, reviewers, and hundreds of contributors turned a new and needed idea into a viable and helpful journal. Redding always intended the *School Community Journal* to reflect the diversity of a real community. Submissions were invited from researchers, administrators, teachers, school boards, parents, and others who were working collaboratively to develop the sense of community in schools. The contributors have shared a mix of quantitative and qualitative research, descriptions and evaluations of programs, reviews, and essays.

The design of the *School Community Journal* was and remains particularly appropriate because the field of school, family, and community partnerships has been distinguished by a close connection of research, policy, and practice. Research interests and practical goals for improving parental and community involvement have emerged and increased simultaneously. Studies of family involvement and home-school-community relations have been conducted in cooperation with educators, based on the experiences, questions, and concerns of parents, teachers, administrators, community partners, and students. Results of research have been swiftly translated and applied in practice (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997).

There is a growing recognition that all elements of school improvement (e.g., challenging curricula, instruction for active learning, rigorous assessments, and school and classroom organization) are more likely to succeed if families are involved in ways that help students focus on learning and schoolwork. It also is clear that all teachers and administrators must be prepared to create effective partnership programs to ensure good schools and successful students (Epstein, 2001).

When the *School Community Journal* first appeared, it looked tentative and temporary. Now, stable and formidable, it serves as a serious outlet for exploratory and intensive studies, formative and summative program evaluations, analytic frameworks, and discussions of important topics. This eclectic collection of articles from the first ten years of publication reflects the journal's diverse contents. It includes reports from school principals Hara and Burke on their practical approaches to partnerships; exploratory analyses of student outcomes by school district evaluators Yap and Enoki; qualitative studies of parents and teachers by A. Baker; exploratory quantitative analyses of partnerships in early childhood by McBride, Rane, and Bae; analyses of family involvement in reading

by Baker and Moss; an historical review of families and children in education by Hiatt-Michael; results of coursework on family involvement for preservice teachers by Katz and Bauch; and many more.

School, family, and community partnerships is a young and vibrant field of study. Increasingly, undergraduate and graduate students and professors in sociology, psychology, and education are reading about and researching all aspects of school, family, and community partnerships at various grade levels and in diverse communities. As the field grows, research, policy, and practice will continue to improve — something to watch in the *School Community Journal* over the next 10 years.

Joyce L. Epstein, Director
Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships
and the National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore Maryland

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THE COMMUNITY OF THE SCHOOL