



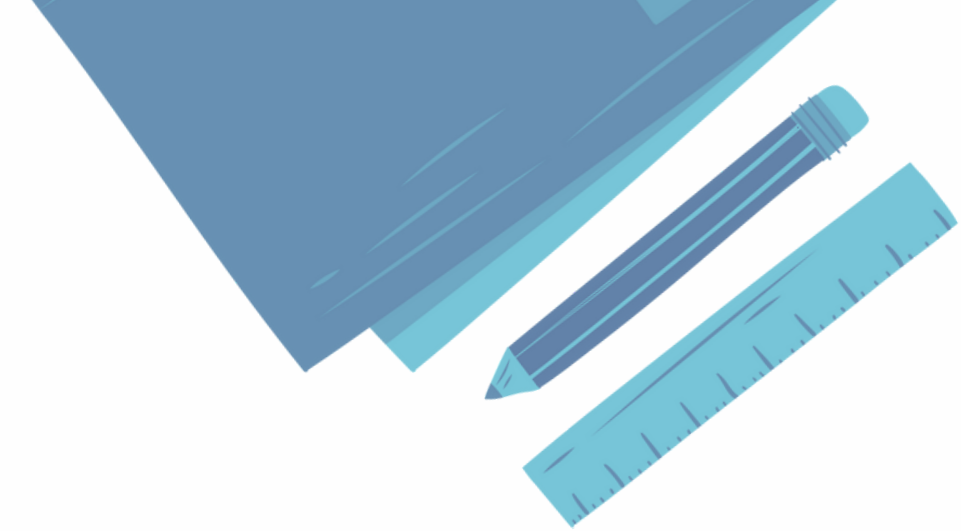
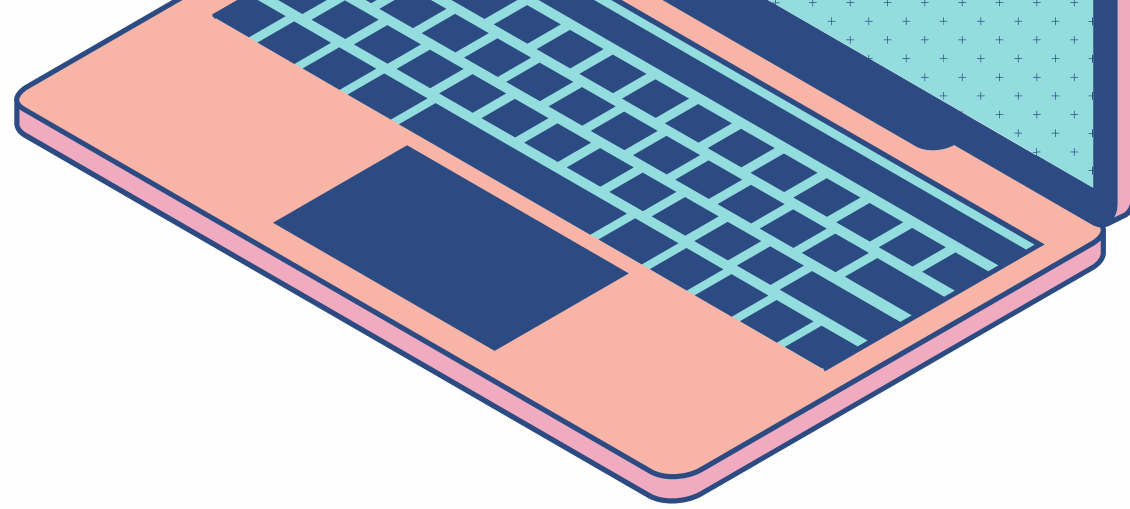
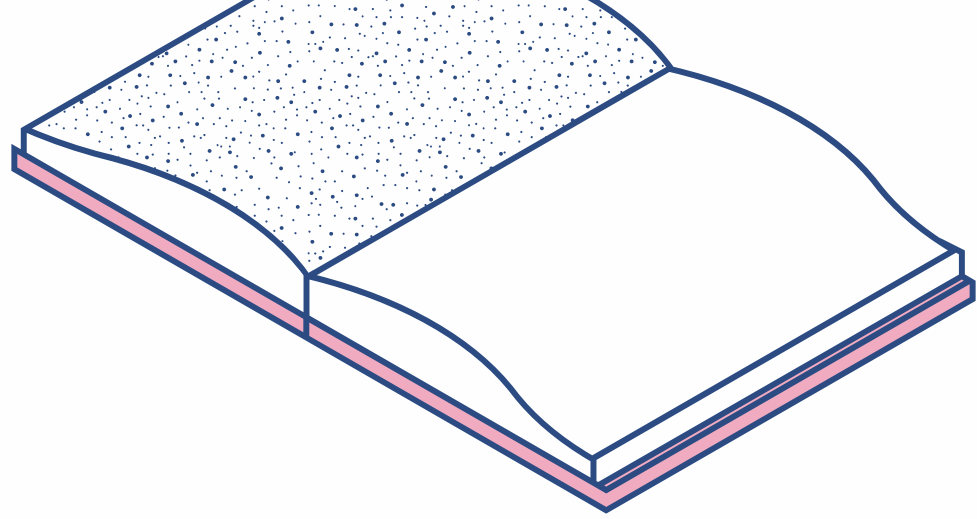
# Family-School- Community Engagement

Focus on Rural Communities

# Learning Objectives:

- Understand the Terminology
- Explore the Importance of Family-School-Community Engagement (FSCE)
- Learn about the FSCE connection to rural schools
- Investigate barriers and facilitators to engagement
- Brainstorm how to best build partnerships





**There is no program and no policy that can substitute for a parent who is involved in their child’s education from day one.**

**—*President Barack Obama (2010)***

**Family engagement is a full, equal, and equitable partnership among families, educators, and community partners to promote children’s learning from birth through college and career.**

**— *Connecticut State Department of Education, 2018***

# Defintion of Terms:

THESE TERMS HAVE BEEN CO-CREATED WITH EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES



## Family:

The word family is more inclusive, including all caretakers--grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other extended family members.

## Engagement:

The term "engagement" denotes more of a partnership than the word "involvement" does. This term is more collaborative, focusing more on "doing with" than "doing to."

## Equal vs. Equitable

**Equal**--Treating everyone as equals and not valuing some families more than others.

**Equitable**--Engagement strategies that are mindful of equity. An example might be having meetings at varied times to accommodate different family schedules.



# Rural Schools and Partnering with Families

**PARTNERING RELATIONSHIPS SHOULD BE BUILT ON CONNECTING, LISTENING, SHARING, AND WELCOMING**

- Families want to be involved in more than a narrow set of activities, such as the bake sale or making their children do homework.
- Families are experts on their children.
- Families should be part of the conversation around curriculum, hiring--the full scope and range.
- Families are an untapped resource for schools. Help them recognize the value they bring as a resource.

*Grant & Ray, 2019; Sheridan et al., 2019*

# Why is Family-School-Community Engagement (FSCE) so important?

*Mapp, K.L. (2022)*

## Benefits for Students

- Earn higher grades and have higher test scores.
  - Enroll in higher level programs (in and out of school, including classes for college credit and summer opportunities).
  - Exhibit faster rates of literacy acquisition.
  - Adapt more quickly to school and attend more regularly.
  - Have stronger social skills and more pro-social behaviors.
  - Graduate and move on to higher education.
- 

## Benefits for Families

- A family's perception of their "job description" shifts, allowing them to play many different roles (i.e., role construction).
  - Families gain confidence in their ability to influence and shape their children's learning and development (i.e., self-efficacy).
  - Families develop an increased sense of accountability to their school and community, which can lead to more advocacy for ALL students and lead to more civic participation.
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# Why is Family-School-Community Engagement (FSCE) so important? (cont.)

## Impact for Educators

- In elementary schools, teachers are more likely to stay in schools that have strong family engagement cultures.
  - Increases a feeling of community--teachers are not "going at it alone," but rather feel that families are partners.
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## Impact for Schools

- Upgraded school facilities.
  - Improved school leadership and staffing--collaborative hiring processes are vital.
  - Increased access to new resources and curriculum.
  - More offerings for families, including after-school programs and family engagement supports.
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# Why is FSCE vital for Rural Schools?

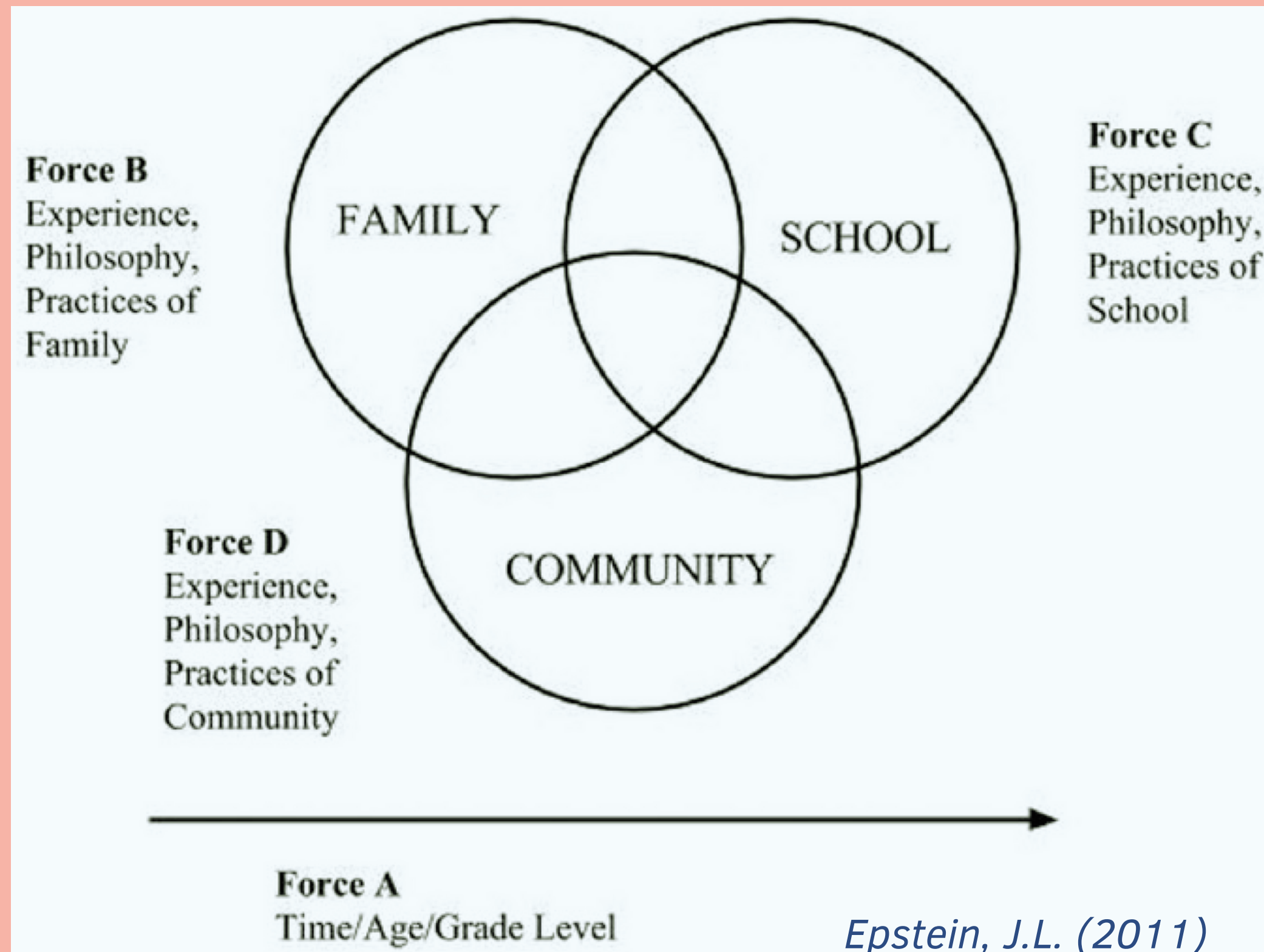
- Semke & Sheridan (2012) completed a systemic review of the literature on rural schools and family engagement.
- Increased family engagement in schools can help to ameliorate difficulties for students living in disadvantaged conditions, such as rural poverty.
- Family-School-Community connection is crucial to school success in rural settings, particularly the collaborative relationships.
- Family involvement looks different in rural schools--tendencies toward less attendance at school events and less interactions with teachers. Thus, schools have to strive to overcome barriers.

*Semke & Sheridan, 2012*



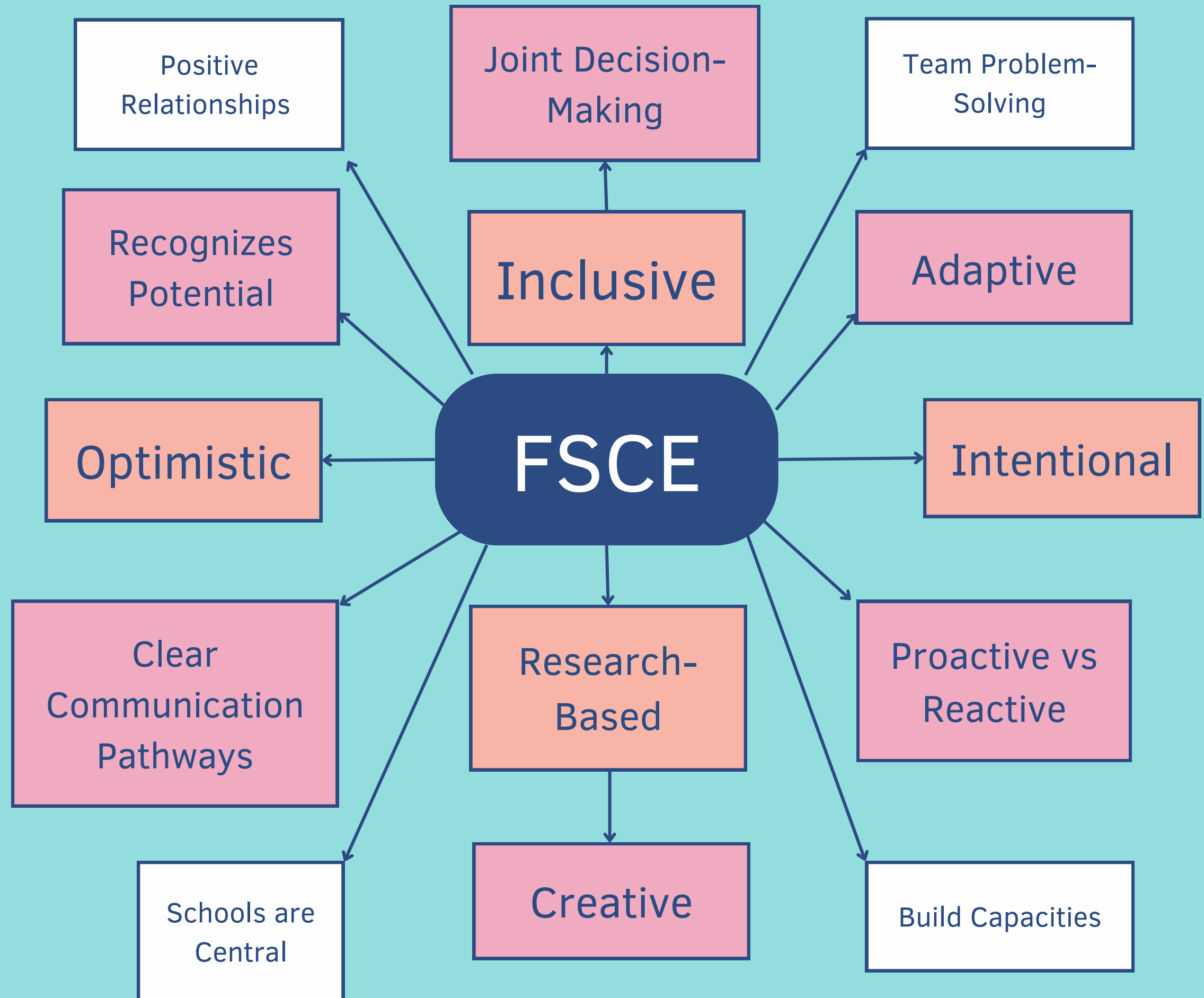


# Factors Influencing Effective Partnering



- A theory of overlapping spheres developed by Dr. Joyce Epstein (Epstein, 2011).
- This model is NOT a Venn Diagram.
- The child is in the center of the diagram.
- Three contexts (i.e., home, school, community) overlap and have unique influences on the child.
- Partnerships are about shared responsibilities between home, school, and community.

# Qualities of Strong FSCE in Rural Schools



*CDOE, 2022; Semke & Sheridan, 2012; Holmes & Sheridan, 2022*



# Four Core Beliefs:

Getting ready to partner with families



<p>All families have dreams for their children and want the best for them.</p>	<p>All families have the capacity to support their children's learning.</p>
<p>Families and school staff should be equal partners.</p>	<p>The responsibility for building partnerships between school and home rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.</p>

# Partnership Practices for Rural Schools



FOUR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR A STRONG FOUNDATION

1. Strong Relationships
2. Welcoming Environments
3. Effective Bidirectional Communication
4. Mutual Learning to Ensure Mutual Understanding

*Holmes & Sheridan, 2022*

# 1. Building Relationships

- The quality of the relationship between families and schools is integral in rural schools.
- In small communities, the quick flow of information and overlap in roles and responsibilities can present additional challenges in building relationships.
- **ACKNOWLEDGE FAMILY COMPETENCE AND CAPACITIES.**
- **DEFINE CLEAR PARTNERSHIP ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS.**

# 2. Creating Welcoming Settings

- Characterized by hospitality and inclusion.
- Engaging physical climate.
- Affective climate of TRUST.
- **EMBRACING PARTNERSHIP-ORIENTED ATTITUDES.**
- **ESTABLISH SPACES (physical or virtual) THAT ARE DEDICATED TO FAMILIES.**

### 3. Multidirectional Communication

- Reciprocal communication extended to all families.
- Rural families interact less with educators.
- PROVIDE REGULAR, NONTRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION.
- SHARE MORE POSITIVE THAN NEGATIVE INFORMATION.

### 4. Mutual Understanding

- Rural communities may lack specialized services, so using existing human resources is important.
- Continuity across home-school is preventative.
- INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY OF MATERIALS AND INFORMATION.
- DELIVER GUIDANCE AND EDUCATION COLLABORATIVELY



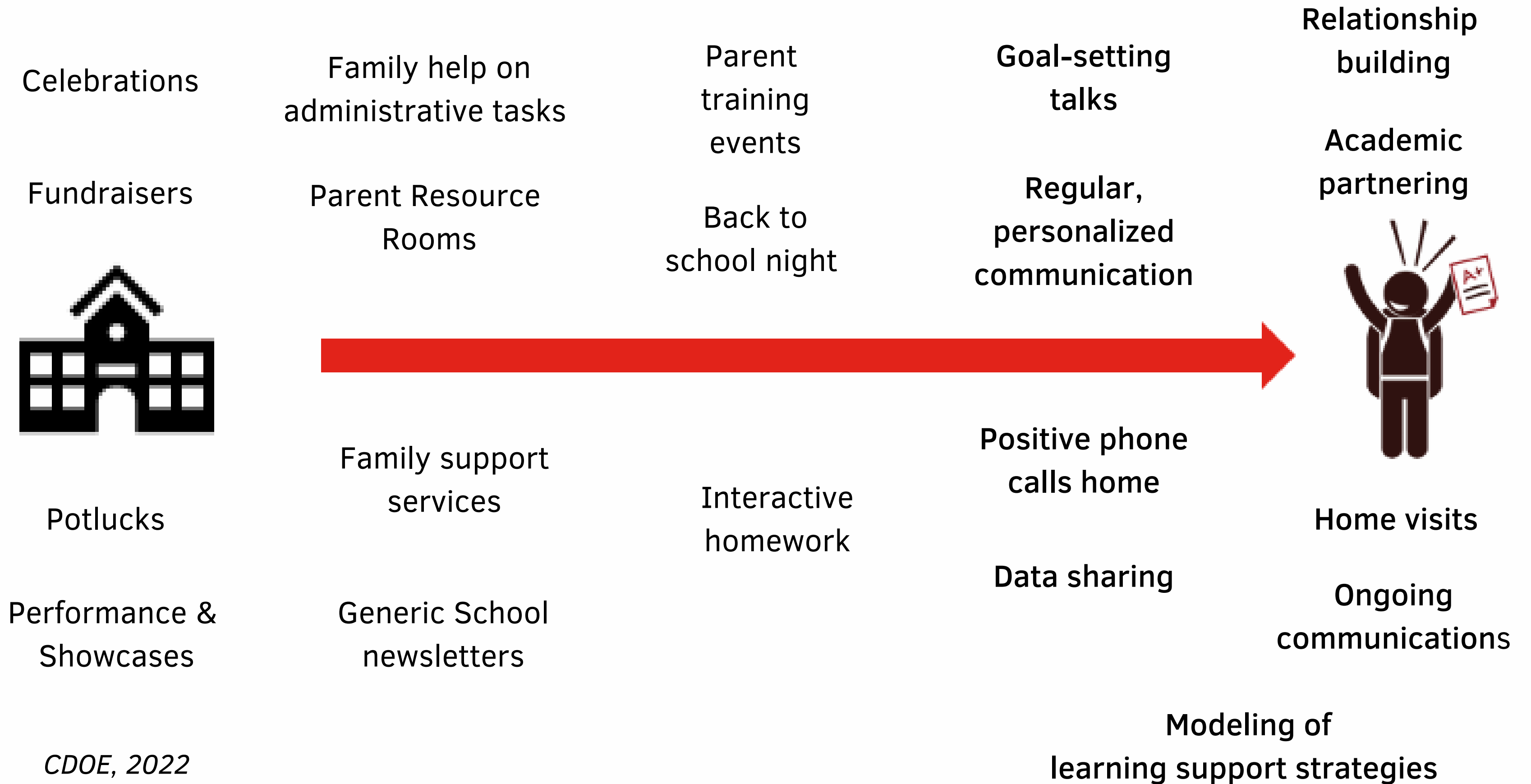
# Barriers to Engagement

## RURAL SCHOOLS FACE UNIQUE CHALLENGES

- Geographic isolation.
- Poverty, often a part of rural ecology.
- Time constraints for both families and educators.
- Communication difficulties related to language & cultural differences.
- Implicit biases.
- Decreased funding for educational program opportunities.
- Decreased school funding levels.
- Families lack time for collaboration.
- Schools have need of more specialized staff.

*Grant & Ray, 2019; Semse & Sheridan, 2012*

# CONTINUUM OF IMPACT





# Joining Activity Suggestions

## SHORT-TERM

*Mapp, K.L., 2004*

- Conduct a needs assessment with families.
- Greet school visitors at the front door in a family friendly way.
- Make "good news" phone calls to families, at least once a month about a student's progress.
- Hold school events around the community (e.g., community centers, churches).
- Provide food, childcare, and transportation for school meetings and functions.
- Provide a family suggestion box.

# Joining Activity Suggestions

## LONG-TERM

*Mapp, K.L., 2004*

- Translate all materials into languages that are spoken at home.
- Create opportunities for school staff and families to interact, several times a year.
- Home visits set up before the school year begins can help to establish partnerships.
- Hold weekly Morning Meetings for families and students on the playground or gym.
- Find ways to use technology to build bridges (e.g., classroom webpages, classroom apps like ClassDojo, newsletters).

# Family, School, & Community Partnerships: Supporting Student Success



# Conclusion

"Listening is the most powerful tool I know to promote family engagement."

**SHANE SAFIR**  
**IN EDUCATION WEEK TEACHER**



# Resource Page

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Semke, C. A., & Sheridan, S. M. (2012). Family-school connections in rural educational settings: A systematic review of the empirical literature. *The School Community Journal*, 22(1), 21–48.

# Thank You!

