



About Harvard Family Research Project

Since 1983, we have helped stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies to promote the well-being of children, youth, families, and their communities. We work primarily in the areas of out-of-school-time programming, and family and community engagement in education. Underpinning all of our work is a commitment to evaluation for strategic decision-making, learning, and accountability.

Building on our knowledge that schools cannot do it alone, we also focus national attention on complementary learning. Complementary learning is the idea that a systemic approach, which integrates school and non-school supports to promote children's learning and development from cradle to career, can better ensure that all children have the skills they need to succeed.

What we do best

By distilling information from our own pioneering research and evaluation projects, and by synthesizing the work of others, we have one overarching goal: to provide practical information that will stimulate innovation and continuous improvement in policy, practice, research, and evaluation. To this end, we

- Create research publications on the most timely and relevant issues facing our audiences, including practical information they can use to strengthen policy and practice.
- Conduct original research and analyses on key issues to promote best practices and inform policies that support learning and development.
- Develop and support collaborations, networks, and convenings that contribute to national, state, and local efforts to improve program quality, evaluations, and programs.
- Test and refine innovative evaluation approaches that build the capacity of nonprofits to use data for continuous improvement and accountability.
- Build evaluation and program capacity by developing easy-to-use tools and “how to” guides.

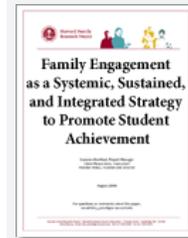
How we can help you

Our work has supported thousands of people who have used our publications, tools, and workshops to make programs more effective, demonstrate results, learn to navigate tough evaluation challenges, read the latest promising practices, and shape the direction of research projects.

Learn more about HFRP and browse hundreds of resources for policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and evaluators at www.hfrp.org.

HFRP Resources

Visit our website to find these and other valuable resources:



Family Engagement as a Systemic, Sustained, and Integrated Strategy to Promote Student Achievement



Family Involvement Makes a Difference

Three briefs on family involvement in early childhood, elementary school, and middle and high school education.

Download the free PDFs from:

www.hfrp.org/FamilyEngagementCommentary
www.hfrp.org/FamilyInvolvementMakesADifference



Family Involvement Network of Educators

Become part of a community of educators committed to family involvement in education.

Subscribe to the *Evaluation Exchange* and the *FINE* newsletter for free at www.hfrp.org/subscribe

What Does Complementary Learning Look Like in Practice?

Marcus's Story: Family, School, and Community Engagement from Cradle to Career

Marcus is 17 years old. He lives in a public housing development with his younger sister and his mother, Maria, who cleans houses for a living. While pregnant with Marcus, Maria went to her community health clinic and told her doctor, "I want my kids to go to college, but I don't know anybody who went to college. How do I help my kids get there?"

Establishing a strong foundation in early childhood

Maria's doctor referred her to the local community center—with strong partnerships with the health clinic and the local school district—where she enrolled in a parenting class. Initially nervous, Maria liked the instructor and she enjoyed meeting other parents to share information and ambitions for their children; the center's home visitors helped her with effective discipline strategies.

The school district's family liaison, Shawna, was regularly at the community center to provide information and answer questions. When Marcus was almost three, Shawna talked about the importance of pre-kindergarten classes: "We have the same goal you do—to help your kids succeed all the way through college." Maria enrolled Marcus in the center's Head Start program and staff shared ideas about how to help Marcus learn to read.

The summer before kindergarten, Shawna and the school principal led a tour of the local public school. Marcus and Maria met the team who would guide him through elementary school, including his teacher, the school's after school program director, and another teacher who would be Marcus' advisor.

Shared, mutual responsibility for learning

Marcus' team met regularly at the parent-teacher conferences each semester. Together they developed a plan for getting Marcus all the way to college—they called it a learning compact—and discussed what each person would do to help him succeed. Maria, who had never had good relationships with her own teachers, quickly warmed to the teachers and other staff. Before Marcus moved on to middle school, the learning compact team introduced Marcus and Maria to his new middle school team, a process that was repeated before high school.

An elementary school teacher recognized Marcus' musical talent and mentioned it to Maria, who encouraged him to sing in the church choir. Marcus' third-grade teacher helped him find an after-school program that taught music and helped students write songs based on the books they were reading in school. Through the after-school program, Marcus discovered a love for reading, and his grades continued to improve. Program staff members later helped him apply for and win a scholarship to an overnight arts camp during the summer after seventh grade.

Looking toward the future: middle school and beyond

In ninth grade, the learning compact team began talking about Marcus' goal of becoming a music professor, including how to apply to and succeed in college. They discussed his progress, what courses to take, and what Marcus could do after school and during the summers to achieve his goals. Marcus and Maria attended a college night co-sponsored by school guidance counselors, local universities, and the local YMCA where Marcus played basketball after school; Maria also attended a "financial aid" night.

Now about to graduate from high school, Marcus is off to college with a scholarship and is preparing to be your neighborhood music teacher.

Related Resources

Visit www.hfrp.org to find these and other valuable resources:

The Federal Role in Out-of-School Learning: After-School, Summer Learning, and Family Involvement as Critical Learning Supports

A research-based case for the federal provision of out-of-school complementary learning supports.

The Evaluation Exchange: Complementary Learning

This issue (Volume XI, No. 1) introduces and explores the concept of complementary learning.

The Evaluation Exchange: Building the Future of Family Involvement

This issue (Volume XIV, No. 1 & 2) redefines family involvement within a complementary learning framework, which recognizes the critical role of families and other non-school supports in promoting children's success.



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