CHAPTER 16: Working with Parents and Communities

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Professional and Community Engagement- Working with Parents and Communities

- **Content:**
- Attitudes towards Math as a subject
- Educational partnerships within parents and communities
  - Roles
  - Importance
- Stakeholder perspectives on partnerships
  - School, family and community
- Families and Communities contribution to Mathematics Education.
- Group Activity

Parental and Community Attitudes towards Mathematics

Differing Perspectives

- **Principal**: our parents here now still want these rows of algorithms and closed tasks and what we do here is catering for the differing abilities of our children… and we've had teachers very rudely spoken to by parents about 'who designed these?'- it was a math homework task to do with looking at snowfalls and look at the weather map, you know, 'Who designed this—stupid! We want REAL math, we want real math.

Differing Perspectives

- **Parent**: I don't feel that [the teachers and administration are] always ready to listen to ideas that we might have…I think [it's] because they're trained, they've done their degrees and they know what they're doing about that kind of thing. Sometimes some of them feel that we're not qualified to offer that kind of advice.

Differing Perspectives

- **Teacher**: the students come from families that really don't care about school. Most of them are dropouts themselves, so school has no place in their lives. Many of the kids will say that their parents hated school and were no good at math, so they believe it is their gene pool.

Differing Perspectives

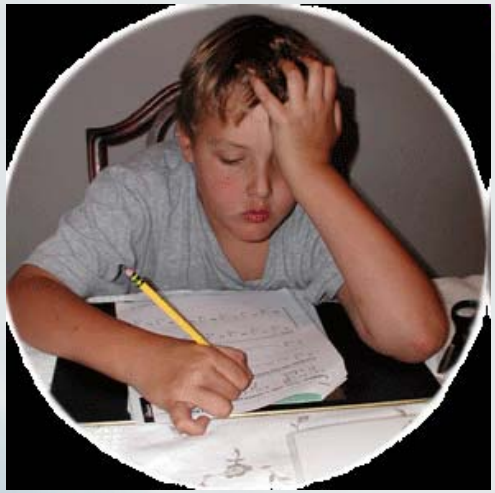
- **Parent**: I don’t know why [other parents don’t get involved]. I don’t know whether it’s their own experience at [secondary] school was pretty horrible when they were kids, but they do seem to be a lot less willing to be involved in the [secondary] school than they are with the primary school.

Who’s Right?

- Trevor H. Cairney, defines two types of deficit views in relationships between the school and the home.

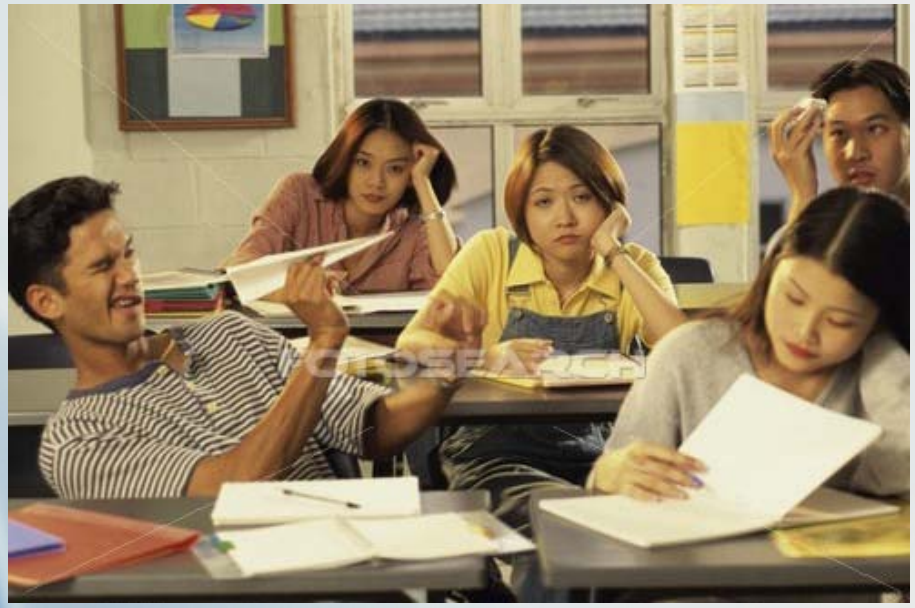
Who's Right?

- **Family Deficit View –** Perceives the homes of children from diverse social and cultural backgrounds as providing limited learning environments and placing little value on education.



Who's Right?

- **Educational Inadequacy View -** Suggests that differential achievements are largely due to the failure of school to develop students' skills.



Roles of parents and communities in educational partnerships

- Different family types/home environments.
- Families are more diverse.
- Low socioeconomic status -- Ripple effect.
- Poor parents and single mothers value their child's education as much as other parents.

Roles of Parents and Communities Con't

- Governance structures of schools limiting parental involvement.
- Parent teacher interviews.
- Immigrant parents (lacking English).
  - Limited understanding of curriculum in a different culture or country.
- Communities can help by offering outside resources to aid with students' schooling (Kumon Center).

Roles of parents and communities Con't

- Communities can help by volunteering, offering work-place experience, etc.
- Community backgrounds for their students.
- Mathematics teaching practices involve curriculum planning, choosing textbooks, and assigning homework.
- Have to utilize different teaching styles in the classroom to reach all students on their level.

Questions to Consider

- Can you think of any parent and community participation during your junior or high school experience?
- Did your school have a PTA?

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decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Why are partnerships important for mathematics education?

- Issues affecting parent and community participation in mathematical education:
  - Parents negative attitudes toward math.
  - Parents are unfamiliar with current classroom practices and approaches.
  - Math as seen as unimportant in the real world (calculators!).
  - Families from different cultural backgrounds may have different expectations than those in their new community.

Why are partnerships important for mathematics education?

- Why mathematical teachers need to engage with parents and the community:
  - To support numeracy learning.
  - "to be numerate is to use mathematics effectively to meet the general demands of life at *home*, in paid *work*, and for participation in *community and civic life*."
  - So children gain a mathematical knowledge (general skills, as well as problem-solving and decision-making strategies).
- To develop good relationships with parents and communities, it is vital for teachers to have a clear understanding of the nature of partnerships and how participants view their role.

Questions to Consider

- What is the importance of parents having a positive attitude towards mathematics despite their own personal experiences in mathematics?
- What are the implications of the diverse cultural backgrounds here in Newfoundland, that could effect how a mathematics teacher would plan his/her lesson?

Stakeholder Perspectives on Partnerships

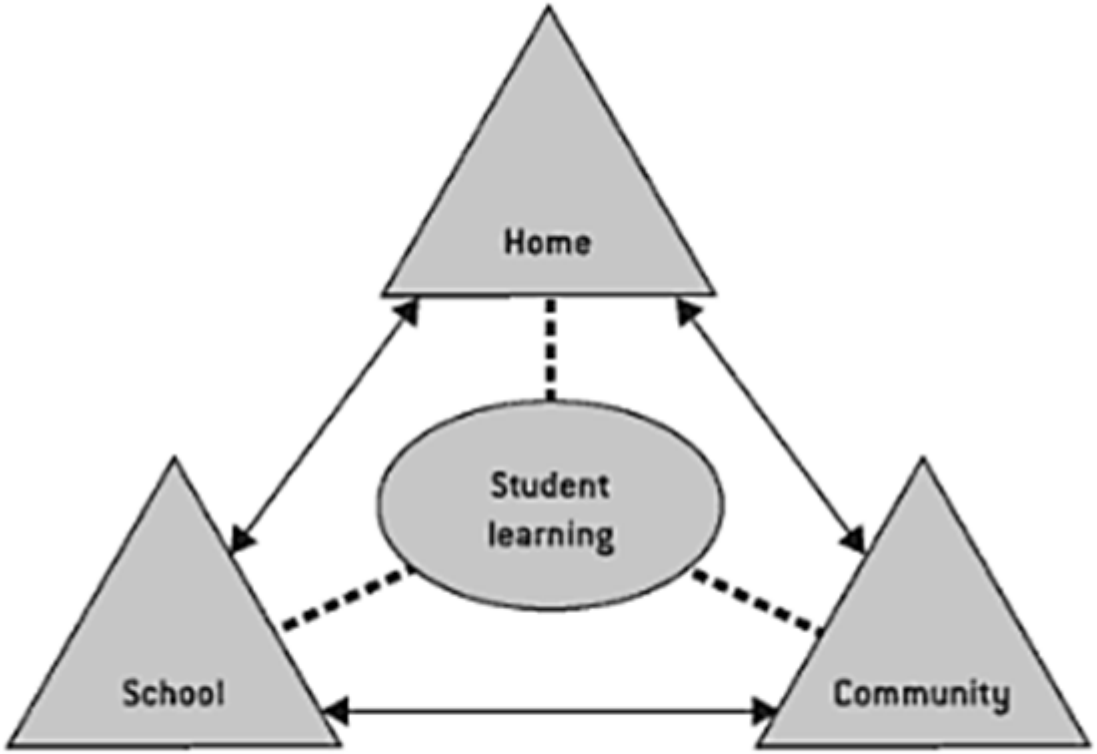


Figure 16.1 **Network model for home–school–community partnerships**

A) School-Centered Perspectives on Partnerships

- Six dimensions
  - Parenting
  - Communicating
  - Volunteering
  - Learning at home
  - Decision-making
  - Collaborating with the community.

Parenting

- Refers to the support provided to families to develop parenting skills that prepare children for school and to build up positive home conditions that support learning.
  - Training
  - Support Programs
  - Home Visits

Parenting

- Challenges
  - All families
  - Sharing information
- Results for students
  - Respect, Balance, Performance
- Results for parents
  - Confidence, Feeling of Support
- Results for teachers
  - Increased Knowledge, Understanding Diversity

Communicating

- Involves establishing effective forms of interaction between school and home.
  - Traditional Connection
  - Various ways in setting up communication
  - Index Card System

Communicating

- Challenges
  - Clarity and Quality
  - English as a second language
- Results for students
  - Awareness of Progress, Understanding Policies
- Results for parents
  - Interaction with Teachers, Awareness of Child
- Results for teachers
  - Appreciation of Communication

Volunteering

- Expresses parents' and families' support for school programs by working with students on learning activities in classrooms, and participating in other activities outside the classroom or outside the school.
  - Very Powerful
  - More common in Primary
  - Other ways

Volunteering

- Challenges
  - Include all families
  - Flexible schedules
- Results for students
  - Communicating with Adults
- Results for parents
  - Teacher Appreciation, Self-confidence
- Results for teachers
  - Individual Attention, Awareness of Parents Abilities

Learning at Home

- Can involve parents in monitoring and assisting their children with homework and other mathematical activities.
  - Most common
  - Could be very productive

Learning at Home

- Challenges
  - Difficult to design and organize
  - Coordinating family-linked homework
- Results for students
  - View parents as teachers, redeveloped self-concept
- Results for parents
  - Support and encourage children, understanding curriculum
- Results for teachers
  - Respect for family time, satisfaction with family involvement

Decision-Making

- Refers to parents' participation in school decisions and advocacy activities through curriculum committees and school councils.
  - Most productive type of parental involvement
  - Challenge the professional position

Decision-Making

- Challenges
  - Represent all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups
  - Training of representatives
- Results for students
  - Awareness of family representation, understanding student rights.
- Results for parents
  - Input into policies, ownership, Having a voice
- Results for teachers
  - Awareness of parent perspectives

Collaborating with the Community

- Reflects the increasing interest of many schools in making connections with the local businesses, higher education institutions and community-based agencies.
  - Financial or Material Support
  - Community Awareness

Collaborating with the Community

- Challenges
  - Informing Community of Programs, Assuring Equal Opportunity
- Results for students
  - Increased Skills and Talents, Awareness of Careers.
- Results for parents
  - Knowledge and use of local resources, Interactions with other families
- Results for teachers
  - Awareness of community resources , Openness to using other resources

Memorial University and the Community

- W.J. Blundon Contest

Memorial University and the Community

- Senior and Junior High Math Leagues

Memorial University and the Community

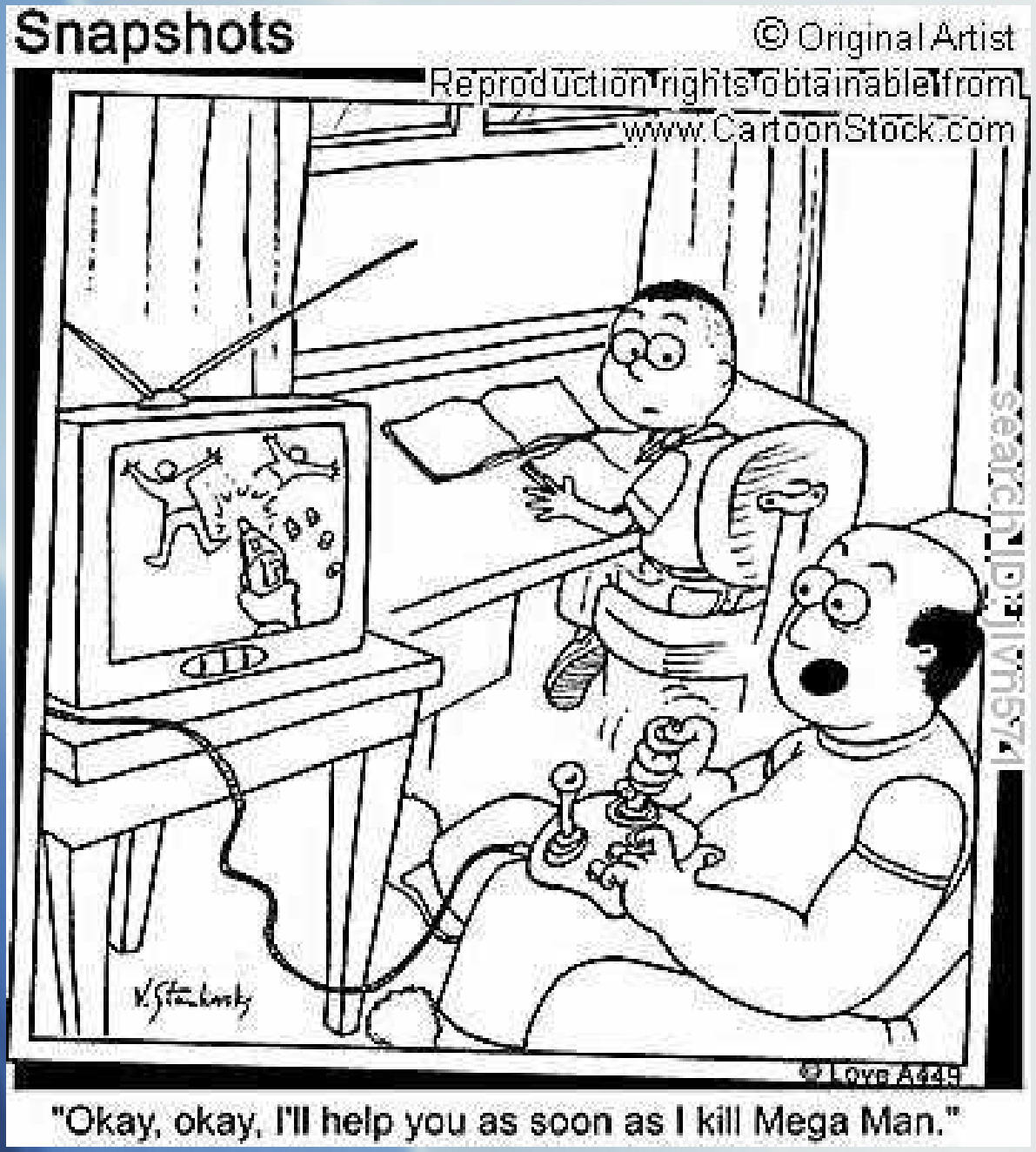
- Math Kangaroo Contest-Game

Memorial University and the Community

- Science at the Mall

B) Family Centered Influence

1. Creating supportive learning environments at home
2. Parental support for the child
3. Parents as role models for the value of education
4. Home practices that support numeracy development
5. Parent-directed activities that connect children to out-of-school opportunities for numeracy development
6. Parent-child discussions and interactions about school-related issues and activities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"Okay, okay, I'll help you as soon as I kill Mega Man."

1. Supportive Learning Environment

- Less time on electronics
- Supervision and checking homework
- Time and space for homework

2. Parental Support

- Aspirations
  - Stable
  - High
  - Certain

3. Parents as Role Models

- Show value of Education through:
  - Own Experience
  - Hard work
  - Life Lessons

4. Home Practices

- Parents creating tasks at home
  - Problem solving
  - Mathematical games
- Early to Late learning
  - Contrast

5. Parent-Directed Activities

- Tutoring
- Enrichment
- Higher Educated Parents are more active in this area.

6. Parent-Child Discussions

- Table Talk
- Be Specific with Subjects

C) Community Centered Influence

1. Community Driven
2. Business-school partnerships
3. University-school partnerships
4. Community service learning programs
5. Afterschool programs
6. Extended programs that target family numeracy

1. Community-driven school reform

- Community needs to help with student achievement.
- School is not the only base of knowledge.

- Use of parents and members of community as tutors.

2. Business-School Partnerships

- Support from businesses:
  - Resources
  - Expertise
  - Volunteers
- For example, scholarships and sponsorships, guest speakers, etc.

3. University-School Partnerships

- Support though:
  - Expertise
  - Resources
  - Professional Development

4. Community Service Learning Programs

- Linking academic content to activities that contribute to well-being of community.
  - Science Center
  - Geo Center
  - Exhibits
  - Science at the mall

5. After-School Programs

- Homework help
- Enrichment learning activities

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decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

6. Extended programs that target family numeracy

- Family Mathematics Program
- Trainers

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How families and communities can contribute to young people's mathematics education

Families

- Encouraging their children to talk about what they are doing in mathematics at school
- Listening carefully and with interest to the explanations of their children about mathematics
- Reassuring and encouraging their children when they face difficulties

Families cont.

- Engaging children in discussions about the useful aspects of mathematics at home and at work

- Talking to their teachers about their child's progress in mathematical development and recognizing what is a reasonable expectation of their performance

Families cont.

- Participating in school-based family mathematics evenings
- Seeking information about the school's mathematics curriculum
- Taking opportunities to practice leisure mathematics learning in the home and the community

Community

- Talking about how mathematics is used in their particular fields
- Being involved in discussions about the school curriculum
- Being prepared to have an active role within the school

Community cont.

- Participating in work experience programs, community placements and other outside-school experience programs for students

- Explaining, discussing and providing training in areas which have specialized mathematical needs

Working with parents…

- Communication with parents is extremely important
- When parents do call or send a note, be sure to respond to their concerns immediately, and when you have a concern about a particular student, do not hesitate to call the parents
- Consider having each student keep a portfolio as an assessment strategy.

Working with parents…

- Whenever possible, involve parents in the process of problem solving and doing homework assignments

- Whenever possible, involve parents directly in the teaching and learning process

- A parent called a teacher to express displeasure with perceived classroom instructional practices. The teacher frequently assigned homework problems and encouraged students to explain their approaches to others in the class. During the phone call, the parent was clearly upset and said it is apparent that you do not understand the mathematics yourself and are hoping that students will bail you out by having them explain the problems to one another.

- How would you as a teacher respond to the parent?

- A parent called her daughter's math teacher because students had been using graphic calculators in class. He argued that when students are using calculators they are not learning math, the machine is doing all the thinking in that classroom and asked the teacher, why are you allowing your students to cheat with those things?

- How would you respond to the concerns of this parent as a teacher?

- A parent called the principal to complain that the mathematics teacher her son has, used a video tape problem solving program in class that day. She claimed that the teacher is forcing students to watch television in class and is calling it mathematics education. Later in the conversation, the parent stated that kids watch too much television at home these days and they certainly don't need another hour of it in the classroom!

- The principal approaches you and explains the parents' concern. How do you as a teacher handle this situation?

- You are a teacher in a low socioeconomic community. The community has very little extra-curricular activities to support academic achievement, however, they are in the process of implementing an after-school program for extra help in reading and mathematics. You feel that the cost of the program is out of the price range for the majority of the families whose children need the additional help. You decide to take it upon yourself to approach the community and the government to find a solution to lower the cost of the program.

- How would you go about doing this? What would your arguments be?

- As a teacher you want your students to be able to relate mathematics to everyday life. You approach your principal with an outline of your thoughts and ideas on sending students into businesses within the community to help develop lifelong skills in the mathematics field. Once he is onboard, you now have to find businesses within the community that would be appropriate to send your students to.
- How do you get these businesses onboard? Which ones would you choose and why?

- * Take into account the different levels of students' knowledge of mathematics*