

A CADRE Webinar
Moving Forward: Building Effective Family-School Partnerships
Karen Mapp
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Transcript

Marshall Peter: Hi this is Marshall Peter, the Director of CADRE, The National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education. And I'd like to invite...or welcome you to today's CADRE webinar, Moving Forward: Building Effective Family-School Partnerships. Today's webinar is one in a continuing series of CADRE webinars.

So our Presenter today is Dr. Karen Mapp. Dr. Mapp is a Senior Lecturer on Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) and the Faculty Director of the Education Policy and Management Master's Program. Over the past twenty years, Karen's research and practice focus has been on the cultivation of partnerships among families, community members and educators that support student achievement and school improvement. She has served as the co-coordinator with Professor Mark Warren of the Community Organizing and School Reform Research Project and as a core faculty member in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership (EDLD) program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is a founding member of the District Leaders Network on Family and Community Engagement, is a trustee of the Hyams Foundation in Boston, MA, and is on the board of the Institution for Educational Leadership (IEL) in Washington, DC. Karen currently serves as a consultant on family engagement to the United States Department of Education in the Office of Innovation and Improvement. I must say also that as I've let people know that Dr. Mapp agreed to join us today that people have been unanimously in the accolades that they've afforded her and really complimented us on the decision to have her present. So with that I'm going to take down the surveys and turn it over to you Karen.

Karen: Okay. Thank you very much and I hope everyone can hear me. It's always a little bit of a challenge with webinars making sure all the technology is working. So I'm just going to check in and make sure that I can be heard. Is that the case, from the CADRE staff, can you hear me?

CADRE: Yes, we can hear you great.

Karen: Okay. Alright. Fantastic. So what I'm going to do in the short time that we have together today is to share with you sort of three things. A little bit about what we now know from the research about why family engagement is important and I'm actually going to start with a definition of family engagement that is now being used across the country. And you heard mention that I'm a member of a district leader's group. This leader's group was funded, it's called the District Leader's Network on Family and

Community Engagement. And this District Leader's group was founded about three years ago by a group of us who have been doing a lot of work with districts on family engagement and noticing that more and more districts were actually hiring someone usually in the senior leadership staff to coordinate and implement the family engagement and community engagement initiatives throughout the district. So this has been a growing national trend. But as I was going out to districts and some of my other colleagues were as well, one of the things we kept hearing was it would be great to talk to other people in this position. And so we, through the support from the Institute for Educational Leadership, we were able to do that. And one of the things we talked about at our meeting, at our first meeting, was a definition of family engagement. So I'm actually going to talk about that in a minute. But, but what I'll do is I'll share again what we now know from the research about why family engagement is important and then I'm going to talk a little bit about how we can actually improve our efforts.

My research is really on promising practice in the field of family and community engagement. So I spend a lot of time talking to people like you, people in the field, of parents, of community organizing groups, district staff, school staff--that would be teachers and principals--people who may have the role of being a parent coordinator or family liaison in their schools and I've been trying to find out what works. How do we build better partnerships between home and school? So I'm going to share a little bit about that information with you today. Most of it is in a book that I wrote with some close colleagues, Anne Henderson, Vivian Johnson and Don Davies called, *Beyond the Bake Sale*, so I'll be sharing a little bit of what we found in terms of best practice around family and community engagement and if you like you can sort of follow-up and get more details from the actual book.

So as I promised you, I want to talk a little bit about the definition of family engagement. And what we are finding is that, you know, I think that many of you have had the experience, I'm going to assume that most of you have a computer or a cell phone or some sort of, you know, iPadish type of device, and periodically you get updates. So it used to be that you had to plug whatever device you had into a computer and download the update. Now they've gotten fancy. You can download it from the internet. But you know the concept of updates. Well, I think what's happened in the field of family engagement is that we now have had updates to the actual terminology. It used to say parent involvement or parent engagement even. But now I think many practitioners are advocating for the use of family engagement, for two reasons. One, by saying family we're being more inclusive and so as you see here from the definition, we're really talking about family engagement as any way that a child adult caretaker, and we're being very inclusive now. So it's not just the biological parents but also foster parents, perhaps older brothers or sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and people who the research language refers to as fictive kin and those are people who may not be directly related to you but actually have oversight over and care of the children. So the first word, family, includes everyone. It's more inclusive than parent.

Now the second word, engagement, really connotes a relationship and you know one of...I talk to a lot of young people. Teenagers seem to like me and they tell me a lot of things. And I remember I was talking to this one young lady and she talked about how, you know, involvement and engagement really means something very different when you're in a relationship. So engagement means something very serious, a very serious commitment, it means a partnership. And so that's why we, we decided to upgrade from the word involvement to engagement, because it really connotes, again, a two-way relationship or...with people really being engaged where it's a partnership with people who are on an equal level with one another. So again, here's the sort of broad definition of family engagement. So again, it's any way that these folks who we're calling caretakers are effectively supporting children's learning and healthy development and one of the things that I talk about when I do the work in the field is that you notice that this is a broad definition when it comes to actually the ways that families can be engaged in their children's education. So we'll talk about that in a few minutes.

There's a lot going on right now in the field of family engagement. I'm very encouraged and very optimistic. You heard mention that I currently am a consultant with the US Department of Education. They've been very open to new ideas and new perspectives about how they can move forward on family engagement. Some of you may have seen that there's been two I3 competitions that are directly focused on family engagement and that has come up about this work. What we're also seeing, some of you may have heard Secretary Duncan has mentioned this in a lot of speeches in the last two years, that's he actually calling for an increase in spending the Title I money that's focused on Family engagement from 1-2%. So you know that if you receive Title I funds in your district that 1% of those funds are supposed to be set aside for family engagement and 95% of those funds are supposed to go directly to the school.

What else do we see? Many senior level positions, as I have mentioned to you a few minutes ago, are being created across the country. And Joyce Epstein, a close colleague of mine, actually has some research supporting this. What she's finding that if there's no central office support for family engagement it's not systemic. In other words, it may show up in a couple of schools where you have principals or other school leaders who have been trained in this area, know how important it is. You know, you have those shining points of light throughout a district but it's not a district wide strategy unless there's an infrastructure at the central office level.

What else are we seeing? As I mentioned to you throughout many of the program challenges or the program competitions that are being offered up through the US Department of Education you're starting to see more robust family engagement language included in those competitions. And then also, in the popular realm, we have the "Tiger Mom" phenomenon, I think that was last year. Actually I saw something again about it in a newspaper recently. You have some discussion about the pros and cons of things like parent trigger and there was actually a movie, I think last year, as

well. And then there's a lot of parent organizing being done around the country. Some of you may know that as a result of some of the school closures, more and more families and parents and students are organizing around having a more active role in these decisions about their schools.

So there's a lot happening in the field right now. So let's talk about those different roles. I mentioned to you when I described the definition that there are various ways that families can be engaged in their children's education and also in the improvement of schools. I think one of the things that has limited the engagement of families is that in some cases schools have been very narrow in their definition of what family engagement is. For example, I have visited places where the school staff or even the district's idea of family engagement is basically families coming to parent-teacher conferences, being involved in fundraising, coming to sporting events and that's it. No real active engagement in the improvement of the school or in really focusing family engagement on student achievement.

So when that happens, when there's this sort of restricted view of family engagement, it's no wonder why many families don't connect with the school, especially if they work two or three jobs, which is the case with some of our families, if they don't speak English, they're recent immigrants to the United States, or if they've had their own challenging experiences with school. When schools and districts limit participation or even sometimes send out subtle messages like, look we only want you to be involved in these ways and not in others, it causes parents to hold back and not want to be involved.

So let's take a look at some of the various ways that families are involved in their children's education. And I would here say I haven't ever met a parent who wasn't engaged in some way, shape, or form in their child's education. So again, what happens when we narrowly define family engagement, if we don't see parents engaged in one of those slotted areas sometimes the assumption is that they're not involved and that's usually not true.

So here's the different ways that I've studied, in terms of how families are involved. And it's not just me, many of my colleagues that actually are looking at the practice of family engagement. These are some of the different areas that they've found. First of all, families are supporters of their children's learning. So that means that at home families talk about school, they maybe make sure there's a space for children to do homework, that they have, you know, libraries at home, make sure children have exposure to books and other reading materials. So really being supporters of children's learning.

But also what we're finding from the research one of the number one ways that families can be engaged and this is especially for the high school, middle and high school aged children, is as encouragers, as encourages and what we say as an achievement identity.

So in other words, building up a children's spirits so that they have a can-do attitude about school. So I can do it. You know, this is where you have parents giving kids support when, you know, things may not go right and saying, you know, no, I know you can do it, you need to hang in there, you need to persevere and again, I want to underscore the fact that we're now finding that this is one of the number one ways that families can be engaged in their children's education that actually have an impact on children's learning.

Monitors of their children's time, behavior, boundaries and resources. Again, I mentioned to you all that teenagers like to talk to me. I did a session, actually in Dubai, last year where there were 300 teenagers at the audience and I asked them, did they think that family engagement was important at the high school level. And there was a resounding yes. And I've actually asked students this question wherever I go. But they also said that they want their families to understand that they don't want them as friends. They want them to be their parents and even though they do everything they can to push back, that they do want their families to monitor their time, to push them, to give them boundaries.

Models of lifelong learning and enthusiasm for education. This is where children see that their parents also like to learn. One of the things that we've noticed, we have a very strong Parent University program here in Boston and for many of these families this is the first time that they've been in a classroom setting in many, many years. Many of these families did not graduate from high school themselves and just the act of seeing their parents in a classroom and seeing their parents coming home with homework has really inspired the children. Some of the children actually wrote stories about how inspirational it's been to see their families in Parent University classes and seeing their parents having homework. So models of lifelong learning is very important.

Advocates for improved learning opportunities for their children and at their schools. Now usually when I am in a venue where I can actually see the participants, I ask the question about, you know, what do people, what comes to mind when you hear the word advocate. And for a lot of my school leaders, when I do this at my principal training workshops they are very honest and candid and tell me that sometimes that word advocate is not a positive word. That sometimes they think about adversarial relationships. One principal said, when I hear advocate I hear litigation, lawyers, and so what. So that sometimes people when they hear the word advocate they don't, they don't have a positive vision.

Well I must say that I think that we all want our families to be advocates. Rudy Crew, who wrote a wonderful book called, I think it's called, Only Connect, talks a lot about how he wanted what he called demand parents in his school system because he felt that that helped keep the system's feet to the fire and a lot of times families can actually advocate for things that you might not be able to advocate for yourself.

So you do want your families as advocates.

Decision makers and choosers of educational options. So this is where families have the capacity to actually weight in and help make decisions not just at the school level but also decisions about their children's programming and opportunities. And then finally, last but not least, as true collaborators with the school staff and other members of the school community. So these are the various roles and actually it's not limited to these. I'm sure if I asked you all to come up with other ideas about roles that families can play...These, we've tried to capture many of them there are others I'm sure. But as you can see, the roles are varied and some families will be more interested or more, have the opportunity to be involved in some of these roles but not all of them. There isn't an expectation that families have to be engaged in every single one of these. But I think what we want to do is give families the opportunities to build the capacity so that they can choose which roles are most appropriate for them.

So let's talk about the impact. I promised you that I would share with you why engaging families is so important to student achievement and school improvement. So there's been over fifty years of research and taken together what those research studies tell us is that when families are engaged in their student's education, students are more likely to acquire literacy, high rates of literacy fast, there's been quite a few studies about literacy, particularly for early learning how family engagement in that is so important. These are students that earn higher grades and test scores which as we all know, given the testing environment that we have here in the United States and there's some pros and cons about that obviously, but these are students that are the ones that usually earn those higher grades and also those test scores.

But also these are students who enroll in higher level programs. So these are the students who are going to be enrolling in your AP and honors classes. These are the students whose parents know that, for example, Algebra is the gatekeeper course and makes sure that their students are enrolled in those courses in middle school. So it's very important for your families to know and understand the curriculum because they can really support their children and weigh in on some of those decisions to make sure they're taking the right courses that are going to prepare them for college.

One of my former jobs was as Associate Director of Admissions at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. And I used to go around the country and interview students. My particular area of focus was on recruiting students of color to Trinity. And what I noticed is that, and also students from high poverty areas. And what I noticed is that many of those students and many of their parents did not get good advice and guidance on the kinds of courses the kids should be taking to prepare them for a four year college. So I'd met very Bright young people but when I looked at their transcripts they had not taken the right courses that would enable me to admit them to a four year level college. So this is one of the things that's also very important and the research

does show that when families are engaged they know this information and they're able to give their children that guidance.

What else do we see? These are the kids that are promoted on time and earn more credits. Another thing that I used to see when I was in admissions was that students would take the minimum number of credits for graduation and I'm sure all of you in the audience know that for a lot of four year colleges they're expecting to see more than the minimum. And so again, when the families are engaged, they have this information they can guide their children to make sure that they're taking the proper number of courses. These are the students who adapt better to school and attend more regularly. One of the things that we see when we do our measurements of the impact of family engagement we see that attendance rates go up and you also see decreases in things like the number of suspensions, the number of disciplinary problems, we have teachers report to us that these students, again come to school with a better attitude. I have a colleague and friend, Ilene Carver, here in Boston, who is a teacher, and is a very successful teacher in Boston, has a reputation of being a very successful teacher and she talks about her focus on families is really the only classroom management the strategy that she needs because when the students know that she knows Mom, Dad, Grandpa, Grandma, et cetera, that really has an impact on their relationship with her in the classroom.

They have better social skills and behavior and these are the students that graduate and go on to higher education. So I'm sure many of you in the audience may remember the where's the beef commercial. I sometimes talk about this when I do my presentations. And even the younger people seem to know about the where's the beef commercial. But what she was asking for was that she wanted to make sure that if she was going to spend her hard earned resources on this particular hamburger that she was going to end up being satisfied. Well for a lot of you in the audience, and for a lot of your colleagues, convincing them that family engagement is important is, is key. And so this is just a summary of some of the data that we now have about the impact on the students. Now we also have data now on the impact on your ability to improve your schools and districts. And this is a book that was published in 2010 by The Chicago Consortium on School Research, the book is called, *Organizing Schools for Improvement, Lessons from Chicago*. Anthony Bryk is, was one of the leaders of this research. Twenty year longitudinal, qualitative and quantitative study about The Chicago Public Schools. And what they were looking for was answers to why some schools improve while others do not. Why is it that we have long term, you know, sort of chronic challenges at certain schools where no matter what the intervention is they don't seem to improve? And so they were trying to figure out well are there particular strategies, techniques, ingredients that sort of ensure the improvement of a school. And what they found out was that there are indeed five essential supports and so what Tony, how he wants you to visualize this is sort of a recipe. And that just like in a recipe of any kind, these ingredients work together, some act as accelerants, but there's, it's

not that there's a priority it's that they all have to be there and they all have to be functioning at once.

So they talk about leadership, the blue circle as the driver of the change. So that's, that person is sort of the conductor of the work. But that the other four pieces have to be there. And so you'll see that professional capacity is very important. So that's the staff. Do you have qualified staff? Quality staff and are they willing to learn? Do you have a learning community at the institution or the organization or the school? You also need to have parent and community ties. So there you have it. In these ingredients that these authors deemed as essential to improving a school like our family engagement and our community engagement. You also see there that it also has to have a student centered learning climate where the adults are focused on the kids. That everyone knows that we're here for the kids, that the curriculum is relevant to the kids in the building. Also instructional guidance, quality professional development. Lots of research now on what quality professional development looks like. All of these things working together have an impact on the instructional core. So that's the triangle you see in the purple box, that's the classroom, that's the relationship between the student and the teacher and the content.

So what's important about this research is the following: What we now know is that family and community engagement, they call it parent and community ties here, is an essential ingredient to whole school improvement. What they found is that if you take any of these pieces out the school does not improve. Now, what I like to emphasize here is that many times when I go districts, they'll say to me, well you know, we'll insert the family and community engagement piece after we focus on teaching and learning. We've got to improve instruction. They see this as a separate component. but what the Bryk research is showing us is that that is a mistake, to wait and to say well after we figure out what we're doing around teaching and learning we'll insert family engagement. Basically what they're saying is that without the family engagement piece, none of the other pieces are going to work. It's all a part of a recipe. So what I've been encouraging superintendents to think about is: How are you including family and community engagement in your whole district strategic plan? Where do you see it? How does it integrate with instruction? It's got to be a part of it. It can't be an add-on any longer. I don't know if we want to stop for a minute and maybe people have a few questions before I go on because I know that, how hard it is for folks to just sit there and I'm talking and talking. So I don't know if we want to stop for a minute, Marshall, and see if we could take some questions.

Marshall: Sure. One thing that's came, that's come up while you were talking...somebody inquired as to whether the PowerPoint was available in Spanish and there was actually an offer from one of the other participants that if it wasn't something that you had available in Spanish they offered to translate it as a volunteer. So...

Karen: Yeah, I know that some districts have, have gone ahead and translated it on their own. I'm not so sure which districts those have been, but if someone wanted to volunteer to go ahead and do that, that's fine with me.

Marshall: That's terrific, so what we'll do then is, Loretta, thank you very much for your offer. We will, we'll be sure that you get the PPT and then when you've had an opportunity to translate it we'll...Karen, before we put it up on the website would you like to have a look at it?

Karen: Yeah, that would be fine.

Marshall: Great. So we'll, we'll send it to Karen and then ultimately post it on the CADRE website with our other materials. There's a question about how do you get the family involved or recognize the encouragers.

Karen: Well we're going to talk in a minute about how we get the families involved. I was just wondering if there was any questions about the slides I've presented so far.

Marshall: Okay.

Karen: But we'll definitely, that's where I'm going next, is the how piece.

Marshall: There is, Angela would like to ask a question live. Angela would you press #6 to unmute? Are you there? So I think, Karen, what we should do, we've got some other chat questions coming in but why don't you go ahead with the presentation then we'll get to those at the end.

Karen: Okay. Alright. So now we've talked about the why family engagement is important. So now I'm, I want to talk about the how and what is it that participants should be thinking about in terms of trying to cultivate more effective partnerships between home and school. And so I mentioned to you that my colleagues and I, a few years back in 2007, put together a book called, Beyond the Bake Sale. And this is sort of a cookbook. We, it's specifically written for practitioners and for parents, for those of you doing the hard work of building effective partnerships between home school, home and school. And when we wrote the book I really was using my experience as Deputy Superintendent for family and community engagement in Boston to really help guide me in terms of what I thought people would want to read in the book and what kinds of materials and advice we should provide. And one of the things that I experienced when I was in Boston as a Deputy Superintendent was that when I asked my 145 principals what a partnership between home and school looked like in terms of what would I actually see. So if I walked into their building and I walked around and I talked to staff and I talked to parents what would I see in a school that was really effective when it came to partnering with families. And that experience helped us think about putting

together a rubric in Beyond the Bake Sale that would actually highlight what a partnership looked like but also what it, what it didn't look like.

Because I did find that some of my school leaders would say that they thought they had strong partnerships with parents but they didn't really have any benchmark, they didn't have anything as a guide to say, oh you know, oops, maybe we're not doing what we should do in terms of partnerships. So we put together a rubric. It goes from one to four and it starts out with what we would call sort of below basic practice and goes up to advanced practice. And I'm, I am also finding, I'm going to update my slide on what's happening in the field because now I'm also seeing that some states are integrating family and community engagement standards into their assessments for schools, school leaders and school staff. And some of them have actually used this rubric to get started on trying to identify what it would look like, what advanced practice would look like, what exemplary practice would look like.

So I want to run through the, the four assessments here so that you can see what we mean and also talk to you about sort of how schools and districts can move up the ladder in terms of strong practice around family engagement. So as I mentioned to you the rubric goes from one to four and this is, would be a one, and this is what we call below basic and this is what we refer to as a fortress school or a fortress district or a fortress organization, when it comes to working with families. And where core beliefs about families is that they, they don't care. Maybe the staff has tried many different strategies to engage parents, maybe they've sent mailings home, maybe they've made some phone calls but when families don't show up the attitude is, well we've tried everything and they just don't care. That's, that's the bottom line. Maybe the principal has a small group of families who've signed those Title I contacts every year. Some of these parents may no longer have children in the schools. These are all real quotes by the way, these are not made up quotes. These are quotes that Anne Henderson and I have collected over the years that we've heard from school and program staff or district staff about the families in their communities, or in their cities or their towns.

Teachers will say, you know, our job is teaching and learning. This family engagement stuff sounds like social work to us, we'll leave that to the guidance counselors, we'll leave that to the case workers, but engaging with families is not what we do. We teach. And when they're encouraged to share data on the schools or on students there's a pushback saying, you know our families, you know they're not, they're not educated, they're not well educated, they don't speak English and if we share this kind of information with them it's going to be intimidating to them and we don't want to intimidate them so we just don't think it's a good idea. A lot of times when I show examples of best practice the pushback I get from fortress schools is, well that's those parents, their parents are different from our parents so we don't think that our parents would be able to do that.

So very sort of deficit attitudes about the families and the communities. I had one experience where I had a school staff person say to me that their job was to inoculate the children from their families and their community. That she felt that was what the school should do because the community didn't value education. So, so you can see that that kind of core belief is really going to be problematic when you are attempting to build relationships with families because families can feel that attitude. I actually can feel that attitude when I walk into a building. And so one of the things that I always encourage people to do is to sit down with your staff and talk about what are our core beliefs around family engagement. Do we see families as being key, as we found in the Bryk research, to student achievement? Are we just here to sort of pacify our parents or to, to try to keep them out of our hair? Or do we really see them as an asset? So in a fortress school unfortunately, families are really seen as problems, and again not seen as having any real value to add to what happens in school. So this would be rated a one. A fortress school. And if you look closely at the picture you can see it does not look like a very welcoming place, there are sharks in the water; the door is up, not a welcoming environment at all.

So let's move up a little bit. You'll notice on the picture it looks a little bit more inviting. There's no sharks in the water but you're probably notice that the door is up. And this is a school we call a "come if we call" school. And so this would be basic practice. These are schools that, you know, they have their open houses. They're standard events for families. If they have workshops the workshops are planned by the staff because the staff have the attitude that they know what's best for the families and the kids so that they don't need to really involve families in creating or being involved in developing workshops. They've scheduled particular times families can come, families can come to the school. So they can come pick up on report card day and they may have computer assisted systems to get messages out to families. Now when I was in Boston and I presented this rubric to my principals they were very candid with me and they admitted that most of them were twos – come if we call – we, we say when parents can come, we expect them to show up then, we don't want them coming at any other time. We don't have any kind of policy for family visits outside of the designated dates and times that we have for families to come to our school. So it's very prescriptive. Very much school controlled. And as I said, these are, these are places that operate the sort of the mindset, don't call us, we'll call you. And a lot of times these places are about appeasing families, and again, keeping them out of their hair and not really, it's not really an active place where families are in the school and feeling like the school is a real place that welcomes them.

So, number three, now we're getting better. This is an open door school. So you see the door is down. This would be proficient practice around family engagement. So these are places that are having, you know, their parent-teacher conferences at least, at least twice a year, sometimes more. They actually have a committee that tries to plan their family engagement activities and that committee, that committee is an action team. Joyce Epstein talks about this a lot in her research. That action team includes some

parents and maybe some community members and school staff and they actually plan the family engagement activities for the year. These are places that are holding all kinds of parent events at least two or three times or three or four times a year. They actually have some kind of mechanism where families can raise issues at either school-site council or PTA/PTO, I know it's different depending on what region of the country you're in. But they have those setup so that families can address issues with the school staff and school leadership and then also the diversity of the school is recognized and that may be through events but hopefully more than that. Remember when I talked a little bit about how a student centered learning climate validates and is relevant to the students, validates their histories. This is what we mean. So it's not just feasts and festivals, but that the families actually and the students actually are seeing themselves from the curriculum. So now this looks pretty good. But there's some things missing. First of all, this is still pretty much a school centric dynamic where the schools are really in control of the engagement and the other problem with this, with this one, and it's not bad, is that you'll notice that everything is happening at the school. There's nothing happening in the community. You don't see sort of a, any kind of bi-directional relationship here between home and school where maybe staff are going into the community or going to families' homes. It's all families have to come to the school. And I can tell you from my research and from my experience that is problematic. Especially when you have a school that's had a reputation of poor communication with families. What has to happen is the staff has to be willing to go into the community.

And so that's what you're going to see here with advanced practice. And this is called a true partnership school. This is where first of all, families are seen as really key and important partners in improving educational outcomes. What you hear at places like this is that education is everybody's business. So from the custodian, to the secretaries, to the parents, to the community members. We're all in this together. We need each other to do school. To help our kids. These are places where they know that families are important because they want alignment between what's happening during the school day and what's happening at home and what's happening in the summer. So families are really seen as key partners.

What else do we see? All family engagement activities are connected to student learning. Now why should I have to emphasize that? I'm sure some of you may have had the experience when you've gone to an event at school and it has absolutely nothing to do with student learning. I've been pushing folks who, who do the open houses, who coordinate the open houses to really look at your open house. If your families aren't leaving your open house knowing what their child should know and be able to do at the end of that grade and, and having learned a new tip or a new skill of how to support that child then your open house is a wasted opportunity. You, you have most families show up to the open house. They're usually done the same way all the time. When I ask people why they tell me that's the way they've always done it. There's no rulebook that says that you have to do open houses the same way. Use it as an opportunity to welcome your families but to also fill them in on what your school goals

are, what you're trying to do and give them an activity that they can practice, that they can learn.

Family engagement is, is something that improves through mastery and it's not through osmosis, it's through mastery and so what you want to do is you want to make sure that you give your, your parents a chance to have fun and practice a new skill. There's a clear process for resolving problems that staff and families have worked on together. Sometimes when we talk about an open door school or a partnership school people will say well does that mean that parents can come in at any time that they want. Well yes, but there's a protocol. There, there's norms. So that maybe the school and the families...I saw one where the school staff and families had sat down and figured out, okay we're going to have an open door policy, families come to the front office they're greeted and recognized by staff in a very friendly way. Some of the, some of the problems between school and home starts with that central office, I'm sorry with the office staff not treating families with respect. So you want to make sure that gets changed and gets addressed. But that there's a sign in sheet. Families get a name card that says very important parent. Sometimes the child's name is listed underneath it. They then can go into the classroom. There's a protocol where parents sit in the back of the classroom can observe but not interrupt. And then they can write down their questions or call the teacher later with questions and the teacher guarantees that they'll get an answer back within forty-eight hours. So these are the different kinds of things that you should do what's appropriate to your school. But this tells parents, you see me as a partner. You see me as a partner.

Parent networks are valued and cultivated. You know, one of the reasons that many families aren't engaged in their children's education is because they don't know what to do. And a lot of how we learn comes from our, through our social network. Many of you know the term social capital. Well social capital is basically the sum of all the networks that we're involved in. So from our religious organizations, maybe fraternities and sororities, our bowling clubs, our reading book clubs, the people who we may do laundry with every week if we're going to laundromats. These are our social networks. And parents learn from each other about school and school policy and you know what their children should know and be able to do. So what we want to do in our school communities is actually actively cultivate those parent networks. That's what's happening, again I mentioned Parent University. A lot of families who had never talked with each other before are now leading and talking and learning together. So you want to try to cultivate that.

Families are actively involved in decision making. So again, there's a protocol for that so that families can be involved. And then the staff are going into the community. So this is an example. Some...a growing trend are parent-teacher home visits. And for those of you who are interested in that there's a wonderful website, the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project. It's out of Sacramento, California. Carrie Rose is the Executive Director of that program and this is where teachers do home visits and the visit is not a visit to

check up on families. In fact teachers are encouraged not to bring any paper or pencils with them. And the visit is to say, you are our partner, we value you what you know about your child. The first question they ask is what should our, what are your hopes and dreams for your child and how can I be you or your child's first teacher and how can I take what you know about your child and use it in my classroom to make sure I'm an excellent teacher for your student.

So these are the ways that...some of the things that we're seeing now in the field. We're starting to chronicle some of these best practices. I can actually provide later a list of some of these websites and things like that that you can take a look at. And one of the other things that's happening in the field is we're starting to get a little bit of a better idea on measuring. So if you actually put some of these practices into place...So say you start to do home visits, you're cultivating parent networks, you're starting to do more around parent workshops, you're starting to make sure that all your family activities, from your open houses to your parent teacher conferences, you know re-purpose what you're already doing. People sometimes say to me, this sounds like a lot of work and we're already overwhelmed with, you know, the common core and all these other pieces.

I'm not really asking you to do more work. I'm actually asking you to repurpose what you're already doing because I would bet that you if you're a school person listening to this conversation you already have probably ten to fifteen events during the year mapped out for families. So starting with your open houses, your parent teacher conferences, you know, some other type of workshops, re-purpose those so that they're partnership activities where you're listening to parents and you're having conversations with parents and it's not just one way where parents are having fun, where activities are designed so that if I come to your district I can ask the question of any parent, regardless of their background, what is it that the child should know and be able to do at the end of this school year and they would be able to tell me at least three things. That's, that's what I'm challenging you to do, is to make sure you're families know that and that they also are learning ways that they can help support that learning and school improvement.

So I'm going to ask that the...I want to show you a website that has been recently put up and this was the result of a partnership between Survey Monkey – yes, Survey Monkey – and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The Survey Monkey people came to us and said, you know, something must be happening in the field of family engagement because more and more districts are starting to try to create their own surveys to measure family engagement or increases in family engagement and they said the surveys are pretty bad. And this is coming from a couple of people on the Survey Monkey staff who are quantitative researchers and a psychometrician. So what we did was, we took my expertise in the area of family engagement practice and combined that with the expertise of Hunter Gehlbach who is a psychometrician and one of our fantastic faculty here who is very knowledgeable about survey design. We hired

some of our really smart doctoral students and we came up with a survey that you can use to help you to measure family engagement in your district.

And so what I want to do is if we go down to, these are the seven areas that you can measure, so you can see, do we, for example, say you put together a program and an intervention and you want to know well what difference has it made. You can take a look at these seven, what we call constructs, but they're basically seven areas that you could measure. So for example, parental support. You may do a year's worth of workshops, or maybe you give your parents this portion of the questionnaire at the beginning of the year. What do you see in terms of improvements? Maybe you're going to see changes in how you've enabled families to actually help their children at home. Child behaviors - maybe you, you want to see whether or not this intervention has had an impact, this family engagement intervention has had an impact on child behaviors. On parent engagement. Have parents shifted? Are they more engaged in more of those roles that we talked about earlier. Parent self-efficacy. Has their confidence increased in being able to help their child? The confidence piece is huge in terms of parent engagement. Parents, when they're feeling intimidated and they feel that oh my goodness, you know, I don't speak English or I didn't graduate from college. These people at the school I don't want them to see that. I'm going to hold back. You know, maybe you've done some work on that. You've built parent networks, parents are feeling more empowered. You want to be able to measure that. So here's a tool that would help you do that. School climate is the big one right now. Lots of people wanted to measure school climate and then we also see school program fit and parent roles and responsibilities. So how do they view their roles? Remember those roles we discussed? As well as teacher roles when it comes to different aspects of their child's schooling. Now, what's great about this tool is that these, this survey has been tested, so it's reliable and valid. It's based on the research. So we've done all that hard work for you. So again, you know, if you have questions about this, there's actually contact information here if you want to use this in your district or at your school, we've been trying to encourage districts to use it so we get, you get, you have more of a, more numbers of parents that would be participating and using this survey. That's always helpful. But I just wanted to make sure I brought this up so that you can see that the field is actually trying to respond to questions about measurement of family engagement. So I'm going to stop and at this time try to answer questions that you may have.

Marshall: So, just a couple of comments before we, and we have a number of comments and questions that we've gotten. First, I just want to say that was absolutely terrific, Karen. I want to assure you that not only do you speak well to teenagers but you also do a very, very good job of speaking to old people.

Karen: [laughter] You're going to be in trouble for saying...you notice I would never say old people?

Marshall: I know. I'm speaking about myself there. I don't know if there's anyone else on the call that would similarly characterize themselves but I want to say that you sure did speak to me. The other thing is, just a note of context from the CADRE perspective. I really appreciated where you talked under partnership schools about the clear open process for resolving problems and many of you will be familiar with the CADRE Continuum that ranges from prevention, dispute prevention activities, all the way up to very adversarial dispute resolution activities and we added to the CADRE Continuum several years ago positive parent engagement and our thinking on that is that really to the extent that schools make meaningful early investments in cultivating positive relationships with families that they, they can make a deposit in a relational bank, if you will. And that if at some point in time there's a disagreement between, between families and schools in the future that if you've got a goodwill relational deposit you're in a position to draw down from that and the possibility of really having a meaningful collaborative discussion is enhanced. And very different than the kind of experience that families and schools have if they're first encounter is one that's centered around a problem, a concern or an issue. So I just this, the work that you're doing around parent engagement really is very, very connected to the work that we're doing around dispute resolution. So with that, we've gotten a number of comments and questions and I'm going to just work our way through them from the top. So, Pamela asked if you could say the book and author that you referred to earlier regarding advocates.

Karen: That's Rudy Crew and the book is called, Only Connect. C-O-N-N-E-C-T. And it's about his experiences being chancellor, I think in New York and Miami. But he has a whole chapter on what he calls demand parents. And basically he's saying that you know, we should not be afraid of cultivating advocacy in families especially families in some of our distressed communities, families who are marginalized, families who are overlooked. You know, in our more privileged communities, obviously, a lot of our families know how to be demand parents. You know, Michelle Brooks, who is the current assistant superintendent for family and community engagement says, you know, there's a difference between demand parents and demanding parents. And, you know, you're going to have both wherever you go or at least you should be trying to cultivate more of the demand parent side. Because again those are the families who are going to advocate for the right things. They're going to hold the school system's feet to the fire. You know, in any environment you always need that push from somebody, and so you know, she's basically saying you should not be afraid of parents, you know, knowing their rights, understanding how school works because those are the parents who are going to not only advocate for their own child but if you really talk to them about what you're trying to do in terms of all school improvement they will rally up and try to do whatever they can to help you. Just a quick story. One of my friends, her name is Claire Crane, she's a principal in Linn, Massachusetts, of a pre-K to eight school. She has a family center right by her office. When she first got to the school her teachers thought she was crazy to put the family center in right by her office but she said this is my way of always knowing what's going on in the community. And she had heard that the city of Linn was going to abolish all day kindergarten. And she went into

the family center and there were about six or seven families there and they you know, they had a computer there and they had information about services, housing, healthcare, all that. And she said, you know I heard a rumor that the city is going to abolish all day kindergarten. And the parents just looked at her and they said, okay Claire, thank you for the information, have a great day. And those parents organized a march so that two weeks later two-hundred families showed up at city hall and all-day kindergarten was preserved. So this is why, you know, you do want your families to be advocates because they can really be advocating in a way that sometimes we can't when we're actually working for the school department or for the district.

Marshall: Great. And then, the next question from Missouri - How do you get the family involved or recognize the encouragers?

Karen: Well, first of all, getting families engaged goes back to the whole relationship piece that I was talking about before. You know, families get messages from schools. Let's, let's be honest. They get messages from school that basically says don't come. And, or they've gotten them from other schools. Maybe not even your school. But they're history with school has been possibly one where they were disrespected. They weren't validated. Particularly for our poor parents, our parents of color, these are the experiences that they unfortunately have had with our institutions. And so in order to get, get beyond that and to get parents connected and wanting to be engaged you're going to have to go out and let them know that you are interested in working with them as partners. And so that may mean getting up and going into the communities. Maybe having meetings at a community center. I have had principals who have gone to, you know, to the mosques, to the synagogues, to the churches, maybe do a little fifteen minute presentation to say you know we need you. We can't do this work by ourselves. I have another principal who does every once a month, he does a coffee at a local sort of, he usually goes to places like Olive Garden or, or to Denny's and he'll ask the management if he can sort of set up a table and parents can come or sometimes he even does it at the supermarket. So you, you've got to go into the community to reach your families. Especially if your school has, unfortunately, had a history of negative relationships between home and school. When families see that you're willing to come into the community, when you're willing to meet them where they're at, that's the beginning of building a trusting relationship. And I saw someone had mentioned the work that Tony Bryk did on relational trust. Basically the bottom line is, no relationship no engagement. It's not going to happen. If you, if you start your family engagement programs by sending out, you know, flyers, it's, it's just not going to work because the flyer is no substitute from you, from that eye to eye, from that human contact. And that's what it's going to take. It's going to be that human contact that you know, smile, that letting people know that, you know, you respect them. Then families will start to be engaged. Then you can start to, you know, families will then get very interested in well tell me what I can do to support my child and then you can do workshops around, okay we've learned that encouragement is really important. I was at a workshop one time where the families did role plays with one another. So one parent did sort of the

old way that she used to talk to her child which was, you know, you don't know anything and oh, you know, you're being silly and dumb to okay, okay you made a mistake, let's try again. Again, if you want people to learn new skills, especially adults, the way we learn is to practice. So, again, bottom line, relationship, relationship, relationship. That's got to be that relationship of respect and then when you, you get that relational trust then parents will be more open to learn new things about how to support their child and the whole school improvement.

Marshall: Thank you, Karen. Just to punctuate the point that you just made, one of the later comments came from Loretta Zayas Revai who said I strongly believe that the education community throughout our land has no respect for minority populations. So I think that the issues you just spoke to regarding relationship and respect are really, closely relate to the point that Loretta made.

Marshall: So we...

Karen: I want to try to rapel the question because I get this one all the time. Well, one of the things that I've learned is that when you start engaging families the work gets easier. So this, this sort of concept of having so many other things on your plate. First of all, family engagement is probably already on your plate because I'm sure your school does already have family engagement events. So like I said, you have your parent-teacher conferences, you have your open houses, you have your curriculum nights. What I'm encouraging people to do is to repurpose those events so that they're more welcoming, that they're more respectful to families and maybe for example, we see that some teachers, what they've done is they've taken their PD time and they've swapped that out to do home visits. So that's how the school takes time that's already been allotted for professional development, and maybe even professional development on family engagement and they're now using that to allow their teachers to maybe make phone calls home or to do home visits. So it's not about adding on, it's about repurposing. That's the point. Repurposing. And then what I've noticed is that what we are learning is that many of the schools that actually cultivate active partnerships with parents, and I mean partnerships where 80, 90% of the families are engaged in some way shape or form, the teachers all report, my job has gotten easier. I love teaching. I love coming to school every day. My parents have my back. My parents are my support system. I've heard these testimonials, over and over and over again. So, I think that, you know, if the attitude of the school is this, this is in addition to, I think that's the wrong attitude. It is how do we take what we're already doing and doing it better? It's working smarter not harder.

Marshall: You know, why we're working our way through the comments and questions Karen we're going to put up for those of you on the call a couple of questions that we'd appreciate you taking a moment to answer and then we'll continue to work through the comments and questions then I'll have some announcements at the end. So do you

want to...it sounds like you're into the questions. Do you want to just take them in the order that you prefer, Karen? Or do you want to...

Karen: No. You go ahead. I only see, I'm only, I'm only catching the ones that are at the very end so some of...you may have seen some earlier that you want to address.

Marshall: Okay. And just a second, I'll get that document back up. Okay, so Katrina Brown asked: What about promoting involvement at the classroom level when you have a child with special needs? What is the role of the teacher and family?

Karen: Well, I'm pretty much talking about engaging all families. So, I'm not sure if this is, if this is sort of specifically for kids with special needs. I mean we owe the special needs community a round of thanks because they're the ones, you know, sort of thirty years ago that really started pushing for more active recognition of families as key players in their children's education. What I would say is that teachers need professional development in this area. Unfortunately, and my colleagues and I are really trying to work on this now, a lot of the teacher preparation programs do not have any robust classroom time or opportunity for teachers to learn about family engagement and in fact the MetLife survey, I think it was either the 2005 or 2007 survey, showed that teachers feel the least equipped to engage families. And that was the topic that was number one in terms of them not feeling prepared. So we really need to do a better job of both pre-service and in-service around, in this area, not just with teachers but school leaders and also front office staff. But I would encourage you to be thinking about, you know, maybe even just having that conversation at your sites about okay, if we want to improve family engagement what are our core beliefs about our families. Do we believe that all families can be engaged in their child's education and want the best for them? Do we believe that families can be our partners? Do we believe that we need to reach out and be responsible for building those relationships? Do we believe that families, you know, should be active decision makers? You also kind of go through that, that soul searching process because, you know, our espoused beliefs are not always our theories, not always what we do. So you know, we say want family engagement but we don't often do it. And sometimes it's not because we don't want to, it's because we really don't know how.

Marshall: Yeah. You know, related to that point, Holly Pauwe said: It seems to me that family engagement is even more crucial within the field of special education. This is often an area where family engagement is not supported to a larger degree. Really involved families are not seen in a favorable light. They are bothersome.

Karen: Right. Right. That's unfortunately when you look at that fortress school picture, that's how families are seen. But I also, again I want to emphasize the fact that what I've seen is that when there are schools where family engagement is embraced as a key strategy for all families, is where I've, I've interviewed special needs families that say that the attitude about the staff has changed because it's for all families now. It's not

just seen as something that's for a few families with a particular designation. And that, and then, then what happens is that the families who do have children with special needs are also involved in a lot of groups and events with families of children who may be in the regular ed community and together they work to improve the school. So I do want to emphasize that, you know we, schools that have been really successful at this are ones that have risen, you know sort of risen the, or, or improved for everyone and not just for a particular community.

Marshall: Great. Deb Sampson: Sometimes I wonder about parent and community being put together. My experience says both are important but what you do for each is different. How do you handle that?

Karen: Well that's true. That's why this particular webinar is about family engagement. I mean I've mentioned community but that's not, that has not been the emphasis of this particular webinar. That's a whole other piece. A lot of some of what I said applies to your partnerships, your community partnerships in terms of the respect factor and making sure that, you know, you're going to not just the usual suspects when it comes to your partners. But the other thing I want to emphasize, just quickly, is that your community partnerships should also be linked to learning. So remember on the, on the slide where we talked about partnership schools, that all your family engagement activities are linked to learning or linked to what your students should know and be able to do. The same thing with your community partnerships. When I was deputy superintendent some of my schools had what I would call partnershipitis. And they were just signing on with all these different companies and organizations and half the time the principal didn't know who was coming in and out of her building and when she went to all her partners and said you know here's our school goals, here's what we're interested in, here's what we want our students to know and be able to do, how can you help us and they really assessed each one of those partnerships or how they were going to get them to where they wanted to be on those school goals a lot of those partnerships fell by the wayside and then she had, you know, partnerships that were really focused on student achievement and school improvement. So, but you're right, they're not the same, there's a lot of, you know, components that are the same when it comes to building partnerships but it's a different kettle of fish.

Marshall: Great. I'm going to have one, one final question here and then I've got a couple of announcements to make. From Katrina Brown: What can parents that want more involvement with the school, especially at the classroom level do? How can they advocate on behalf of their child so the child makes maximum gains with regards to students in special education that need that strong communication between the adults that spend the most time with them?

Karen: Well I would say that, you know, first of all working individually is always tough. So if, you know, parents want to come together as a group and talk and then maybe go to the staff. I mean the main thing I always say is that common partnership, come

saying, you know, we want to work with you. And the same for teachers and school staff and others to say we want to work with you. Because that's part of the problem is that a lot of times the institutions come in and want to, you know, do things to the community and not with the community. And that's a real problematic dynamic. So it is tough. You know, one of the things that I have learned in my work in this field is that a lot of school districts focus on building the capacity of families. So they'll focus on you know parent workshops and building parents together and you know for families of students with special needs, you know, training them on their rights and, you know, how school policy works. But they haven't done the same kind of capacity building with their staff and what ends up happening is you end up with disequilibrium because you have maybe a cadre of families who really have learned, who really want to get engaged, but then you have a bunch of schools that are maybe fortress or come if we call. So you have to do both. And that's what I'm working on with the US Department of Education. A dual capacity framework saying that you know you don't want to just have this mentality that we need to fix our parents. It's got to be that we want to try to build the capacity of both, of everybody in the district to work together in partnership to support student achievement and school improvement.

Marshall: Wow! Well, Karen, this has been absolutely terrific. I...you certainly have lived up to the advanced billing and reputation. It's been a fascinating webinar. My...I have a couple of quick announcements. First I want to tell you that today's presentation...CADRE's funded by the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs and I'm personally, as you can imagine, delighted to report that we received a call from the department of education yesterday and CADRE has been re-funded. So we will begin October 1 our sixteenth year as the National Center on Dispute Resolution and so we are very, very excited about that and look forward to continuing these webinars well into the future.

We want to let you know, we have a, a webinar that's scheduled September the 11th. It's really not as broadly applicable but will be, we think, of special interest to the people who work in the Part C early dispute resolution systems. It's a webinar on customizable hearing officer training resources that focus on the differences between Part B of IDEA and Part C so that hearing officers can be more prepared to hear Part C related matters. So please join us for that webinar. Because we weren't certain about funding we have not yet booked our more general interest webinars for the future but we have two speakers that we will be approaching and that we're very excited about and that we believe that you will find very interesting and enjoyable. So more information on that will be forthcoming.

We also want to draw your attention, if you're not aware that the Office of Special education programs recently released Questions and Answers on IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution Procedures. This is an extensive document that has, that will answer many of the questions you may have had on this topic and so we encourage you to visit that resource. We also expect to be announcing and possibly hosting webinars in the future

from staff from the Office of Special Education Programs that will go into more detail regarding the procedures and the information in the Q&A. So with that then I want to thank you all so very much for joining us today and again to thank Dr. Mapp for an absolutely superb presentation. We'll be continuing to provide you with webinars in the future. Hang out on the CADRE website. Please make it your, your homepage and that way you'll be sure to be kept abreast of what it is that we're doing. So again thank you very, very much and Karen you should know that the survey results and the comments have all been extremely positive. So thank you all very much. I hope you enjoy the remainder of your summer. Bye.

Karen: Bye, bye everybody.