Is Great Teaching Enough?
The Impact of School Community Connections on the Achievement Gap
Supplementary Information
October 27, 2008

Texts

The Essential Supports for School Improvement (2006) by Penny Bender Sebring, Elaine Allensworth, Anthony S. Bryk, John Q. Easton and Stuart Luppescu.
http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/content/publications.php?pub_id=86

Organizing Schools for Improvement (forthcoming in 2009) by Anthony S. Bryk, Penny Bender Sebring, Elaine Allensworth, Stuart Luppescu and John Q. Easton. University of Chicago Press.

So Much Reform So Little Change (2008) by Charles Payne. Harvard Education Press.

The Five Essential Supports

These are the organizational elements that characterized Chicago elementary schools that improved student learning substantially between 1990 and 2005.

Coherent, ambitious instruction: This is the coordination of subject matter across grades and building more in-depth knowledge over the duration of schooling. Instruction encompasses basic skills and cultural knowledge and developing students' abilities to apply these skills and this knowledge to novel and challenging problems.

Professional capacity refers to the quality of the faculty and staff recruited to the school, their base beliefs and values about change, the quality of ongoing professional development, and the capacity of a staff to work together

Parent-community ties involve active outreach to make school a welcoming place for parents and to strengthen connections to other local institutions.

Student-centered learning climate. This is a safe, welcoming, stimulating and nurturing environment focused on learning for all students.

School leadership as the driver for change. Principals must be strategic, focused on instruction and inclusive of others in the leadership work.

Summary Statistics on the Racial-SES Classification of School Communities

	Truly Disadvantaged	African-American low-SES	African-American moderate SES	Predominantly Minority	Predominantly Latino	Racially Diverse	Racially Integrated
Number of Schools	*46*	*95*	*74*	*45*	*39*	*34*	*57*
% African-American	100%	99%	99%	34%	3%	21%	14%
% Latino	0%	1%	1%	61%	93%	56%	35%
% White	0%	0%	0%	4%	4%	17%	40%
SES*	-1.9	-0.6	0.4	-0.3	-0.3	0.5	0.8
% Low-Income students in school	96%	90%	83%	93%	94%	86%	70%
Male unemployment rate in block group	64%	46%	32%	29%	24%	24%	22%
Median family income in block group	$9,480	$19,385	$33,413	$23,293	$23,381	$33,156	$37,350
Percent of families below the poverty line in block group	70%	38%	14%	30%	25%	17%	7%

*The SES indicator was standardized on a sample of 460 schools.

Sources: Data on students' race, ethnicity, and percentage eligible for free and reduced-price lunch were supplied by CPS. Using school address and students' addresses, we located schools and students' neighborhoods in 1990 census block groups, and from these we obtained estimates of the proportion of male residents not employed, median family income, and percentage of families below the poverty line.

Social Capital

Social capital is the quality of the social relationships in communities that shapes their collective capacity to solve problems. We differentiate between **bonding** and **bridging** social capital. Bonding social capital permits groups to build solidarity and achieve common goals. Bridging social capital links people to others who are somehow different than they are, but who may have valuable information or assets.

Data Sources for the Study of the Essential Supports

Surveys of students, teachers. To measure the essential supports in each elementary school, we drew on teacher and student surveys conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, University of Chicago. We relied especially on teacher and student surveys from the

winter-spring of 1994, and supplemented these surveys with information from the 1991 (teachers) and 1992 (principal) surveys; and with survey data from 1997 through 2005. The surveys collected detailed information about teachers' professional work, including instructional practices, their opportunities for continued learning, and the development of professional collaboration and community. These surveys also explored teachers' perceptions of the school environment, their participation in school governance, and the involvement of parents and community in school life. The student surveys inquired about students' experiences in school, their motivation and engagement with learning, their educational and work aspirations, their perceptions of the school environment, and their relationships with teachers. Students were also asked to furnish their views about classroom instruction. Depending on the year, between 265 and 400 elementary schools participated in the surveys.

Outcome data. The outcome measures in this study were based on annual individual student test scores in reading and mathematics on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) from 1990 to 1996. We calculated the amount students learned each year and whether these learning gains increased over time. In addition, replication analyses were carried out using the ITBS from 1997-2005.

School administrative records. We obtained administrative records from the CPS Comprehensive Student Information System. These records contained basic registration information about students, such as birth date, race, gender, home address, school attended within CPS, and grade level. In addition, these records included transitions students made from grade to grade and school to school.

In-depth case studies of two schools. These cases detail the stories of two schools that were located about a mile apart from one another. One eventually improved student outcomes substantially, but the other did not.

Other data. We also drew on the U.S. Census, public aid data, Chicago public housing data, and crime statistics from the Chicago Police Department. We were fortunate to be able to take advantage of two other innovative research endeavors occurring in Chicago during the 1990s. First, through the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN), we gained access to unique information about the 363 micro-neighborhoods that comprise the city of Chicago, based on interviews, surveys, and videotapes collected by PHDCN. This information provided real depth for our analysis of the social resources in different Chicago's school communities. The project followed some 7,000 individuals and 80 communities in a coordinated effort to study the many intricate developmental pathways toward social competence and antisocial behavior. See www.icpsr.umich.edu/PHDCN/about.html.

Second, through collaboration with the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, we gained access to their extensive longitudinal data base on the public social services provided to all children and families in the city of Chicago. These data proved extremely helpful as we sought to examine the concentration of students living in exceptional circumstances in various Chicago school communities and the effects that this might have on a school's capacity to improve.