Bridging The Gap Between Caregivers and Educators

Kirstie Feng

Myrna Ordona

TELL-3C

Table of Contents

Introduction

Full Day Kindergarten Guide

This transition [to school] is as much a social-emotional issue as it is an academic one. Making friends — for children and parents — is an integral part of this transition.

Strong family-school-community relationships can make transitions easier. These relationships are strengthened by ongoing communication and valuing the roles of all the adults in children's lives: parents, extended families, local community members, teachers, school principals, and other educational personnel (teacher-librarians, teaching assistants, etc.).

Effective communication and collaborative relationships that support children's vertical and horizontal transitions contribute to their social and emotional well-being and academic success, throughout their school years and beyond.

Introduction

Why is community important?

Gaitan: Culture, literacy, and power in family-community-school-relationships

3 major principles to connect to community:

1. How are people communicating to each other?
   a. Languages spoken at home
   b. Forms of media used to send info (newsletters, e-mails etc)
   c. Quality of information itself, who does it pertain to
2. Culturally, are educators literate about the community's practices?
   a. What is valued? In the school, in the neighbourhood
   b. What are the power dynamics? Economically? Politically?
3. How are people participating?
   a. Does everyone have access? Availabilities, language offerings
   b. Are needs being met? Is what you're implementing what your community needs?

Introduction

What should teachers keep in mind?

- It is a collective process
- Culture is always changing
- Your role as the teacher is to be malleable

The emphasis is not on "Who's in charge?" but rather on "How can we get things done?"' (Blank et al, 2006 p. 8)

…because its all about the Children!

	Bridging	Buffering
Family and Interagency collaboration	Welcome and Manage Partnerships	Minimize disruptions
Full-Service Schools	Institutionalise partnerships	Prevent increased bureaucracy and inefficiencies
Full-Service Community schools	Democratise governance	Manage conflicting perspectives
Community Development Model	Join neighbourhood coalitions	Avoid overly ambitious commitments and burn-out

Valli p12. Leadership's bridging/buffering tensions in partnership models.

Introduction

What is Community Development?

- It is place based instead of school based
- Views community transformation holistically and reciprocally

Main components:

(a) the conditions of distressed communities must be changed for the educational and developmental outcomes of students to improve

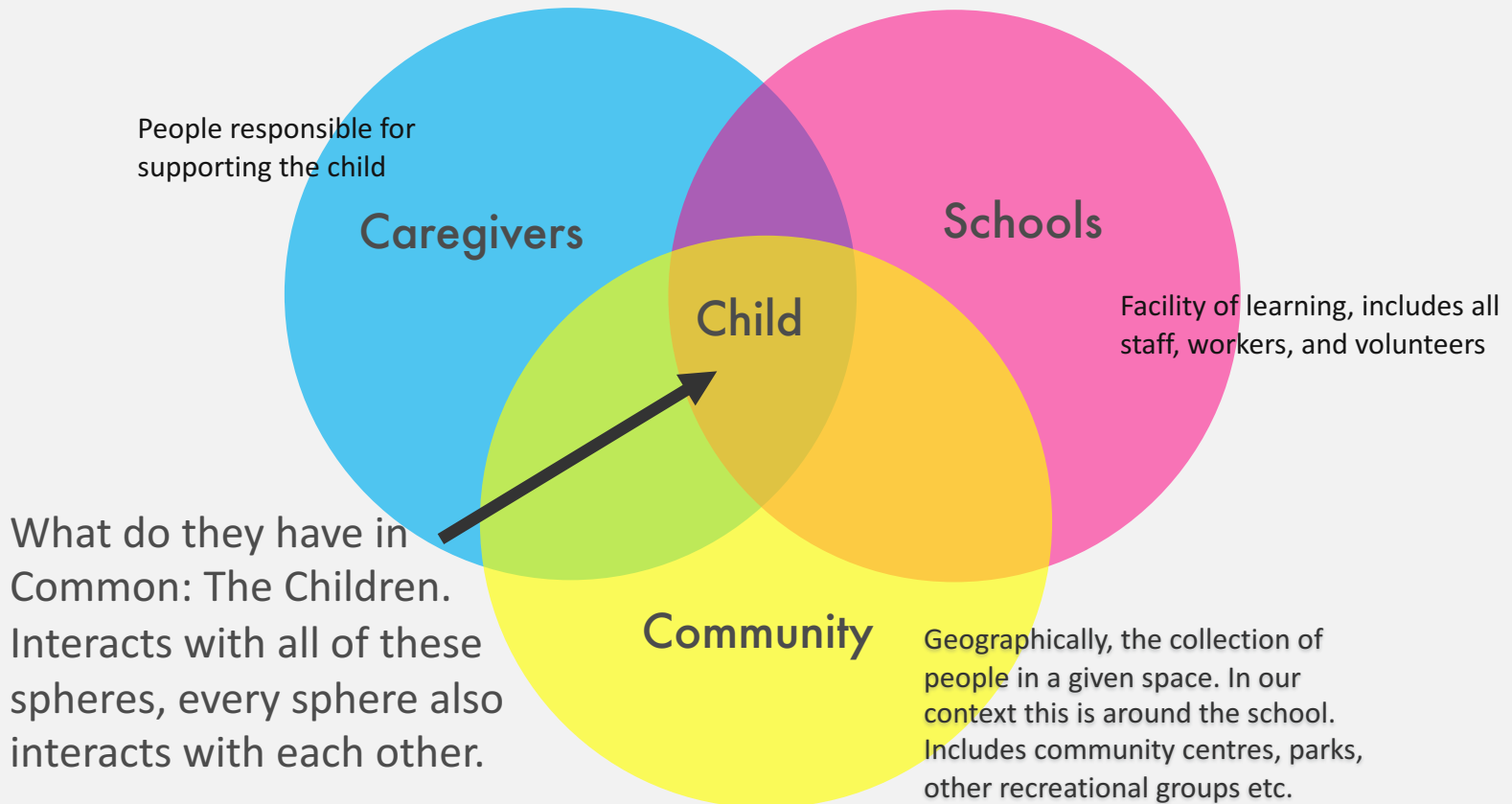(b) thriving, sustainable communities need high-quality neighbourhood schools.

The essential components of a community's capacity to enact change:

- ✓ Leadership development
- ✓ Community power
- ✓ Social capital

(Gold, 2004)

6

Introduction

Who are the participants?

People responsible for supporting the child

Caregivers

Schools

Child

Facility of learning, includes all staff, workers, and volunteers

What do they have in Common: The Children. Interacts with all of these spheres, every sphere also interacts with each other.

Community

Geographically, the collection of people in a given space. In our context this is around the school. Includes community centres, parks, other recreational groups etc.

7

The Case

You've landed a job as a kindergarten classroom teacher in an ethnically, economically, linguistically and culturally diverse neighbourhood.

When you stepped into your school a couple of days ago, a young mother was in the office registering her children.

The mother looked you up and down and said, "When my son was at this level, all they did was play. How are you going to make sure my daughter learns to read and write and add and subtract?"
"I, uh, well…please come to the *Meet the Teacher Night* in September," you replied. "I'll share my plans then."

"Start out with getting to know your kids and building your classroom community."

After a brief introduction, Sam tells you he's meeting with a few members of the Musqueam Nation to plan a school event for next week.

Looking At The Issue

What are the barriers and possible solutions to bridging the gap between caregivers and educators?

-building a community
-caregiver and educator relationship

The Causes of Disconnect

What are some of the barriers that cause the gap between caregivers and educators specifically?

Communicative

- Language barrier
- Use of jargon
- Limited or no communication at all

Ideological

- Parental expectations vs. educators goals
- The value of school itself
- The roles expected of each other
- Misaligned focus of the common factor, the child

The Causes of Disconnect

Language Barrier

How can caregivers and educators communicate if they do not speak the same language?

Caregivers may be unable to speak English, or whatever the L1 language is in the school.

According to Gaitan (2012), parents in Latino communities feel disempowered because of their limited English language skills and their limited knowledge of the education system. (p. 305)

The Causes of Disconnect

Use of Jargon

"So, we're agreed then?"
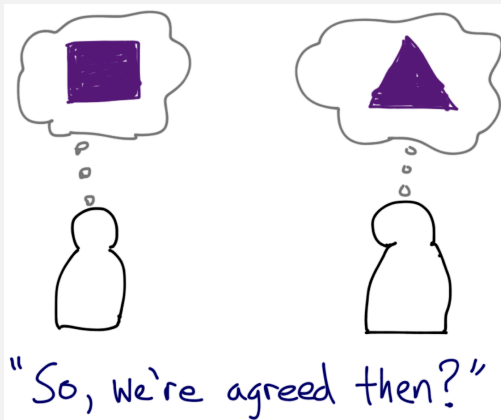
Educators may use language that caregivers and community members do not understand, whether it be terminology or acronyms.

Imagine you are meeting your child's teacher for the first time and they say this to you:

"Aligned instruction with buy-in by highly qualified teachers for authentic inquiry- based learning and student engagement in professional learning communities will produce 21st Century skills in our youngsters." (Latta, 2013)

12

The Causes of Disconnect

Limited Communication

Simply put, very little communication is established between any of the three spheres.

It could be just by choice. Joyce Epstein (2010) explains that schools "might conduct only a few communications and interactions with families and communities, keeping the three spheres [school, family, community]…relatively separate" (p. 82).

The Causes of Disconnect

Caregivers Values vs. Educators Goals

In response to the issue of play and academic skills in the case:
According to research:
-educators focus on the "independent learning of various developmental domains"
-while mothers focus on "adult guided learning of curricula in preparation school"
(Colliver, 2016, p.4-5)

"In non-technologically advanced societies, anthropological research suggests mothers do no consider play as a means for learning" (Roopnarine, 2011)

Who values what?
"mothers value literacy and numeracy six to eight times more than educators"
"Other studies show that mothers rank academic skills as more important than any other skill, while educators rank them second last."

With mothers, there is doubt that play will "lead to the learning that will 'get children ready for school'
(Colliver, 2016, p.4-5)

14

Bridging the Gap

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WK8dUmauwTE

Bridging the Gap

Use creative forms of communication
"Failure to communicate effectively accounts for many conflicts in parent and school or community partnerships."

➤ **Blogs:** With technology all around us and keeping in mind the proper protocols for producing a class web blog, this can invite caregivers to see and read on the activities of the class. Moreover, they can allow them to "feel more connected to their child's education." (Powell, 2012, p. 24)

➤ **Newsletters:** A print equivalent of a blog and to consider for those who do not have access to technology. This could also include some housekeeping information like important dates, upcoming school trips, etc.

➤ **Weekly/Monthly Reports (individual):** To inform the caregiver how their child is doing in the classroom and highlighting some achievements or contributions that the student has made.

16

Bridging the Gap

The <u>community</u> can serve as an excellent resource to bring together families and schools.

As show in the excerpt below from an interview (Shillady, 2014) with an elementary school principal, the community can give cultural and linguistic support:

One lesson we learned pretty quickly is that just putting out a flyer inviting families to come isn't enough. We never met attendance goals with this method. Then we realized just how important it is to personally reach out to families. This brings me to my earlier point about being part of the community. Making connections and building relationships is how you get families in the door. Communicating with a population that speaks so many languages can be challenging. Fortunately our parent–community coordinator provides Spanish interpretation and translation as needed. We also provide both English and Spanish translations of all written communication sent home to families. (p. 48)

17
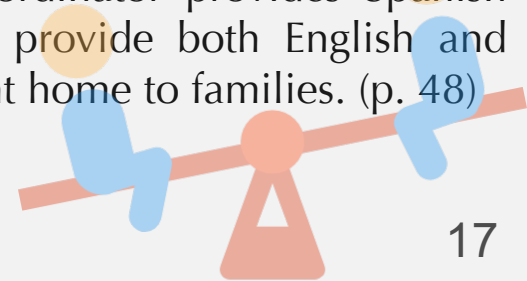
Bridging the Gap

Using the community as an enhancement to children's learning which opens up opportunities for caregiver involvement.

Field trips, for example not only takes learning outside the classroom, but it allows for "improved critical thinking and problem solving skills, greater personal efficacy and leadership development, or enhanced social responsibility and career opportunities." (Claiborne et. al, 2016, retrieved from https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-outside-the-classroom/)

And with school activities like field trips, opportunities such as volunteering, touring and leading become available to caregivers.

18
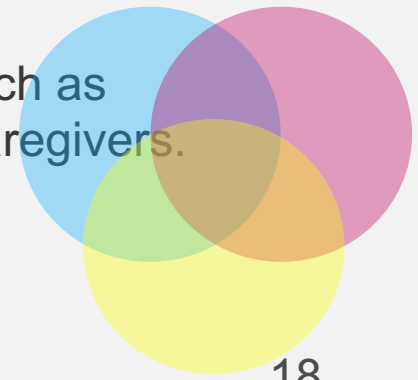
Bridging the Gap

Overlap of all three spheres are key to a successful partnership, and most importantly, to the success of a child's overall development..

As Epstein reports , "frequent interactions between schools, families, and communities, more students are more likely to receive common messages from various people about the importance of school, of working hard, of thinking creatively, of helping one another, and of staying in school."
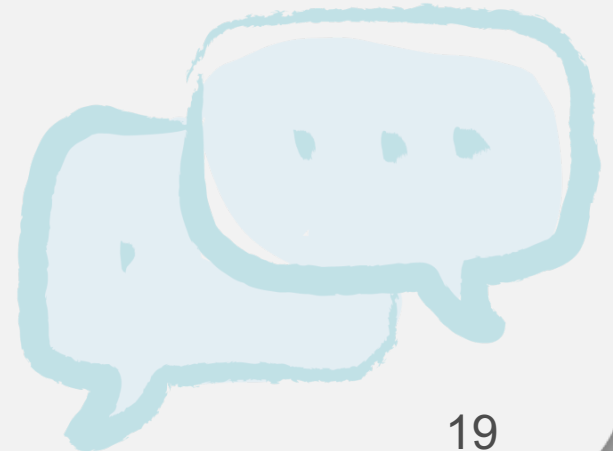
Let's Critique…quickly…

Critique your given school event

- Strengths and weaknesses
- Do they relate to the three spheres?
- Concerns?
- Improvements?

This activity would be useful to remind teachers to be critical of the events that happen in their communities to ensure that all events are inclusive of the community as a whole

20

Glossary

Caregivers - People responsible for supporting the child

Community – Geographically, the collection of people in a given space. In our context this is around the school. Includes community centres, parks, other recreational groups etc.

Community Development Model – An approach that focuses on the development of the entire community, viewing the school as a component and a participant in its development

Community power – The potential a community has as a collective to do work, make changes

Jargon - Language used for a specific group. May be misunderstood by others.

Leadership – a group of individuals that are responsible for planning and enacting positive change

School - Facility of learning, includes all staff, workers, and volunteers

Social capital – a network of relationships that positively influences the efficiency of a social group

Annotated Bibliography

B.C. Ministry of Education. (2010) *Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide.* Retrieved from http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/early-learning/teach/fulldaykindergarten/fdk_program_guide.pdf

The Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide thoroughly covers the expectations that the Ministry has for classroom teachers. It outlines the different aspects that educators should address such as community, the transition between Preschool and Full Day Kindergarten, and suggestions on how to organize a Kindergarten classroom. It helps to focus on what a child will have experienced before entering Kindergarten and how to proceed to scaffold and develop those skills.

Blank, M., Berg, A., & Melaville, A. (2006). *Growing community schools: the role of cross-boundary leadership*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools.

This is a resource by Coalition for Community Schools that educates people on what a community school is, what work they do, and how they are effective for students. They go through different models of leadership for the different levels, school, community and "the middle" (the organizational managers). They focus on looking at community holistically given that there is a large about of overlap as a space for collaboration. They touch on the maintenance of these community schools in regards to how the community sustains these spaces and how interactions affect that. It also presents statistic information about how students' grades improved after implementing the Community Schools view.

Claiborne, L., Morrell, J., Brandy, J., Bruff, D. (2016 Sept 29). *Teaching outside the classroom.* https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-outside-the-classroom/

This websource gives insight into ways of taking learning outside the classroom. It is categorized in a user friendly manner, with easy to follow headings. The main ideas of taking learning outside are field trips, community engagement, studying abroad, technology in the classroom, and place based learning to name a few. Each is supported with extended web references for further exploration.

Colliver, Y. (2016). Mothers' perspectives on learning through play in the home. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 41*(1), 4-12.

This is a study done on mothers' opinions of learning through play and how it affects the development of the child when their opinion aligns or not with the educator's perspective. They say that the more advanced the society where the mother is from, the more they are willing to consider play as a form of learning. The document shares statistics about the values put on skills learned, numeracy, literacy, motor skills etc. They identify an area of misalignment that is placed between the educator and the mothers' ideas on what is being achieved in play and what children should learn. They advocate to educators to tailor some of the activities in their classrooms to mimic what would be available in a home setting. I think it would be a good way to scaffold the transition the children from home to school as their place of play. The teacher could manipulate the variables available and to prepare guiding questions in this play to move forward into the educational goals that the mothers want to see while satisfying curriculum requirements

deFur, S., & Sharon deFur. (01). Parents as collaborators: Building partnerships with school- and community-based providers. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 44*(3), 58; 58.

This document outlines what an effective partnership with parents and the community would look like and speaks on some of the difficulties that educators would face while maintaining and building that community. They had a section for the 10 strategies that contribute to collaborative community partnerships that would help the teacher in Case 1 with planning how to engage parents and to assist her students with their Full-day Kindergarten transition. The section on being Culturally Responsive would address the multicultural aspect of the school community and would help the teacher plan to integrate these behaviours and outlooks. The document has sections that show indicators of successful outcomes for each subsection.

Dikkers, A. G. (2013). Family connections: Building connections among home, school, and community. *Childhood Education, 89*(2), 115-116. doi:10.1080/00094056.2013.774247

This document gives insight to different situations that involve families, school and community. It talks about the values being put onto a child's education by the various realms and advocates for people to take a moment to realize the context that the other groups are coming from when making assertions. It shares some methods that help engage these 3 spheres in order to best help the child's learning. They want there to be a team approach to wor together to positively impact the child's future, rather than having moments where the spheres clash at the expense of the childs' development. For case 1, I think that the new teacher would benefit from having this advice to help better equip themselves in anticipation for what is to come in the school year.

Epstein, J. L. (2010). School/Family/Community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(3), 81-96. doi:10.1177/003172171009200326

Epstein shares an approach looking at school, family, and community as they overlap in influence for children. In regards to community building, this article is useful to illustrate who the main influencers for a child are. As well, it provides good organization to explore the spaces that the spheres intersect. It recenters the focus for community building as literally, all interactions are child centred. It gives practical ways to accomplish these spherical overlaps.

22

Annotated Bibliography

Gaitan, C. (2012). Culture, literacy, and power in family-community-school-relationships. *Theory into Practice, 51*(4), 305-311. doi:10.1080/00405841.2012.726060

Gaitan's work in this article focuses on creating moments Latino families to connect to the community. They introduce main points to put into consideration as an educator when trying to build community. Influence is put on looking at the community as a whole rather than looking at its components: the school, the people, the students. It tells educators to be aware and informed about the inner workings of the community and how to care and address these areas in a way that is respectful and beneficial.

Gold, E., Simon, E., Mundell, L., & Brown, C. (2004). Bringing community organizing into the school reform picture. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 33*(3), 54S-76S. doi:10.1177/0899764004265439

Gold introduces the idea of "school reform" where the community becomes invested in the well-being of the school. They focused on urban lower income schools were engagement was lacking and found that community engagement between families and the school was lacking as well. Engagement took the form of communities rallying together in partnership with the school in the improvement of living conditions, political matters, and educating the broad public as a whole. There was a sense that it was not just the students that could benefit from the school, and that the community could also be part of the process that takes care of the children by moving forward with a similar vision.

Shillady, A. (2014). Engaging families in diverse communities: Strategies from elementary school principals. *YC Young Children, 69*(4), 46.

This resource was an interview with two principals about how their school has engaged their community. They share strategies on what they wanted to address for their respective communities and shared about which each group did to contribute to building the community. Notably, both communities had points of difficulty, one community was very multicultural while the other was stratified economically. They encouraged educators to focus on the children, to know what their role is, and to remove judgement in order to do their jobs effectively.

Valli, L., Stefanski, A., & Jacobson, R. (2016). School-community partnership models: Implications for leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education,* 1-19. Doi:10.1080/13603124.2015.1124925

Valli introduces the idea of the Community Development model where schools do not only just look at the community as a resource or a space that the school is part of. But where the school views itself as part of the community that partners with members of the community through leadership opportunities. It defines leadership as something that is not exclusively for teachers or people from school, but rather honing the skills present in the community and using it to enhance the overall community experience for all its members.