



Walking the walk: portraits in leadership for family engagement in urban schools **Auerbach, Susan**

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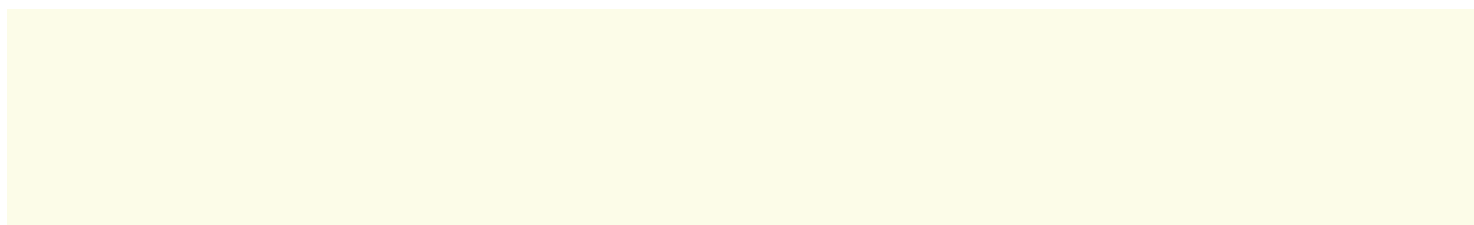
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Abstract:

Family and community engagement are increasingly seen as powerful tools for making schools more culturally responsive, and collaborative. The commitment of school leaders is vital to school-family connections, yet is poorly documented in the literature and insufficiently addressed in research by school administrators. Many school leaders “talk the talk” of school-family partnerships, but how exactly do they “walk the walk,” given the competing pressures they face in a massive urban district like Los Angeles? This study offers contextualized portraits of four school leaders notable for their proactive, community-oriented approach. Data focus on the administrators’ role in promoting activities, including an annual conference with elected officials, the Parents as Authors Program, community organizing-style “house meetings” in schools, and home visits. Findings suggest these leaders actively pursued family engagement as part of a broader commitment to social justice and educational equity for disenfranchised Latino families. Inspiring new family engagement models but distrustful of traditional parent involvement structures in the district, these leaders adapted activities to the needs of their particular communities. Implications for leadership preparation are discussed, such as the need for more hands-on experience working with parents and apprenticeship-style training of community-oriented school leaders.

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