



**Partnering with Parents and Communities: Maximizing the  
Educational Experience for Inuit Students**

*A Discussion Paper for the National Inuit  
Education Summit*

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**“Many of our children and youth are in crisis.— We need to work with parents and community members to provide a solid foundation —”**

*Mary Simon, President ITK, October 2006*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The present report addresses a pedagogical standard that is fundamental and primary for Inuit success from preschool through to post-secondary education: students must arrive at school everyday, all day, physically and psychologically healthy, and eager to learn.

To achieve this fundamental standard and maximize the potential for every Inuit student, the school needs to partner with parents. The school and parents have an equal responsibility, but for the present report we focus on parents. The report analyzes the impact of colonization on parents and the challenges this poses for parents in terms of supporting their children for school success. In order to accelerate the decolonization process, a constructive intervention is proposed designed to build a genuine partnership between parents and the school.

The report is divided into four parts, and concludes with four specific recommendations:

**Part I: Research Methodology.** In addition to the years of research, social, and pedagogical experience of the research team in Inuit communities, data for the report was derived from two main sources. The first was an in-depth review of the literature on the consequences of and challenges related to parental involvement in the formal education of their children. The second data source was a series of interviews with Inuit educators from the four regions.

**Part II: Bilingual Education in Nunavik.** In this part we describe an extremely successful bilingual program that centers on the use of Inuktitut as the only language of instruction from Kindergarten through to Grade 2. The program has been so successful that it has recently been expanded into Grade 3. The scientifically measured success of the program, including the training of Inuit teachers and administrators, and the construction of pedagogical materials and resources in Inuktitut, was highly dependent upon parental involvement. It was recognized, however, that the future success and expansion of the bilingual program required an increased commitment from parents. This led to the

realization that *no pedagogical program would be successful, or standard met, without the full participation of all parents in the education process.*

**Part III: Partnering with Parents.** We next analyze the unique challenges that Inuit parents face in their attempts to support the school success of their children. We point to five specific challenges all arising out of the consequences of colonization: a) parents' lack of knowledge of the explicit and implicit demands of formal education, b) the lack of trust parents naturally have of formal education, c) the feelings of inadequacy that parents feel when interacting with the school, d) the reality that jobs in communities are not tied to formal education, and e) the structure (80-20) of community norms. A detailed analysis of these five challenges positions us to describe an effective intervention strategy designed to promote parent participation in the formal education process.

**Part IV: Research as a Vehicle for Constructive Social Change.** In this section we introduce an intervention strategy in the form of using community-based survey research as a vehicle for constructive social change. Specifically, experience conducting scientific surveys in Inuit communities reveals that the whole community participates and the issues raised by the survey become the focus for community discussion. We propose to conduct a formal survey of all parents in a community, first in order to gain their views and insights about formal education. Second, as part of the survey we propose to ask parents to make a small commitment to partner with the school. Scientific research has demonstrated that such a small commitment can serve as a starting point for engaging parents in larger commitments. This process might encourage parents to attend workshops designed to meet parents' need to prepare and support their children in the pursuit of academic excellence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The use of Inuktitut in all schools needs to be promoted. Specifically, an emphasis needs to be placed on teaching all content subjects, at all levels *in* Inuktitut, not teaching *about* Inuktitut.
- 2) Formal education needs to be made concretely relevant in all communities. For example, for all jobs in the community, associating wages with years of schooling would provide students with concrete incentives to maximize their formal education.
- 3) A formal survey of parental experience and attitudes with respect to school be implemented in every community with two aims: 1) to obtain the views and insights of each and every parent, and 2) to initiate a partnership between parents and the school.

- 4) Institute a policy of reserving 10% in the budget of all pedagogical projects for research designed to document the measurable outcomes.

**“Many of our children and youth are in crisis.— We need to work with parents and community members to provide a solid foundation —“**

*Mary Simon, President ITK, October 2006*

### **Towards a National Inuit Education Strategy:**

Carving a national strategy for Inuit education is an absolutely necessary, but daunting challenge. The ravages of internal colonization are only beginning to be redressed through empowerment and decolonization. It is only in the last thirty years that Inuit have been exercising some decision making power over their own education. Clearly, Inuit education is in an embryonic stage and this reality must be appreciated as we engage the process of articulating a forward-thinking national Inuit Education Strategy.

A wide variety of exciting, culturally relevant, programs have been introduced into the curriculum in the four Inuit regions in Canada. These programs have required Inuit to become formally trained as teachers, curriculum developers, and creative producers of materials in Inuktitut for Inuit students. The goal of the present report is to maximize the chances that these initiatives, designed to meet the unique needs of Inuit students, will succeed. It is our contention that in order for any Inuit designed program to be successful, students must arrive at school, every day, all day, physically and psychologically healthy, and motivated to learn. Until this very basic standard is met, even the best program initiatives will not result in Inuit students realizing their full potential. Parents need to play a pivotal role in this process, and thus are the major focus of the present research undertaking.

Ask any Inuk parent if they want their children to receive education that will permit them full participation in modern, mainstream life, and the response will be a resounding “YES.” Then ask if they want their children to receive education that fully supports Inuit identity, and the response will be an equally resounding “YES.” Inuit may vary in the emphasis they assign to mainstream and Inuit identity, but all want their children to be fully Inuk, but prepared to participate in mainstream society. This is an enormous challenge and underscores the need for a National Strategy that is unique to Inuit. Such an ambitious undertaking can only succeed if parents and the school support each other in their shared mission of providing a pedagogical environment that allows

each and every Inuk student to realize his or her full potential. At this early stage in the decolonization process, parents are only beginning to reflect on the role they might play to support the formal education of their children.

This reflection took a dramatic turn when, in 2005, a Nunavik-wide Symposium of over 200 participants from all fourteen communities convened to address the theme of “Leading the way for our children.” For the first time, speaker after speaker, including leaders, educators, parents and students, spoke with courage, openness, and faith about the overwhelming social problems in their communities. The frankness of the discussions were empowering and delegates left the meetings, not discouraged, but certainly appreciative of the challenges that lay ahead.

### **Report Outline**

The present report is comprised of four sections. We begin, in Part I, with a description of the research methodology that forms the basis of our analysis. In Part II we describe an extremely successful implementation of policy designed to maintain and grow Inuktitut, while improving students’ fluency in English or French. The evolution of the Kativik School Board’s Bilingual Education policy underscores two major points central to the present report. First, the evolution of the policy was grounded in community consultation, and state of the art scientific research. Second, the policy evolved by involving parents in the process. Indeed, we have been testing and following cohorts of children and their families for years.

As the bilingual policy evolved, new programs, trained Inuit teachers and administrators, and Inuktitut materials were introduced. It became apparent that successful implementation required that students arrive at school on time, every day, physically and psychologically healthy, and eager to learn. This led to a growing realization that a partnership between the school and parents had to be forged. Simply put we realized that from early childhood education, through to primary school, secondary school and post-secondary education, *no pedagogical program would be successful, or standard met, without the full participation of all parents in the education process.* Engaging parents in the education process, with a special focus on the challenges confronting parents forms the basis of Part III. Finally, in Part IV we describe a community-based intervention strategy designed to engage the help of each and every parent. Specifically, we point to the importance of scientific research for informing policy, and offer a unique role for research as a catalyst for constructive social action. We outline a research

strategy designed to promote parental commitment to partner with the school for the life-long learning of their children.

A more detailed outline of the report is presented schematically in the following diagram.

**Need to Engage Parents in the Education of their Children**



**Bilingual Program: Inuktitut used as exclusive language of instruction for Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2**



Parental support was crucial in implementing this program



**BUT:** Underscored the desperate need for full parental participation to ensure successful implementation of all pedagogical programs.



**Barriers to Parental Involvement Unique to Inuit**



- Experience
- Trust
- Feelings of Inadequacy
- Importance of Education
- Community Norms



**Research as a Vehicle for Promoting Parental Involvement**



Research is usually a means of collecting data. We believe research can be an outreach mechanism for involving parents in lifelong learning.

## Part I Research Methodology

The methodology that forms the basis of our analysis consists of three phases. The first phase involved conducting a comprehensive review of research literature pertaining to parental and community involvement in education. The initial focus of this review was to examine research that has been conducted in mainstream populations across the world investigating the role that parents play in their children's education. This vast body of literature consistently pointed to the difficulty in engaging parents in the education process for their children. Equally clear was the consistent and dramatically positive relationship between parental and community involvement and a child's success at school. Our literature review went on to explore research conducted with minority groups and with Aboriginal groups in particular. Again, parental and community involvement was found to be an important component of a child's educational success in both minority and Aboriginal contexts. Finally, we reviewed literature and reports pertaining directly to Inuit education in the four Inuit regions. Here the focus was on examining the current needs of Inuit education as well as on uncovering any current programs that are designed to foster parental and community involvement in the formal education process. The detailed results of our literature review can be found in an annotated bibliography appended to the present report (Appendix A).

The second phase of our methodology involved conducting interviews with Inuit who have considerable experience working in education in each of the four regions. Members of our research team conducted two interviews per region. The interviewees were asked to describe what strategies they knew of that were being used to involve parents in their children's education, and if they had any ideas or suggestions for increasing parental involvement. Those being interviewed were asked to speak freely about the issue and were assured that their responses would be anonymous. Interviews were conducted in either Inuktitut or English, with those in Inuktitut being subsequently translated by a member of the research team into English. The interviewees were asked to provide a point form summary of each interview. These summaries can be found appended to this report (Appendix B).

The third and final phase of our methodology was labeled: "the *integration phase*". The *integration phase* was pivotal in terms of theorizing and writing the present report. The aim was to integrate both the literature review and the interviews into a larger perspective in order to avoid the potential for

subjective bias or neglecting key factors. Such a comprehensive review could hopefully provide the platform necessary to propose concrete and feasible solutions in terms of achieving the desired standards for Inuit education. That is, knowledge derived from past theorizing, past research involvement, and past hands-on teaching experience were considered in writing the present report. Specifically, an extensive array of published papers on the pedagogy of teaching and learning were reviewed. These were combined with a number of published papers written by ourselves to form the framework for the present report. Second, knowledge derived from years of research in the fields of education and social psychology with mainstream populations, visible minority groups, First Nations, and, most extensively, Inuit communities, was also integrated. Finally, at a practical level, the integration was based on experience in teaching to mainstream populations in Québec (e.g. McGill University, Université de Montréal), in other cultures in developing countries (e.g. Indonesia, Mongolia), in First Nations communities (Mi'kmaq, Mohawk) and in Nunavik. These past theoretical, research and practical experiences allowed us to compile a, hopefully objective report in terms of the successes in Inuit education, and equally, to the challenges for the future.

## **Part II**

### **Bilingual Education in Nunavik**

In 1975 the historic James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed. The result was a Kativik School Board (KSB) mandate to empower the Inuit of Nunavik with the responsibility of providing educational services to the fourteen communities that comprise Nunavik. From its inception in 1978, the KSB has carved a clearly defined mission statement guided by a board comprised of 14 elected Inuit commissioners, whose policies have been informed by an ambitious, on-going, twenty-year program of research.

The integration of Inuit culture into the formal, southern mainstream, school environment in the communities is evident. Inuktitut is the exclusive language of instruction for Kindergarten through to Grade 2, and continues through to at least 50% of Grade 3. Thereafter, students follow an English or French stream through to the end of high school, but always with a formal period of Inuktitut language instruction coupled with Inuit culture.

The goal of KSB is to ultimately offer students a Balanced Bilingual program whereby Inuktitut and English or French, would be used equally throughout the entire educational process. To date, there are formally trained

Inuit teachers as well as formally trained Inuit administrators. Moreover, formal programs and materials have been developed in Inuktitut, up to the Grade 3 level, and for Inuktitut and culture courses at higher levels. Beyond this there have been special parallel programs in Inuktitut, and French and English, developed at the secondary level (e.g., social studies).

As KSB's bilingual education format has evolved, its impact on Inuit students has been assessed formally through state of the art research in the social sciences. The results of this twenty-year program of research are very encouraging. Inuit students benefit substantially from having Inuktitut as their language of instruction. The benefits include increased Inuktitut sophistication, increased cognitive development, increased self-esteem and increased pride in Inuit identity compared to Inuit students who receive no instruction in Inuktitut. KSB's bilingual education policy, the training of Inuit personnel, and the state of the art research supporting the policy have had a major impact on the schools in Nunavik. Moreover, the policy has served as a model in many indigenous communities, and through publications in the most prestigious educational journals, the education of minority students internationally. The details are outlined in Appendix C which documents the results of twenty years of scientific research.

The KSB Bilingual Education program continues to develop, and was recently expanded into Grade 3. In the process of developing the curricula, training new teachers and generating new materials in Inuktitut, there was a growing realization that unless students were motivated to learn, all of the efforts needed to implement the new program might be wasted. Specifically, it became clear that students at all grade levels need to arrive at school well fed, with a good night's sleep, on time, and motivated to learn. We needed the help of each and every parent in the community.

The issue of parental support has, indeed, become a pivotal issue, not only in Nunavik, but across the Canadian North. In all four Inuit regions the need for parental and community involvement in schools is strongly emphasized. In Nunavut, Berger in his 2006 report, *The Nunavut Project* points to the need for a "bottom up" approach to education in that it has to involve parents and communities as well as students and teachers. He argues that "parents must do more to keep their children in school." Furthermore, Kwarteng (2006) in the article *Implementing Nunavut Education Act: Compulsory School Attendance Policy* suggests that parental involvement is essential in order to implement this school

attendance policy. Without the support of parents, children are much less likely to arrive at school on a regular basis ready to learn.

In Nunavik, the mission statement of the Kativik school board includes the phrase, "In partnership with parents, communities, and other education stakeholders...." Partnering with parents and community members is a topic that permeates many of the education policies of the North. One of the main themes in the *New Paths for Education Initiative* in Nunavik is to increase support for community and parental involvement. In addition, a report prepared for the current summit on Inuit education by Silta associates reports lack of parental involvement in the schools as an ongoing challenge in the Nunavik region.

In Inuvialuit, the *Inuvialuit Education Foundation Education and Training Policy Document* (2007) refers to this program's main goal: To increase the number of beneficiaries accessing and completing post-secondary education programs. The government of the Northwest Territories has for years been working to improve the quality of education in the region and to achieve this goal. Education and curriculum documents have been compiled and their policies implemented. The 1982 report, *Learning: Tradition and Change in the Northwest Territories* identified the need for increased parent-school liaisons as did the 1996 document *Inuuqatigiit-the curriculum from the Inuit Perspective* which was grounded on the belief that education must be community based. Indeed, if students do not receive parental and community support, they are much less likely to even make it to the post-secondary level.

Finally, in Nunatsiavut, a 2003-2004 annual report of the Labrador Inuit Association notes a drop in the number of students applying for post-secondary education despite the availability of a post-secondary student support program. A paper prepared for the current summit on Inuit Education by Silta associates calls for increased collaboration between Inuit communities, the school board and the new Nunatsiavut government. Again, community and parental collaboration with educators and school boards is desired and can only enhance a child's experience at school, contributing to their success in later grades and even at the post-secondary level.

In every Inuit community there is ongoing criticism of our schools. Every member of our research team has been for years confronted repeatedly with the view of community members that there is widespread underachievement among our students and that, therefore, the schools are failing Inuit young people. With growing empowerment, Inuit leaders and educators are forging and designing

new pedagogical programs that better reflect Inuit identity and Inuit reality. If these programs fail, it will not only be a blow to educational institutions, but to Inuit culture which is becoming the new bedrock of education. And, these creative culturally relevant programs may well fail unless students attend school regularly with a healthy attitude toward learning.

### **Part III**

#### **Partnering with Parents**

All over the world, communities struggle to achieve a healthy partnering between parents and the school. It is the student who suffers when school personnel adopt the attitude that, "If the family would just do its job, we could do our job" and parents espouse the view that, "I raised this child; now it is your turn to educate her."

The point here is that a successful partnership is a dual responsibility, involving the school and parents equally. In the present report the focus is on parents. This is only because during our twenty years of consulting parents on the implementation of Inuktitut in schools, parents themselves voiced their feelings of alienation. In a recent survey in Alaska, parents underscored as most important, the need for them to help with homework, encourage reading and attend meetings with their child's teacher

In terms of the best interests of students, there is a good reason why every school jurisdiction wants to have parents maximally involved. Parents play a pivotal role in the school's mission, and that impact has been documented world-wide by meta-analyses of hundreds of scientific studies. What these analyses demonstrate is that parental involvement in their child's education is associated with marked increases in student achievement, better attendance, and positive attitudes.

Clearly, every school wants to maximize parental involvement. Indeed, our interviewees consistently expressed this desire through statements such as, "It is vital for both parents and teachers to collaborate should we want our children to attend school regularly" (Nunavik), and, "The more parents are involved in the school, the better it is for everyone" (Holman Island, Northwest Territories). Furthermore, reports from ITK and from the four Inuit regions point to the need for increased parental and community involvement. For example, Berger in his 2006 report, "The Nunavut Project" emphasizes the need for a "bottom up" approach to education in that it has to involve parents and

communities as well as students and teachers. The Inuit section of the Canada Aboriginal People's Roundtable Final Roll-up Report (2004) along with the "New Paths for Education Initiative" in Nunavik and the "Healthy Children's Initiative" in the Northwest Territories also highlight the importance of family and community involvement in education.

The problem is that achieving such an important goal has proved elusive. Many school jurisdictions world-wide struggle to invent ways to foster partnerships between parents and the school. The lack of parental involvement is not just an Inuit, or Aboriginal, or Minority Group, or Canadian, or American challenge, it is a universal challenge.

However, there are social realities unique to Inuit in Canada that make a genuine partnering with parents especially challenging. Borrowing strategies from the experiences of mainstream school boards, or tweaking existing initiatives will not suffice. Nothing short of a concerted, collective, national strategy, that is specifically designed to meet the unique challenges that Inuit parents face, is needed. In order to design such a strategy, we need to explore five barriers to parental involvement that are unique to Inuit. Only by understanding the barriers will we be in a position to design genuinely effective strategies to promote parental participation. The five barriers that are common to the four Inuit regions across Canada include: 1) Experience with formal education, 2) Trust in Formal education, 3) Feelings of inadequacy, 4) Importance of Education, and 5) Community Norms.

## **EXPERIENCE:**

It is one thing to ask parents to prepare their children for school when the parents themselves have had extensive experience with the very educational experience their children are being exposed to. It is a different matter when parents have not had extensive experience themselves with formal education, and whatever experience they have had does not correspond to the experiences of their children. This is what is being asked of Inuit parents. They have typically had little experience with formal education and schooling has changed dramatically in Inuit communities. Indeed, ITK's (2005) report, "State of Inuit Learning in Canada" describes Inuit parents' historical reaction to the formal schooling of their children. Upon the introduction of schools in Inuit communities, parents and elders initially could not comprehend why their able-bodied older children had to sit in school learning what they saw as not very useful for their lives. Formal education in Inuit communities continues to change

and a parents' perception of their children's education remains unclear." Lacking this knowledge and experience, it is unfair and unrealistic to expect Inuit parents to know how to support their children in the context of formal education. As noted by one of our optimistic interviewees from Holman Island, Northwest Territories, "Some parents are not sure how to help, but are open to suggestions/requests that are made."

This issue is made more complex because Inuit parents may know about the visible aspects of schooling, but not its deep structure. The parent may know the superficial structure of how the school in their community functions, its time frame, the changing of teachers by subject, the report card. Even these may have changed radically in the last ten years. More challenging is an understanding of the hidden structures that lie at the heart of formal education. Here we cite one simple example by way of illustration. Formal education is, by design, progressive. Entire Curricula, and individual lesson plans, are built in a progressive fashion: The student needs to master A so that they can understand the next unit, B. Thus, A and B are not discrete units of information; instead without knowledge of A, it would be impossible for a student to master B. A basic understanding of this premise is necessary for any student to be successful. Now, if units of knowledge were separate units, a student could master A, skip B and C, and then master D with little difficulty. But because the units are progressive, a student cannot skip any units, otherwise they will be frustrated in their attempts to learn any subsequent units. This is, of course, why parents with an in-depth experience with formal education will do everything in their power to ensure that their child never misses a class: the student will not only miss that class but experience difficulty with all subsequent classes. (For a discussion of further examples see Appendix D)

Parents may well be motivated to support the schooling of their children, but a history of colonization and the recentcy of formal education in Inuit communities have rendered parents uncertain about how to support their children. Especially lacking is an understanding of the deep structure of the pedagogical process that is for the most part invisible.

## **TRUST:**

Asking Inuit parents to partner with the school is made especially difficult considering many parents' own personal experiences with formal education. Very few Inuit parents would describe their school experience as positive. The ITK report "State of Inuit Learning in Canada" documents Inuit experiences with

residential school and describes the considerable negative impact it had on survivors including its detrimental effect on the bond between parent and child. Those who were subjected to Residential schooling can hardly be expected to have any trust in formal education. But this is but the tip of the iceberg. Even younger parents might have attended formal schooling in their own community, but one whose assimilation agenda precluded any Inuit cultural content to the curriculum. As well, with the growing disciplinary problems in schools, parents must be wondering what goes on inside the biggest building in their community. All of these factors combine to create a barrier between parents and the school that will need to be overcome.

### **FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY:**

If parents lack experience, and their own personal experiences with formal education have been demeaning, it is no wonder that parents might feel uncomfortable partnering with the school. It is only natural that parents would feel their self-esteem threatened at the very thought of school. Moreover, every encounter they have with the school likely leaves them feeling ashamed. Often parents are forced to engage the school because of a problem with their child, or they are being asked to make a difficult pedagogical decision for their child, and these are demeaning experiences at the best of times. These feelings are exacerbated given the historical experience of Inuit with formal schooling. Even a casual encounter with school personnel about how well their child is doing will be intimidating, for after all they will be chatting with trained Inuk or Qallunaat educators whose knowledge and experience remind parents of their own inadequacy. Anyone would try to avoid an institution that evokes feelings of inadequacy, and successful partnering will require breaking this cycle.

### **IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION:**

Parents have a multitude of responsibilities and demands. Modern community life places inordinate demands and parents apportion their time accordingly. "The community has many working parents, report card time they do not show up", asserted one of our interviewees from the Northwest Territories. To date, formal education is not central for "getting ahead" in life. Few jobs in the community reward education directly. For example, employees working side by side might be paid the same wage yet they might have dramatically different levels of formal education. In the vast majority of job postings in a community, there are no formal education level requirements listed. Just the visibility of listing a formal education requirement with each

advertisement would raise awareness of the importance of formal education. What is the incentive for students and their parents when succeeding at school is not rewarded? The result is that parents do not place a premium on formal schooling and direct their parenting skills elsewhere.

### **COMMUNITY NORMS: THE 80-20 RULE:**

We end this section with what we believe to be the most challenging barrier to overcome in terms of fostering a healthy partnering between schools and parents. Our analysis introduces what we call “the 80-20 rule.” Our rule is designed to underscore why promoting a partnership by means of the usual mainstream interventions will be doomed to failure. Tragically, our 80-20 analysis will indicate that even interventions based on Inuit cultural traditions will also be unsuccessful. Our hope is that an awareness of the 80-20 normative challenges can form the basis for building a successful strategy for a partnership between parents and schools that will have a positive and measurable impact on the lives of students.

Every group from an entire nation, to a large company, to the family wants to accomplish its goals, and an Inuit community, or indeed a classroom, is no exception. In order for a group to succeed each group member must contribute in their own way: in a community leaders must lead, parents must parent, grandparents, children, teachers, social workers, police officers, carpenters, everyone must make their contribution for a community to be successful.

It is unrealistic to think that each and every community member will play their role perfectly, and here is where the 80-20 rule is evoked. As a rule of thumb, in every group, organization or community, 80% of the group members perform well, but there is always a minority 20% of group members who do not perform at an acceptable standard. For example, in most classes 80% of the students behave appropriately, and 20% are trouble makers. In any company most employees (80%) do their job according to standards, but there is always the minority (20%) who do not perform up to standard. And, of course, in a well functioning community, 80% of community members make an effective contribution, but there is always a small number, the 20%, who do not contribute as they should. Of course every group hopes to have 100% of its members functioning well. Realistically, however, if a group can maintain at least an 80% rate of effective functioning, the group has a good chance of succeeding.

This explains why the non-performing 20% in a group receive so much attention. Police, the courts, social workers, and counselors are but a few of the professionals who spend all of their time trying to rehabilitate the dysfunctional 20% so that at least some of them might rejoin the 80%. And, they want to prevent anyone else in the 80% from dropping into the 20%. If they do not succeed, and the 20% rises to 30% or 40%, the group is certain to fail.

Professionals are not the only group members who try to rehabilitate the 20%. Every single member of the 80% plays a vital role. Every functioning group member serves as a role model for "how to do it." In this sense the 80% serve as the very definition of what it is to be a constructive group member, and thus each is vital to a successful group.

Thus, the 80-20 rule is the normative structure that can be found in every successful group. Why is this normative structure so important for understanding the lack of parental involvement in our communities? Our communities do not have the benefit of an 80-20 normative structure. Some Inuit leaders would proclaim that "our communities are not 80-20, they are 20-80" The precise percentages are not important. What is important is the recognition that the normative structure in our communities is such that the usual interventions by professionals *will not be effective*. They won't be effective because there is not an 80% of highly functioning role models to support the difficult rehabilitation of the 20%.

For example, imagine a small classroom of 10 students where the usual 80-20 rule is operating. This means that 8 of the students will be performing well in terms of attendance, completing assignments, doing well on exams and behaving in a cooperative manner. Two of the students will be disruptive, with irregular attendance and poor performance on exams. These are the 2 students that will be the focus of the school counselor who will have individual sessions with these two students designed to redirect their behaviour. The counselor has some hope of success since the two troubled students don't really want to be "weird" and the behaviour of the other 8 students in the class makes them feel out of place. But the 8 model students help the counselor offer the troubled students a concrete set of classroom behaviours that will lead to success. The 8 students are living daily proof that success is possible and they are real-life examples of what behaviours lead to success. Under these circumstances the counselor has at least a chance of rehabilitating the two non-normative students.

What if instead of 80-20, our classroom had a 20-80 normative structure. That would mean that only two of the students were performing well while eight of the students did not attend regularly, failed to complete assignments, did poorly on exams and spent most of their time disrupting ongoing classroom activities. In such a situation it is the majority eight who will establish the norms, not the two well-functioning students. The teacher faces an uphill battle when trying to establish discipline in a classroom where the normative structure is 20-80 rather than 80-20.

Our normative 80-20 rule analysis has important implications for encouraging parents to partner with the school. In the absence of an 80-20 structure parents have no normative support and no clearly defined models for guiding them with respect to supporting their children. This means that the usual outreach efforts to involve parents simply won't work. As one of our interviewees from the Northwest Territories proclaimed in frustration "Parents are not involved. We have tried everything to get them involved." If 80% of parents in each community were already partnering fully with the school, it would be relatively easy to encourage the remaining 20%. But when 80% of parents, for very good historical reasons, are not participating fully, and have few models for them to do so, promoting a partnership with the school will be a daunting challenge. Indeed, this challenge is recognized by those who work in education in the Inuit regions. For example, "Closing the Education Gap: A Status Report on the Issues" prepared by the Iqaluit District Education Authority suggests that low levels of parental support is one of the factors that impede success in public education in Nunavut.

Our 80-20 normative analysis is not designed to paint a discouraging portrait, but it is designed to serve as a reality check. Simply put, the usual outreach efforts to engage parents will not be successful and this reality will ultimately affect negatively every constructive Inuit based pedagogical initiative to serve the needs of Inuit students. Armed with the reality of the 80-20 normative structure, we are hopefully in a position to design interventions that will succeed in engaging parents in the formal education process. For further discussion of the 80-20 rule, see Appendix E.

## Part IV

### Research as a Vehicle for Constructive Social Change

Engaging parents in the education of their children is a universal challenge. As we have seen, the challenge in Inuit communities is even greater. Thus, the usual methods will not succeed. In the words of one of our interviewees, “We’ve tried everything.” Inviting parents to school meetings, making home visits, organizing workshops, and a host of other well intentioned efforts will not suffice.

In this section, we propose a novel function for community based research, a function whose aim is to instigate a partnership between parents and the school. Usually, community-based research is used to objectively document a situation. The results may be used by community leaders to address an important issue, or the results might be used to seek funding and support to solve a community problem. We propose to use scientific research for a new purpose: stimulating a community into constructive social change.

#### **LANGUAGE SURVEYS:**

The Kativik School Board’s language policy was informed by a series of language surveys conducted in five of the communities in Nunavik. The purpose of the survey was to provide an opportunity for every adult in the community to share their language experiences, voice their opinions and specify the role that parents and the school should play for ensuring that young people are fluent in Inuktitut.

The survey had a number of features that are relevant to the present context:

- 1) The research survey was genuinely community based. The survey was instigated by the education committee in the community who were pressured by parents to address the question of Inuktitut, French and English language use in the community, home and school.
- 2) The survey design followed state of the art procedures for maximizing it’s objectivity, and thereby it’s credibility. For example, questions about language use were designed by a team of community members and researchers. The questions were prepared in one language and then back-translated into the other two languages. Respondents provided their answers on standard rating scales that were amenable to powerful inferential statistical analyses.

- 3) In most community based surveys, the research aims to have a 10%, representative sample complete the survey. Remarkably, and as an indication of community interest and cooperation, virtually every member of the community (close to 100%) over the age of fifteen completed the research instrument. Such an inclusive survey ensured that every voice was heard, and that every voice had equal weight.
- 4) The survey research on language yielded important results that impacted policy. Inuktitut was strong in the community, BUT English and French were beginning to intrude in the world of work, and among young people in the community. Moreover, there was consensus that the school and the family both had an obligation to promote Inuktitut.
- 5) The survey process yielded a number of outcomes beyond the immediate results. The survey raised awareness and interest in the entire community about how precious Inuktitut is, and how fragile it's status might be in the future. Beyond this, it facilitated attendance at community meetings about language and allowed other community organizations to reflect on their language policy. Finally, it provided a basis for organizations to seek funding for projects designed to promote the development and use of Inuktitut.

### **COMMUNITY BASED SURVEY RESEARCH AS A VEHICLE FOR INVOLVING PARENTS:**

We believe that community based research may be the ideal strategy for overcoming the 20-80 normative structure in most communities and engaging parents in the education process. We would begin by assembling a cross-section of community members to construct a survey instrument to be completed by every adult in the community. The questions would focus on parent's own experience with education, their concerns about education for their children, and their attitudes about a variety of pedagogical issues. The questions would be carefully designed so as not to be threatening but rather clearly crafted to allow parents to share their experiences and valid opinions. All participants would be asked exactly the same questions, in the language of their choice, and would answer according to a standard rating format. Finally, all survey questionnaires would be answered *anonymously* to maximize the chances of obtaining participants' genuine attitudes.

**Foot in the Door:** At the end of the survey questionnaire would be a short series of questions designed to engage parents in the partnering process. These questions would be based on the well-known social psychological

phenomenon, known as the “foot in the door” technique. The idea is that if you want to change peoples’ attitudes dramatically, asking for a dramatic change will not be successful. Instead, you ask for a small change in commitment to begin with, one that is easily met. Once a person makes a small commitment, it is much easier to ask for an even greater change.

Our community-wide survey would conclude, then, with a series of questions designed to elicit from parents a small commitment to partner with the school. For example, “would you be willing to meet your child’s teacher once a term?” YES or NO, or “Would you be willing to sign your child’s homework each night?” YES or NO. The questions would be ones that parents would have difficulty responding NO to.

When the results of the survey have been analyzed, feedback to the community could set in motion the partnering process. The usual community meetings for survey feedback and FM discussions highlighting the results would focus on the small, but written commitment parents had made to support their children’s formal schooling. Parents would be confronted with the reminder that they had made a written commitment, and they would be aware that they are not alone—every other parent in the community had also made the same commitment. Community leaders and school personnel are now in a position to encourage and provide welcoming opportunities for parents to meet their self-declared obligations.

Once these small commitments have been made it will be much easier to take the next step toward even greater involvement. Now school initiated workshops on such topics as the explicit and implicit norms of successful learning, how to help with homework, how to address disciplinary issues, and how to encourage positive attitudes about school can be successfully implemented. Instigating the process is key, and a community based survey is one initiative that reaches everyone and where a small commitment can be elicited.

#### **BEYOND SURVEY RESEARCH:**

As we have seen, research is much more than a process for gathering objective information. It is a community event that helps shape community issues, engage communities in a meaningful dialogue on important issues, and provides objective information for soliciting much needed funding for

constructive projects. Here we have argued that community based research can be used as a vehicle to initiate a partnership between schools and parents.

There remains, however, one last function of research that is fundamental for an Inuit based national education strategy. Once Inuit have articulated a unique education strategy, it will be necessary to evaluate the extent to which the implementation of the education strategy is genuinely meeting the goals of the strategy and, by extension, the needs of the students. There is only one way to genuinely assess a “results-oriented” strategy, and that is through objective research. Every program, at every level needs to include a research component designed to *objectively* assess the outcomes of the program.

We have argued that having the school partner with parents to promote students arriving at school every day, physically and psychologically healthy, eager to learn must form an important component of an Inuit education strategy. As such, the impact of our proposed intervention by means of community surveys will need to be evaluated objectively through state of the art research. This will require a baseline assessment of the current reality for students, such as actual rate of absences, drop outs, late arrivals, classes missed, as well as more challenging measures of student attitudes. Each year the same factors will need to be assessed in order to determine the extent to which increases in school-parent partnering is associated with genuine changes in student behaviour.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The use of Inuktitut in all schools needs to be promoted. Specifically, an emphasis needs to be placed on teaching all content subjects, at all levels *in* Inuktitut, not teaching *about* Inuktitut.
- 2) Formal education needs to be made concretely relevant in all communities. For example, for all jobs in the community, associating wages with years of schooling would provide students with concrete incentives to maximize their formal education.
- 3) A formal survey of parental experience and attitudes with respect to school be implemented in every community with two aims: 1) to obtain the views and insights of each and every parent, and 2) to initiate a partnership between parents and the school.
- 4) Institute a policy of reserving 10% in the budget of all pedagogical projects for research designed to document the measurable outcomes.

## Appendix A

### Annotated Bibliography

**Agbo, S. A. (2007). Addressing school-community relations in a cross-cultural context: A collaborative action to bridge the gap between First Nations and the School, *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 22, 1-13.**

This paper investigates community and teachers' perspectives of community-school relations in a small fly-in reserve in Northwestern Ontario. The author argues that in order for First Nations communities to take control over their education, parents need to become more involved in the school. The author interviewed Euro-Canadian teachers and First Nations parents in order to examine their views on community involvement, in particular how to bridge the gap between the community and the school. Results indicate that the school must empower the community through discussions that foster collaboration and respect, and that the values of teachers and community members have to shift so as to reformulate First Nations education in a non-Eurocentric way.

**Arriza (2004). Making changes that stay made: School reform and community involvement. *High School Journal*, 87(4), 10-24.**

This article reports a step-by-step struggle that Mexican American parents have undertaken, in the Salinas high school district, to allow their children equal access to educational opportunities regardless of their "poor" competence in English. In this struggle, Mexican Americans are considered a force for social change in education.

**Auerbach, S. From moral supporters to struggling advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color.**

This article considers that parent role construction (i.e. what parents think they can do for and with their children) is central to parent involvement. The role of parents can be seen as a continuum with, at one end, the role of Moral Supporter ("behind-the-scenes moral support for education at home") and, at the other end, the role of Struggling Advocate ("direct, instrumental support and monitoring at home along with advocacy at school"). Results show that both parents from higher socioeconomic levels and parents of color from working class help their children: based on their own values, they use their own emotional, navigational

and moral resources to help their children. According to the authors, this typology of parent role is not comprehensive but can serve as a new way of considering parent involvement, suggesting that parent involvement is not limited to its traditional forms and can take multiple other forms.

**Backgrounder on Inuit and Education. Prepared by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2004, Ottawa, Canada. Retrieved on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 from <http://www.itk.ca/roundtable/sectoral-lifelearning-backgrounder.php>**

This document provides a background on Inuit education including a historical perspective and areas that are important and that require action. Areas that are identified as important are: Literacy, early childhood education, elementary through secondary, post-secondary, adult training and college programs, and barriers to learning. For each of these areas, the authors recommend actions such as funding, teacher training, strategies to encourage children to complete their education, a school system that is sensitive to both formal and traditional knowledge acquisition, adequate resources for families and mental health issues, etc.

**Bauch, P. A. & Goldring, E. B. (1995). Parent involvement and school responsiveness : facilitating the home. School connection in schools of choice. *Educational and Policy Analysis*, 17(1), 1-21.**

This paper show that a school's approach to discipline and responsibility from the parents (at home) influences parent involvement. The article also reports that communication between schools and parents is more effective in schools with a communitarian model (i.e. social cohesiveness among students, parents, and school professionals on the basis of a shared set of beliefs, values and expectations; less curricular and organizational complexity) than in schools with a bureaucratic model (i.e. increased school size, greater curriculum complexity and student differentiation, and a dense external policy network).

**Berger, T. R. (2006). Conciliator's Final Report: "The Nunavut Project"**

This report discusses how, in order to comply with Article 23 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, 85% of the positions in the Nunavut public service must be filled by Inuit. Berger suggests that, in order to accomplish this objective, significant changes must be made to the education system. He recommends: A comprehensive/strong program of bilingual education, that many more Inuit teachers be trained, and that education be "bottom up" meaning that it must

involve all people of Nunavut, not just teachers and students. Community-based recommendations include: Language nests where elders speak to their children and grandchildren in Inuktitut, local tradespeople giving classes in their specialties, middle-aged and adult Inuit in every community who speak Inuktitut taking a year of teacher training in the community and teaching Inuktitut in schools, early childhood programs in Inuktitut, as well as housing and health improvements. Berger points out that parents must do more to keep their children in school.

**Bridge, H. (2001). Increasing parental involvement in the preschool curriculum: What an action research case study revealed. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 9(1), 5-21.**

This article demonstrates that parents play a major role in their children's education, and gives the example of children that enter preschool. Specifically, in preschool education, parent involvement can establish, in the school, a context that takes into account family particularities, and what is particularly important for preschool children's socialization.

**Canada Aboriginal People's Round Table. Sectoral Follow-up Sessions. Final Roll-up Report, 2004. Retrieved on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 from [http://www.aboriginalroundtable.ca/sect/ffr/index\\_e.html](http://www.aboriginalroundtable.ca/sect/ffr/index_e.html).**

A section of this report describes the needs of Inuit Education. These needs include: Inuit control of an Inuktitut-language curriculum, more qualified Inuit teachers, appropriate cultural learning incorporated into education system, literacy programming including early childhood development with a focus on the role of parents, a holistic approach to language development involving the entire family, more sensitivity training about Inuit culture, consideration of creative and innovative options such as informal learning models and oral testing methods. The report identifies two best practices: the Nunavut Sivuniqusavut Program in Ottawa and the role model programs supporting healing among parents and the role of elders.

**Carlisle, E., Stanley, L. & Kemple, K. M. (2005). Opening doors: Understanding school and family influences on family involvement. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(3), 155-162.**

This article reviews multiple factors that contribute to parental involvement. Among them, the authors include "family ethnicity". Family ethnicity is known

to influence parental involvement because parents from minorities (1) feel that their culture is not understood in school (where teachers are, mainly, from the dominant culture), (2) may not know what is considered correct as family involvement practices in the dominant culture, and (3) may experience some language barriers. Finally, the article provides concrete practices that can help teachers to maximize parental involvement.

**Closing the Education Gap: A Status Report on the Issus. (2005). Iqaluit District Education Authority Document**

This report seeks to define the education gap between the performance of public schools in Nunavut and those in Canada as a whole. It suggests that some of the factors contributing to the gap are language and culture, curriculum development, the training and retention of Inuit teaching staff along with factors such as racism, housing conditions, economic conditions, child poverty, and the level of parental support. The report pinpoints issues that need to be addressed including restructuring of funding for education, the establishment of organizational structures to support the participation of students and parents in decision-making for public education, and the implementation of an accountability regime for the Department of Education.

**Crosnoe, R. (2001). Academic orientation and parental involvement in education during high school. *Sociology of Education*, 74, 210-230.**

This study confirms that some parent involvement tends to decrease over the years their children attend high school. As an example, parents of high-status students in a more advanced curriculum (“college-preparatory track”) tend to become especially less involved as their children progress in high school. This is particularly interesting since these parents’ involvement is the highest at the beginning (compared to involvement from parents of students in less advanced difficult tracks). When ethnicity is taken into consideration, parent involvement tends to decrease as time passes, only for parents of minority students in the less difficult curriculum (“remedial track”).

**Crozier, G. (2001). Excluded parents: The deracialisation of parental involvement. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 4(4), 329-341.**

Like a number of authors who found that family culture must be taken into account in involvement programs, this author argues that race cannot be neglected. The author highlights the fact that current involvement programs

consider involvement as universal. Consequently, people from ethnic minorities, whose situation does not allow them to actively participate in their children's education, do not reap these programs' benefits. However, people from the ethnic majority, who represent the norm, are those who respond the best to these programs and who benefit from them. Finally, this causes the gap between parents who are highly involved (from ethnic majority) and those who are less involved (from ethnic minority) to grow bigger. Consequently, the gap between children whose achievement is high (from ethnic majority) and those whose achievement is low (from ethnic minority) tend to increase.

**Crozier, G. & Davies, J. (2006). Family matters: A discussion of the Bangladeshi and Pakistani extended family and community in supporting the children's education. *The sociological Review*, 54(4), 678-695.**

This article highlights a new perspective concerning parent involvement, namely extended family and community involvement. Based on the study of two minority communities, the authors argue that the extended family and community represent an important form of social capital, i.e. a form of social resource that can contribute to children's education. Also, the authors point out the fact that this social capital formed by the educational support of the extended family and community is based on ethnic or religious values (i.e. shared values). Finally, it is argued that schools must recognize and transform into "educational knowledge" the social capital formed by the extended family and the community, instead of focusing on the low level of involvement of the parents themselves.

**Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S. & Weiss, H. B. (2006). Family Involvement in school and low-income children's literacy: Longitudinal associations between and within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(4), 653-664.**

This article points to the fact that parent involvement should be considered, like literacy performance, as a developmental phenomenon. Specifically, when considered across time, an increase in parent involvement is associated with increased literacy performances from children in low-income families. Then, from a cross-sectional perspective, the average parent involvement (from kindergarten to 5th grade) is positively associated with literacy performance of children from low-income family whose mother's level of education is low (if mother's level of education is high, the average parent involvement seems not to be associated with literacy performance).

**De Geatano, Y. (2007). The role of culture in engaging Latino parent's involvement in school. *Urban Education*, 42(2), 145-165.**

The author argues that it is not acceptable that most schools promote the dominant culture. One way for schools to become more multicultural is to involve minority parents in the learning process. In order to promote the involvement of parents from minorities in school, these parents must be treated with respect, in terms of their language and culture. For example, people who work on implementing the parent involvement program must, if possible, be able to communicate with parents from minority groups in their own language. This article reports a step-by-step approach to implementing a parent involvement program that is respectful to the minority culture (e.g. Latino culture).

**Demmert, W. G. Jr. (2001) *Improving Academic Performance Among Native American Students: A review of the research literature* Charleston,WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED-99-CO-0027).**

This document is a review of the literature pertaining to improving the quality of education for Native American students, with the intent of providing recommendations to improve academic performance of these students. The author touches upon six major themes: 1)Early childhood environment and experiences, 2)Native language and cultural programs in schools, 3)teachers, instructors and curriculum, 4)community and parental influences, 5)student characteristics, and 6)factors leading to success in college. In the section pertaining to community and parental influences, the author reviews a number of studies pointing to the positive association between parental and community involvement and increased academic achievement of Native American students.

**Desimone, L. (1999). Linking parent involvement with student achievement: Do race and income matter. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 93 (1).**

This article reports that the effects of parent involvement on student achievement vary across different races/ethnicities and family incomes. This suggests that the different parental practices (in the educational field) are interpreted in different ways depending on the cultural context. More research must be conducted in order to find the most effective parental practices in different cultures.

**Deslandes, R. & Bertrand, R. (2005). Motivation of parent involvement in secondary-level schooling. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 98(3), 164-175.**

This article demonstrated that, during adolescence, factors predicting parent involvement at home and parent involvement at school are different. First, parent involvement at home seems to concern both parents and their adolescents. Specifically, parent involvement at home is influenced by adolescents' involvement demands to their parent concerning academic projects. Then, parent involvement at school seems to concern more parents and schools. In fact, parent involvement at school is influenced by the extent to which parents think that they must, as a part of their parents' role, be involved in their adolescent's education and by parents' perceptions of teachers' involvement invitations. Finally, this study suggests that predictive factors of parent involvement in secondary-level at home and school vary across grade-levels.

**Domina, T. (2005). Leveling the home advantage: Assessing the effectiveness of parental involvement in elementary school. *Sociology of education*, 78, 233-249.**

This research highlights three important elements. First, when controlling for different background characteristics (socioeconomic characteristics of family and schools and prior child performance), different parent involvement practices do not always boost children's achievement (cognitive development) and can, sometimes, have negative influence on children's achievement. However, some parent involvement practices have been found to be correlated negatively with children's behavioral problems. Finally, results suggest that some parental involvement practices are more positive for children whose parents have a low socioeconomic status than for those whose parents have a high socioeconomic status.

**Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community involvement: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76.**

In this article, parent involvement is considered using a theory that postulates that education is influenced by three spheres (school, family, community). These spheres act separately or jointly. As an example, when schools choose to minimize communication with parents and communities, the school's sphere of influence affects children's learning in a way that is separated from other spheres. According to this theory, when these three spheres act together (in a joint fashion), they are considered overlapping. This overlap occurs through

school/family/community partnership in a child's education. Consistent with this theory, the author argues that successful involvement programs give particular attention to each of the three spheres. This article proposes that programs are supervised by an ACTION team (composed of people from the school, families and the community).

**Epstein, J. L. (1998). What we learn from international studies of school-family-community partnerships. *Childhood Education, 74(6), 392-394.***

This paper highlights the fact that parents are, all around the world, interested in their children and that they impact their children's learning. If schools implement successful involvement programs, all parents, even those who are more at-risk for low involvement, can become involved.

**Epstein, J. L. & Sheldon S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *The Journal of Educational Research, 95(5), 308-318.***

Results from this research show that partnerships between schools, community and families improve student attendance at school and reduce absenteeism. Authors of this paper provide some guidance for how to improve attendance with family and community involvement.

**Fege, A. F. (2006). Getting ruby a quality public education: Forty-five years of building the demand for quality public schools through parental and public involvement. *Harvard Educational Review, 76(4), 570-586,***

Based on an historical review of the African American parents' struggle for school integration and for their children's access to quality educational services, the authors suggest major recommendations concerning parental and community involvement in education. Among these recommendations, the author argues that federal policy plays an important role in enhancing both parent and community involvement. In addition, community involvement must be considered as an important influence for improving the quality of education in some difficult schools. It is also suggested that information concerning child achievement (based on tests, etc.) should be explained to parents and members of communities in order for them to be able to use this information as a way to become mobilized and to pressure for change.

**Gibson, D. M. & Jefferson R. N. (2006). The effect of perceived parental involvement and the use of growth-fostering relationships on the self-concept in adolescents participating in gear up. *Adolescence, 41(161), 111-125.***

This article evaluates the impact of parent involvement on the adolescents' self-concept. Particularly, this study reveals that parent involvement is positively correlated with adolescents' self-concept development.

**Grolnick, W. S., Benjet, C., Kurowski, C. O. & Apostoleris, N. H. Predictors of parents involvement in children's schooling. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89(3), 538-548.***

In this paper, parent involvement is defined as the dedication of resources by the parent to the child within a given domain. In all, three types of parent involvement are considered: 1) Behavior: participation in activities at school (e.g. attending parent-teacher conferences) and at home (e.g. helping with homework); 2) Cognitive-intellectual: exposing the child to intellectually stimulating activities (e.g. going to the library); 3) Personal: knowing about and keeping abreast of what is going on with the child in school. Results of this research suggest that socioeconomic level is a strong predictor of behavior and cognitive-intellectual involvement. However, personal involvement does not seem to be affected by low socioeconomic level, suggesting that parents from different socioeconomic classes are equally involved personally. Results of this research also demonstrated that parents and child characteristics (or attitudes) are associated with cognitive-intellectual involvement: Parents who see themselves as efficacious, who consider their role as a teacher role and who consider their children as easy ones, are more likely to involve themselves in cognitive activities with their children.

**Hanson, S. L. (2007). Success in science among young African American Women. *Journal of Family Issues, 28(1), 3-33.***

Past research has found that African American women are interested and engaged in science learning in high school even if they experience sexism and racism. It is family support that explains why these women have positive experience in science. Specifically, family support is generally positively associated with African American women's science experiences. This is also the case for White women's science experiences. However, the article reports that the types of family support that are important for White and African American women's experience are not exactly the same.

**Healthy Children Initiative. Departments of Education, Culture, and Employment and Health and Social Services. Retrieved August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007 from <http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/A-Z/indexA-Z.htm>**

This report details a program developed by the departments of education, culture, and employment and health and social services in the Northwest Territories to help children from prenatal to age 6. The program provides financial support to people, organizations and communities that create programs and services to work towards the vision of “healthy children of healthy parents grow up in strong, supporting families in caring communities”. The key principles of this initiative include: community ownership; culture-based, building on existing strengths of child, parent, family, and community; families as the primary teachers and caregivers; provision of a full range of family supports; agencies working together to support families; evaluation and continuous improvement.

**Honouring the Spirit of our Children: A Framework for School Counselling Programs in the Northwest Territories, 2004. Northwest Territories Education, Culture, and Employment. Retrieved August 8, 2007, from [http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Divisions/kindergarten\\_g12/indexK12.htm](http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Divisions/kindergarten_g12/indexK12.htm)**

This document describes the current state and future directions of school counselling in the Northwest Territories. A section of this report discusses the implementation and role of *School Community Counsellors*. In 1985, the government of the NWT introduced an amendment to the education act that provided for the enforcement of the Compulsory School Attendance Provision. With this amendment came the creation of a new position--School Community Counsellor—designed to help communities implement the provision and improve attendance in their local schools. Although school community counsellors were meant to work closely with parents to foster interest in their child’s education and trust in the school, they find that they spend much of their time monitoring attendance and have come to be seen as “attendance administrators”. The authors recommend stronger school counselling programs which would allow for the counsellors to work closely with families and assist them with routines at home and at school. In this way families would be less stressed, and children could attend school regularly and experience success.

**Hover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S. & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved?**

**Research findings and implications.** *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 105-130.

This article reviews research findings concerning the factors that contribute to increased parent involvement. From this review, parental role construction, parents' sense of efficacy for helping their children in school, school climate, invitations from teachers, invitation from the child, family socioeconomic status, parent's knowledge, skills, time and energy and family culture have been identified as factors that can enhance parent involvement. The authors argue that schools must adjust their efforts concerning parent involvement to each particular family culture. Specifically, schools must take into consideration the native culture of parents from an immigrant family when asking them to participate in school activities. For example, homemade home-work, parent-teacher conferences on evenings and week-ends and home visiting by teachers are practices that can enhance parent involvement and that take into account family culture.

**Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from an Inuit Perspective.** Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Retrieved October 2 from: [http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Divisions/kindergarten\\_g12/curriculum/curriculum\\_Services/INUUQATIGIIT%20Curriculum/INUUQATIGIIT.pdf](http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Divisions/kindergarten_g12/curriculum/curriculum_Services/INUUQATIGIIT%20Curriculum/INUUQATIGIIT.pdf)

This document outlines a culture-based curriculum from the Inuit perspective that is grounded in the belief that education must be community based. The goals of this curriculum include: maintaining and enhancing Inuit language and culture in the school and the community, enhancing unity within Inuit groups, creating a link between the past and the present, encouraging the practice of Inuit values and beliefs, and encouraging pride in Inuit identity to enhance personal identity.

**Inuvialuit Education Foundation: Education and Training Policy, 2007.** Retrieved August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007 from <http://www.irc.inuvialuit.com/community/education.html>

This document outlines the programs of the Inuvialuit Education Foundation. This foundation was designed to increase the number of beneficiaries accessing and completing post-secondary education programs. It also seeks to support the overall goals of the Inuvialuit Land Claim, enabling beneficiaries to be equal and meaningful participants in the northern economy. The programs they currently

operate are a tutor program, a post-secondary financial assistance program, a scholarship program, and a summer language camp program.

**Izzo, C. V., Weissberg, R. P., Kasprow, W. J. & Fendrich, M. (1999). A longitudinal assessment of teacher perceptions of parent involvement in children's education and school performance. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(6), 817-839.**

This study highlights a number of relationships between parent involvement and child performance across grade-levels. Among the findings of this study: (1) some parent involvement practices tend to show a small, but significant, decline as their children progress across grades-levels, (2) parent involvement practices are positively associated with school performance (in different domains), (3) parent participation at home and school is associated with positive change in school performance as their children progress across grade-levels (4) parent involvement at home ("in educational activities") is the type of parent involvement that is positively associated with the largest number of performance variables. It also best predicts academic achievement.

**Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Urban Education*, 42(1), 82-110.**

This meta-analysis of 52 studies concerning parent involvement in schools revealed that: (1) overall parental involvement was positively associated with achievement for all children (majority and minority children), (2) when artificially initiated through parent involvement programs, parent involvement was also positively associated with achievement, but to a smaller extent when compared with voluntarily initiated parental involvement, (3) some practices of parental involvement that are considered as more subtle (i. e. "parental style and expectations") had more positive influence on achievement than more visible practices (e. g. concrete parent participation at school), and (4) the relationship between parent involvement and achievement was generally positive, regardless of race.

**Kashala, E. , Elgen, I., Sommerfelt, K., & Tylleskar, T.(2005). Teacher ratings of mental health among school children in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 14, 208-215.**

Results of a study conducted with 1,187 children aged 7-9 years, recruited from randomly selected schools, showed that poor nutrition, low socioeconomic status and illness were found to increase the risk for mental health problems and low school performance.

**Kwarteng, E. F. (2006) *Implementing Nunavut Education Act: Compulsory School Attendance Policy, Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 55, 1-22.***

Kwarteng discusses the implementation of the Nunavut compulsory school attendance policy as part of the Nunavut Education Act (NEA; 2002). The compulsory school attendance policy stipulates mandatory school attendance and monetary fines for parents who do not comply with this policy. Kwarteng argues that this policy may not achieve its objective unless the District Education Authority (DEA) of each community is allowed to adapt the policy to the local context. Kwarteng points out that the cooperation of parents is needed to successfully implement this policy; however, most Inuit parents are not fully informed of the goals and values of the schools in their communities, and even when they are informed, they may not share these goals and values.

**Labrador Inuit Association Annual Report, 2003-2004. Retrieved August 8, 2007 from [http://www.nunatsiavut.com/pdfs/LIA\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://www.nunatsiavut.com/pdfs/LIA_Annual_Report.pdf)**

This annual report from the Labrador Inuit Association includes a section on Education that details initiatives promoting Inuit education in Nunatsiavut. These initiatives include the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) designed to provide financial support to full-time university students. The report mentions two projects designed to promote awareness of education and career opportunities: A game and activity book, and a COOL ED mascot. The report also emphasizes programs in place to train teachers, early childhood educators, and nurses.

**Learning: Tradition and Change in the Northwest Territories. (1982). Prepared by the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, Yellowknife. Special committee on education. ERIC No. ED345928**

This document summarizes public hearings held across the Northwest territories pertaining to education in 1981-1982. The report outlines issues for education such as the preparation for Native life versus the preparation for a wage economy, choosing among bilingual programs, the need for a culturally

appropriate curriculum, poor attendance and high dropout rates, discipline problems, lack of Native teachers, the need for parent education and parent-school liaisons, the need for adult and continuing education, limited funding, and large differences between educational policies and classroom practices. The report makes restructuring recommendations to address these issues.

**Machen, S. M., Wilson, J. D. & Notar, C. E. (2005). Parental involvement in classroom. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 32(1), 13-16.**

This article highlights some practices that schools can use to enhance parental participation in the classroom. Among them, we find: maximizing the frequency of “positive” communications between schools and parents, organizing workshops to provide parents more information about what their children are able to achieve in school (“children’s academic potential and aspirations”), and find some ways to minimize the factors that contribute to low involvement (e. g. parents’ work schedule that does not allow them to participate in schools, etc.).

**Mackay, R., & Myles, L. (1995). A major challenge for the educational system: Aboriginal retention and dropout. In M. Battiste & J. Barman (Eds.). *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds* (pp 157-178). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.**

The authors identify three areas thought to contribute to Native student dropout: Poor language skills, lack of parental support, and poor home-school communication. They conducted a drop-out survey of educators (Native and Non-native), dropouts (on and off reserve) and parents (on and off reserve). They found that inadequate English language skills contribute to Native youth drop-outs, that Native parents are not involved in the schooling of their children and that this contributes to drop-outs, and that home-school communication is lacking in both quality and quantity in Native communities, again contributing to high drop-out rates.

**Mattingly, D. J., Prislun, R., McKenzie, T. L., Rodriguez, J. L. & Kayzar, B. (2002). Evaluation evaluations: The case of parent involvement programs. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(4), 549-576.**

This article reviews 41 studies evaluating the efficacy of parent involvement programs. The article reports that, considering these studies’ non-rigorous data collection methods and evaluation designs, and the fact that they have often not taken into account demographic and socio-economic characteristics, parent

involvement programs cannot be considered as causes of improvement in children learning. It is recommended that the efficacy of these parent involvement programs be evaluated in a more rigorous way.

**Mercedes, T. S. (1997). Teacher education and parent involvement : Reflections from preservice teachers. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 24(4), 233-239.**

This article highlights a new perspective concerning parent involvement programs, namely, the teachers' perspective. Based on results from a survey completed by preservice teachers, the author reports that, preservice teachers would like to acquire, through their teacher education program, more theoretical knowledge concerning parent involvement programs (theories, research results). It is also suggested that direct contacts with parents (during courses and also fieldwork) should be included in teacher education programs. Informing teachers about parent involvement programs should be an integral part of their teacher education program.

**Mission Statement: Kativik School Board. Retrieved August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 from [http://www.kativik.qc.ca/downloads/mission\\_statement\\_e.pdf](http://www.kativik.qc.ca/downloads/mission_statement_e.pdf)**

This document outlines the mission statement of the Kativik School Board. In partnership with parents, the communities, and other stakeholders in education, the Kativik School Board seeks "to provide the people of Nunavik with educational services that will guide and enable all learners to develop the qualities, skills, and abilities that are necessary to achieve well-being and self-actualization". The principles of the Kativik school board include: the right to education; Inuit control of Inuit education; partnership; Inuktitut (of primary importance); importance of other languages; culturally responsive curriculum; safe environment; need for lifelong learning; physical, intellectual and emotional development; high achievement in education; equity; flexibility; research; and management.

**Morgan, N. A. (2002). "If not now, then when?": First Nations Jurisdiction over Education: A Literature Review. A report to the minister's national working group on First Nations education. Retrieved on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007 from [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/krw/jur\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/krw/jur_e.html)**

This document reviews literature on the subject of First Nations jurisdiction over education and recommends strategies for implementing this jurisdiction. The principle recommendation is for the Government of Canada to recognize First

Nations' inherent jurisdiction over education immediately. The paper discusses a history of First Nations education, key concepts related to First Nations jurisdiction over education, the legal basis upon which governments with an interest in First Nations education can rely, conceptual models for the exercise of jurisdiction over First Nations education, a summary of the key aspects of the existing models of First Nations jurisdiction over education, and ongoing initiatives across the country as well as recommendations and strategies for moving forward.

**Muhammad, C. G. (2007). Book Review: African Americans and college choice: The influence of family and school. *Urban Education*, 42(2), 185-190.**

The book that is reviewed suggests that college aspirations and that ability in school in minority groups (mostly for African Americans) are not the main predictors of college enrollment, contrary to our Western conceptions of enrollment in college. In fact, for African Americans, decision to go to college is more influenced by the value (mostly monetary value) that is given to higher education in their community and by high school's orientation toward a multicultural curriculum.

**New Paths for Education Website: Kativik School Board. Retrieved August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 from [http://www.kativik.net/pp/index.php?module=subjects&func=viewpage&page\\_id=8](http://www.kativik.net/pp/index.php?module=subjects&func=viewpage&page_id=8)**

This website describes an education initiative of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada that is administered in the Nunavik area by the Kativik School Board. The objective of this program is to work in partnership with Inuit to improve education programming and to strengthen the governance structure of its educational system. Themes for this initiative include: Strengthening First Nations management and governance capacity, improving effectiveness of classroom instruction, supporting community and parental involvement, and aiding the school to work transition. Examples of 2005-2006 projects from this initiative in the area of "homework and social intervention" include parenting courses, a drop-out student survey, a "show kids you care" program, and an "opening school doors to our community" program.

**Rogers, J. (2006). Forces of accountability? The power of poor parents in NCLB. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(4), 611-641.**

This article argues that inequalities in the education system (inequalities of resources between different groups of people, e. g. majority and minority people) must be taken into account to improve education quality. The program NCLB (“No Child Left Behind”) implemented in the United States to improve the educational system failed to address the following issue: What can we do to reduce inequalities? The author argues that public power (from parents) play a major role in reducing these inequalities in education. Consequently, governmental policies (like NCLB) must be corrected in order for parents to learn more, know more and participate more in the education.

**Sheldon, S. B. (2003). Linking school – family – community partnerships in urban elementary schools to student achievement on state tests. *The Urban Review*, 35 (2), 149-165.**

This study suggests that the schools’ efforts in implanting partnerships with parents and communities, in urban and low-income areas, leads to students’ higher results on achievement tests. However, this study reports that for this positive result to take place, schools must invest particular efforts in trying to reach all the families and the community. More importantly, it is important to focus on people who resist being involved.

**State of Inuit Learning in Canada: Prepared for the Canadian Council on Learning. Prepared by ITK Socio-Economic Department. Retrieved September 24, 2007 from <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/NR/rdonlyres/03AC4F69-D0B8-4EA3-85B1-56C0AC2B158C/0/StateOfInuitLearning.pdf>**

This document outlines details on the following issues pertaining to Inuit education in Canada: background on Inuit Education, the state of current K-12 and post-secondary education, the state of work and learning, the state of early childhood learning, the state of health and learning, success stories and best practices, and finally current issues that need to be addressed. These issues include literacy, creation of a National Inuit Education Resource and Research Centre, and support for language and culture.

**Stein, C. B. & Garcia, E. E. (1997). Multilingualism in U.S. schools: Treating language as a resource for instruction and parent involvement. *Early Child Development and Care*, 127(1), 141-155.**

The authors of this article argue that multilingualism in U.S. schools, in a responsive pedagogy perspective (i. e. a pedagogy that considers the child, and

his cultural context, as the main actors of his learning), allows parents from minority to involve themselves in their children learning. Taking into account the language of minorities can enhance parent involvement in education.

**Worobey, J., & Worobey, H. S. (1999). The impact of a two-year school breakfast program for preschool-aged children on their nutrient intake and pre-academic performance. *Child Study Journal*, 29,113-131.**

This research focused on a breakfast program aiming at increasing children's school performance. Results of this research confirm the fact that introducing such a program has positive consequences on the performance of children on a number of tasks.

**Yu, S., & Hannum, E. (2007). Food for thought: Poverty, family nutritional environment, and children's educational performance in rural China. *Sociological Perspectives*, 50, 53-77.**

In developing countries, access to nutritious food is often limited for poor households. The results of this research show that in rural China the nutritional environment is associated with household socioeconomic status. Results also show that a good nutritional environment predicts the performance at school by children and that it is an important mediator of poverty on schooling for children in primary school.

## Appendix B

### Notes from Interviews

#### Pond Inlet Nunavut

##### *Interview #1:*

#### **What strategies do you have to get parents involved in children's education? What ideas/suggestions do you have?**

Parents can volunteer at the school - do activities with the children. For example, family tree, special occasions...

Mothers are involved in the breakfast program. What about fathers? No

Another example, is in Pond Inlet they had a shop class for elementary students. Initially her son was not too interested but this the father was happy about this activity "made him happy" and in turn he encouraged his son in school. The son was encouraged to do more and one of the outcomes - the son made something for his father.

Over the past 10 years parental involvement has not increased it has stayed pretty much the same.

If she gets any ideas which beyond the regular e.g. concerts she will email me.

##### *Interview#2*

#### **What strategies do you have to get parents involved in children's education? What ideas/suggestions do you have?**

On report card days provide country food. This is the number one way to get the parents into the school and involved. Parents know that on these days something will be provided.

Also regular assemblies. For example, instead of Halloween a Multi-Cultural day. Children sing, wear costumes and most parents will visit. Have assemblies announced on the radio. The radio can also be used to get parents involved to ask parental opinion, questions, feedback...

Special occasions: parents will come to the school days to celebrate with their children (graduation), return of the sun, hat days, baby days

K-6 parents more likely to get involved in their child's education but it is also important at the secondary level. Parents get involved in Home Economics classes and making of hunting tools.

At the secondary level it is important to show appreciation for what a son/daughter has made. For example, my son in grade 12 made some traditional tools I showed my interest and appreciation for what he made by going to see it at the school. Do other parents do this? Some parents have to be involved especially when it comes to hunting.

Anything else you wish to add?

Elders must be involved in education. They have the knowledge and skills. "We are losing our Elders few remain".

### Holman Island, NWT

#### *Interview #1*

**What strategies do you have to get parents involved in children's education? What ideas/suggestions do you have?**

Involve parents in the various subject areas, for example, Social Studies have them do a family tree together, collect rocks for Science.

Teachers/school should send a memo/letter home to parents on a regular basis stating what the students will be studying in the upcoming month and what help will be needed by the parents. Some parents are not sure how to help and but are open to suggestions/requests that are made

Have a lot of cultural based activities when you do participation of parents increases, especially if it is land-based.

Involve parents in all school trips, cultural events, graduation, sports...

Teachers need to do home visits to find out general information about the child – allergies, if there is a place to do homework, is there reading material available, what cultural activities (or other activities) do they do together, what language is spoken at home, are toys/manipulatives, computer available?

Link with the community. The more parents are involved in the school the better it is for everyone.

#### *Interview#2*

**What strategies do you have to get parents involved in children's education? What ideas/suggestions do you have?**

Parents are not involved. We have tried everything to get them involved!

The community has many working parents report card time they do not even show up. What if activities took place after hours? Some might show-up.

Do teachers do home visits? "Who wants to do home visit with all the drinking and gambling that is going on – no one wants to walk into this"

There is a push to revive/keep alive the language - have parents come into the school to work directly with the child in especially in Inuinnaqtun.

Teachers need to model involvement (she is a K teacher and frequently cannot attend her son's secondary events).

Send out personalized invitations.

Have activities such as open house (come and help set-up the classroom at the beginning of the year with their children), day trips, and concerts...

Teachers who are teaching in Inuinnaqtun are swamped they have to create all their own materials it would be great if parents could help with generating materials, organize the classroom, photocopy... "If they are not strong speakers there is still an awful lot they can help with".

As a teacher, school we have tried and tried to get parents involved in their children's education (something has not been modeled for them)

Nunavik, Quebec

*Interview #1*

**What strategies do you have to get parents involved in children's education? What ideas/suggestions do you have?**

Long before children attend school, as they're growing we take on major roles in their daily routines from waking them up, brushing teeth, making sure they have urinated before going to bed, nourishing them with morning meals making sure they are not hungry. When one strives of hunger and lack of sleep their physical condition is not as it should be and would be under normal circumstances, this includes a poor performance with mental concentration.

As much as they are unconditionally loved, when they feel they are no longer loved, by seeing what their parents do may have an effect on their learning abilities and thus difficulties in learning is encountered.

When they are struck by ailments, they are brought to the medical center for assessment and treatment, making sure they're vision and hearing have not been affected nor impaired.

We take caution in making sure our children do not listen in on our discussion that is involved around a problem between us and by doing so take measures in speaking English so we are not being understood.

By half as much as we would like to offer help to the students with their education and, in the event the teacher does not show up to work due to alcohol related matters such as having had too much to drink, this adds to pressure to our will for the children to attend school and it does not seem fair to try and explain the reasons to the students why their teacher has failed to show up.

It is vital for both parents and teachers to collaborate should we want our children to attend school regularly.

We also provide learning materials at home and expose their school work on our walls, some of which we purchase ourselves from the stores.

Presently, due to the fact that we have not yet stepped a leap forward, our culture has greatly been affected mostly because we have to keep up with an ever changing world around us. We must help them recognize that we will not remain on the same path, our life is never ending and moving forward.

We must also take into consideration that we should not trail behind too much in terms of technology, therefore encouraging their knowledge in that respect.