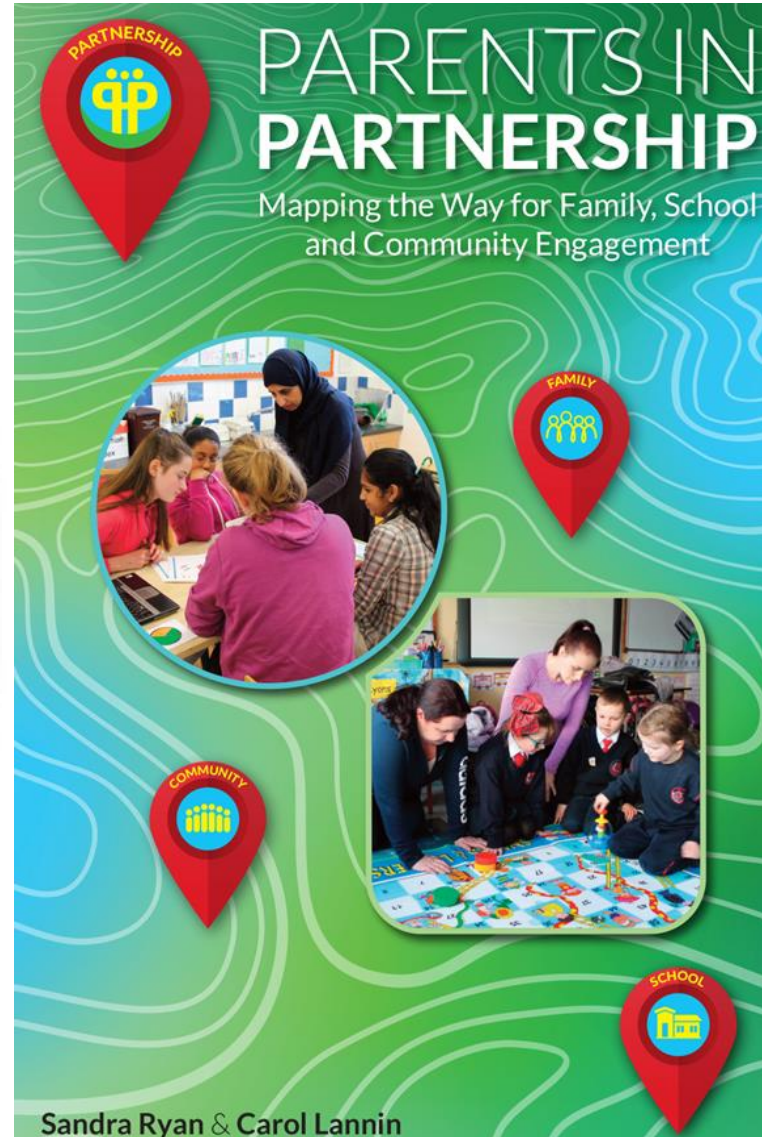Education Scotland Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home:
Student event
May 30, 2023

Dr Sandra Ryan

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

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PARENTS IN PARTNERSHIP
Mapping the Way for Family, School and Community Engagement

Sandra Ryan & Carol Lannin

Session Overview

- Personal declaration
- Why do we need parent engagement?
- Beliefs and assumptions
- Unpacking terminology
- Research findings/outcomes
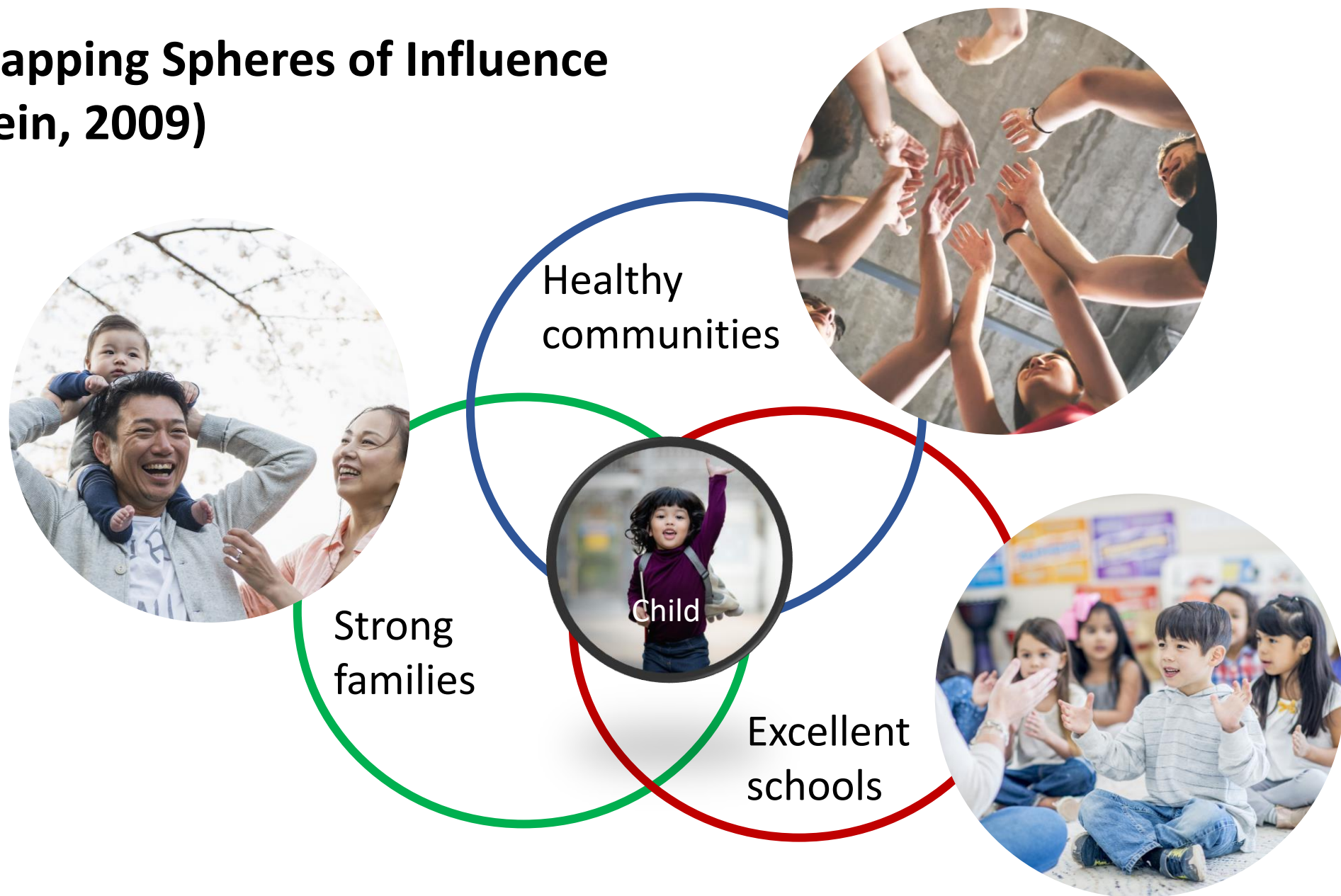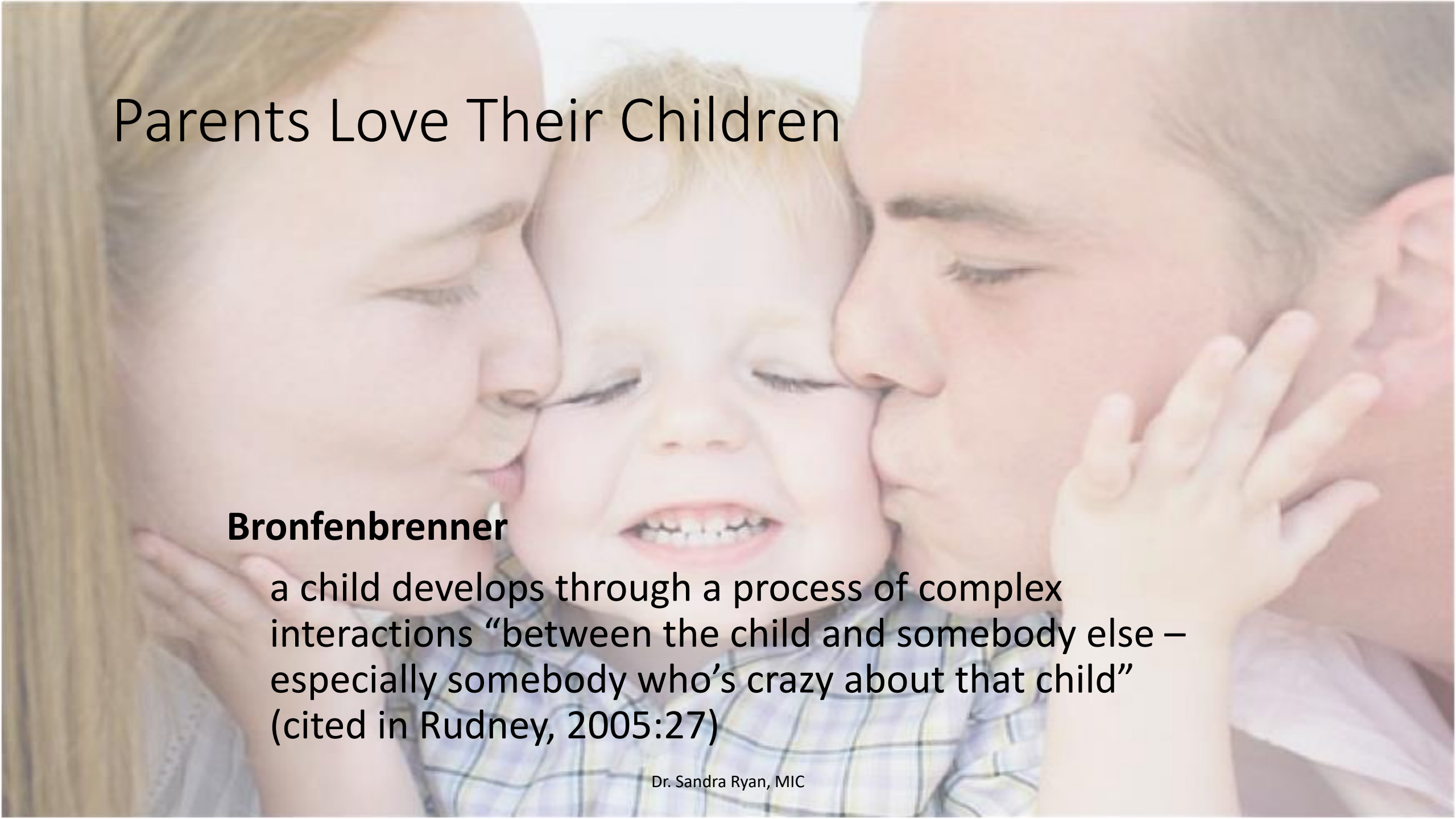- Need for teacher education
- Strategic Framework
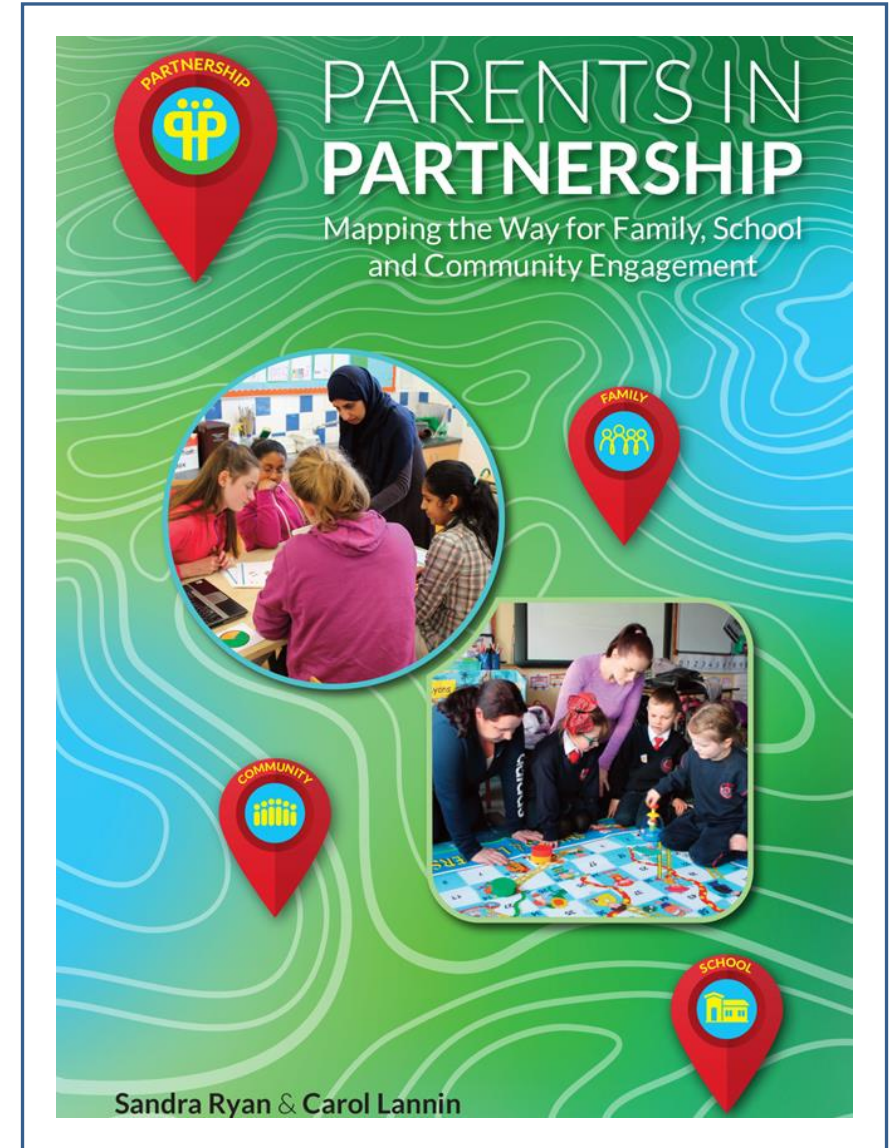
Rationale for School, Family Partnership

- From 0 to 16 a child spends 85% of time outside school

- Advancing democratic practices – a question of rights

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Overlapping Spheres of Influence (Epstein, 2009)

Healthy communities

Strong families

Child

Excellent schools

Parents Love Their Children

Bronfenbrenner

a child develops through a process of complex interactions "between the child and somebody else – especially somebody who's crazy about that child" (cited in Rudney, 2005:27)

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Beliefs and Assumptions

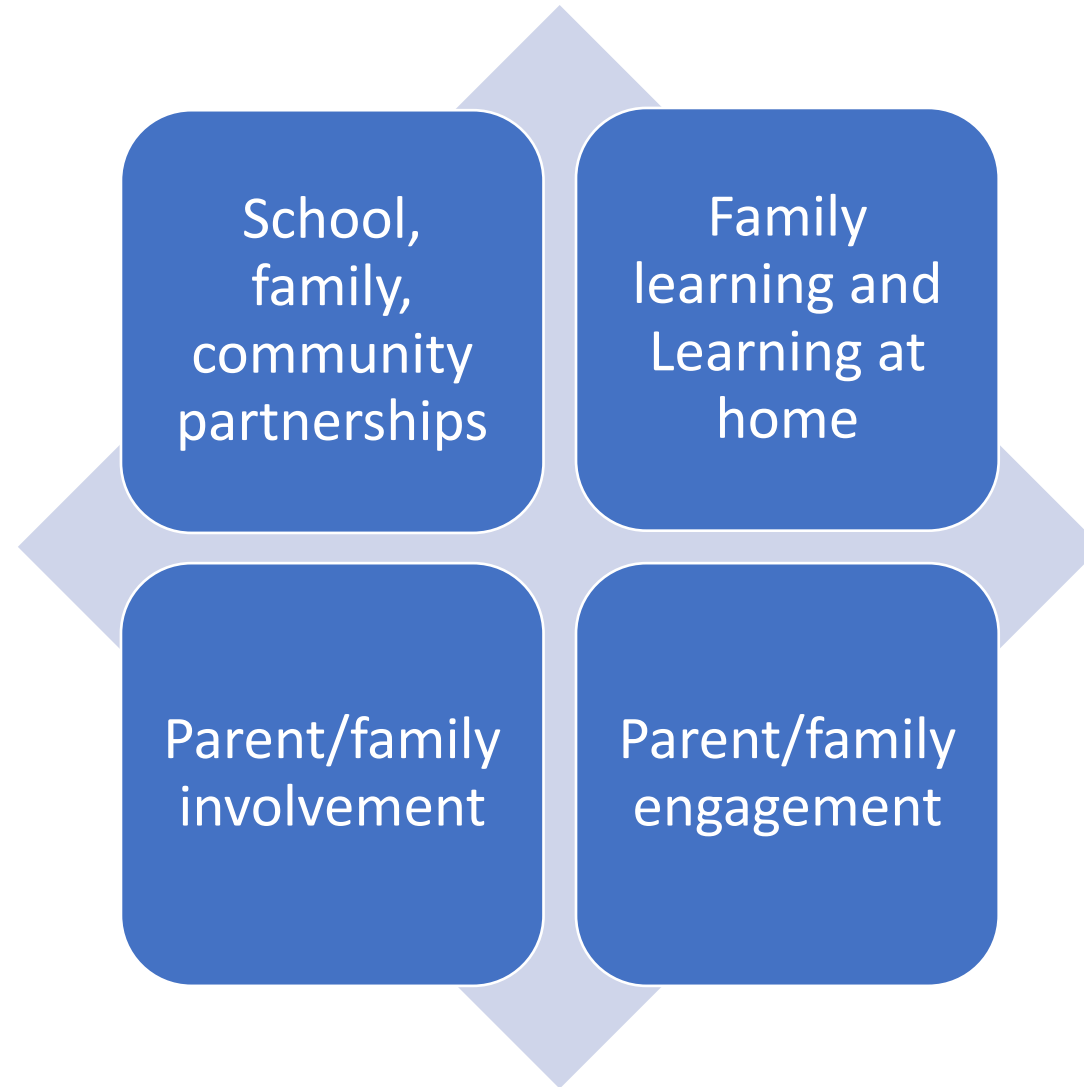'What do I believe about parents and the community in which I work?

What role do I believe parents and community should play in the school?

What opportunities have I given parents and community members to be meaningfully engaged in the school?'

(Amendt and Bousquet 2006)

Unpacking terminology

School, family, community partnerships

Family learning and Learning at home

Parent/family involvement

Parent/family engagement

Strategic Framework for:

Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home

- **Parental involvement** is about supporting pupils and their learning – parenting practices, aspirations, talking about school with children, participation in school activities, communication with teachers about their child, rules at home

- **Parental engagement** can be considered as active engagement in learning – supported by discussion between parents, teachers and practitioners – represents a greater "commitment, ownership of action" than parental involvement (pp. 30-31)

Research Findings

There is widespread agreement about the need for family engagement in education and compelling research evidence worldwide demonstrates its impact on a range of outcomes for children. Teachers want the best for their students and they need to know how to work with parents in positive ways to improve student success. Families also want the best for their children and they need strategies to help their children achieve their potential. Children have greater success in school when they receive support, encouragement and guidance from their parents, teachers and other community members (Epstein 2011).

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Parent engagement and success in educational outcomes

- Academic outcomes (literacy, numeracy, science)

- Regular school attendance

- Improved behaviour

- Better social skills

- Greater motivation and interest in learning

- Greater engagement in school work

- Higher educational aspirations and expectations

- Stronger value of education

- Support school transitions

(see Sheldon 2019; Epstein and Associates 2019; McConnell & Kubina, 2014; Wilder, 2014 and lots of others)

Continuum of impact on <mark>student achievement</mark> for family engagement strategies (the way they are typically done)
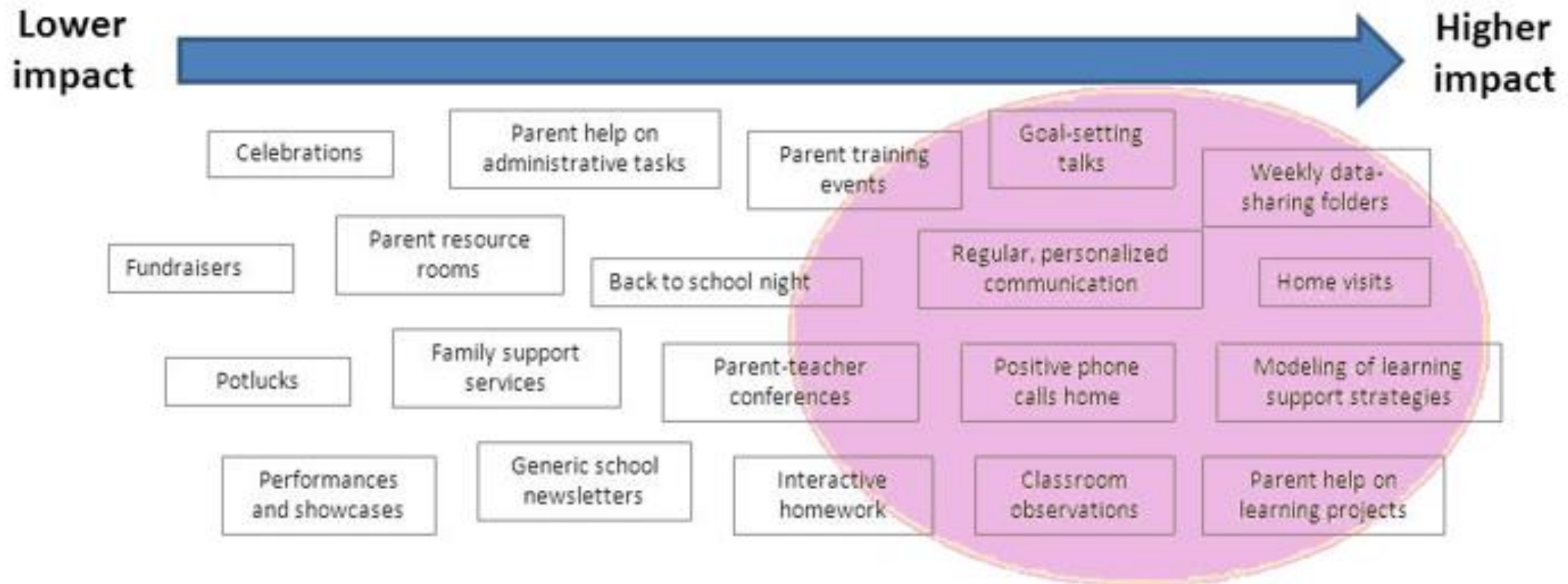

Lower impact →→→ Higher impact

Celebrations	Parent help on administrative tasks	Parent training events	Goal-setting talks	Weekly data-sharing folders
Fundraisers	Parent resource rooms	Back to school night	Regular, personalized communication	Home visits
Potlucks	Family support services	Parent-teacher conferences	Positive phone calls home	Modeling of learning support strategies
Performances and showcases	Generic school newsletters	Interactive homework	Classroom observations	Parent help on learning projects

Family Engagement Center, OSU   Dr Sandra Ryan, MIC

Figure 1: Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (2010)

Type 1

Parenting
Help all families establish home environments to support children as students

Learning at Home
Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum related activities, decisions and planning

Type 4

Type 2

Communicating
Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programmes and their children's progress

Decision-making
Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives

Type 5

Type 3

Volunteering
Recruit and organise parent help and support

Collaborating with the community
Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programmes, family practices, and student learning and development

Type 6

Core work of schools/settings

- Core part of teaching and learning

- Carefully delineated

- Planned for by teachers

- Timetabled/scheduled

Parent engagement has to be part of what we do in the same way as literacy and numeracy.

Also has to be systematic and planned – move beyond "random acts" (Weiss et al.)

Need for teacher professional development

Teacher education programmes worldwide do very little (Epstein and Sanders 2006; Pushor and Ciufferelli Parker, 2013; Willemse et al., 2016;)

Teaching Council (2020) in Ireland has introduced a new standard for ITE programmes that includes **Professional Relationships and working with parents**

Teachers and Family Engagement

- Establishing relationships with families is the most significant challenge encountered when entering the profession

- Teachers report high levels of anxiety in their encounters with families (Evans, 2013)

- "The future of school and family partnerships rests in improving teacher education and training (Epstein, 1992:1147)

Teacher Education Challenges

- Cultural disconnect (Flanigan, 2007)
- No experience being a parent (Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003)
- School ethos of family roles – mixed messages from school staff
- University regulations limit student teacher interactions with families and communities (Evans, 2013)

Key learning from course

"this course showed me how to interact with parents appropriately"

"I feel more ready now – I know strategies to use when dealing with difficult parents"

"I used to be afraid of how to include parents in the classroom but this has changed now"

Why Module on Parent Engagement?

"..from talking to friends I know they would not know how to engage families or feel the importance to do it"

"I had no idea parents could be involved in the classroom. I have seen so many examples of how they can and how excited they are to help out and be involved"

"It is an endeavour that many teachers have little knowledge about and find daunting but can be so worthwhile"

"School-parent relations are more important to children's education and development than I previously thought"

"Parental involvement is crucial"

Implications for Initial Teacher Education

Readiness of undergraduate students to comprehend the complexities and implications of what's involved – timing within the programme

Limitations of a single course/module to develop this – need for integration across other programme areas

Continuous professional development is necessary – school leadership required for whole school approach

Course content – need for link to practice and challenges of this

Methodologies – interactive, discursive, reflective, linked to practice
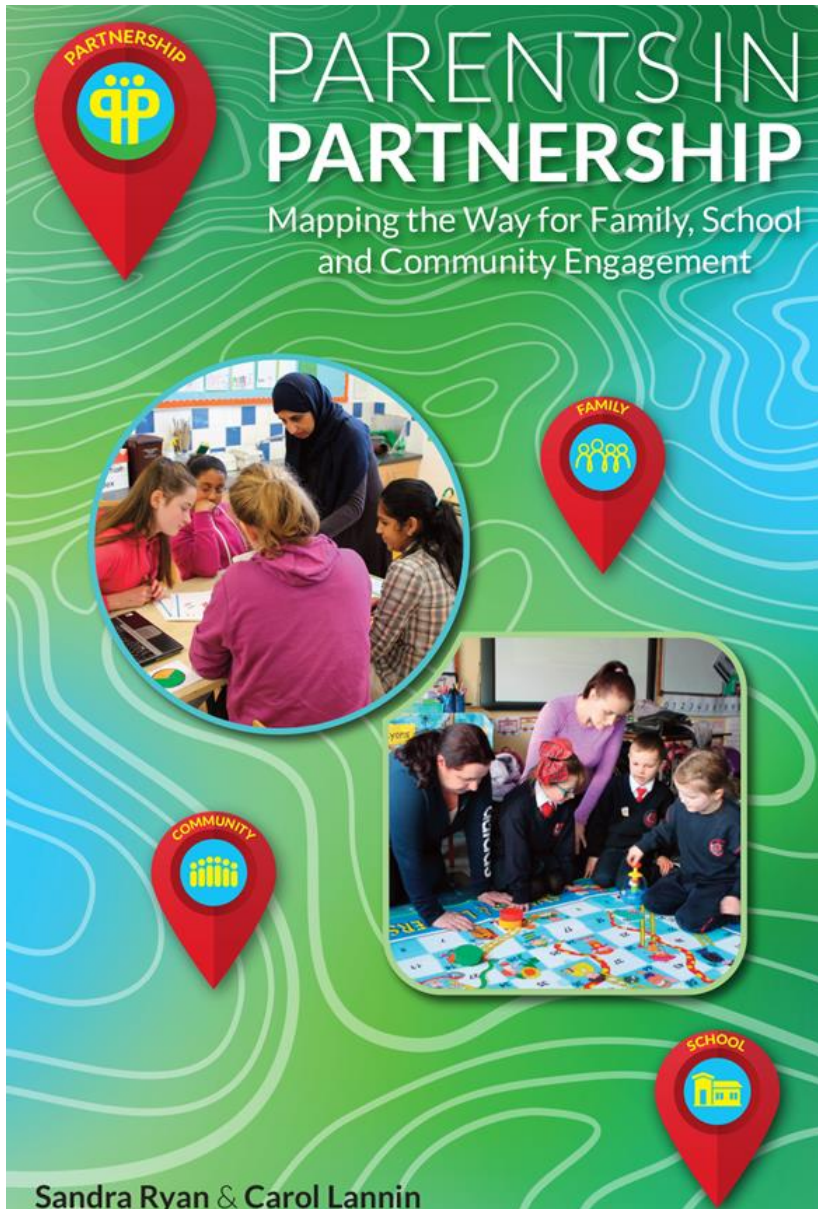
- oral language and literacy initiatives with parents such as storybook reading, Happy Talk, One Book Project, Storytime and Kidstalk.

- maths activities and games with parents in the classroom

- Science for fun, local history trail, school garden, geography ideas

- nutrition, marketing and food labelling

- reach all parents, especially fathers

- challenges posed by issues of diversity and inclusion

- Teacher professional development for family engagement

Conaty 2002:181

"despite educational theory emphasising the role of parents, educational practice has lingered behind. The formation and culture of teachers did not lead to their having a strong practical conviction about the role of parents in the school....It was taken for granted that the axiom "parents as prime educators" referred to what went on at home. From a teacher's point, therefore, there was an absence of a positive appreciation of the possible role of parents. There was a negative apprehension in which parents were seen as threatening, intrusive, a nuisance, not really understanding the school and not professional (see Wilton, 1975). It is important when seeking to change school culture to see the teacher as the medium through which the change must pass, otherwise the change may be resisted or shaped in an unintended way (Hatton, 1985)."

Strategic Framework for:

Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home
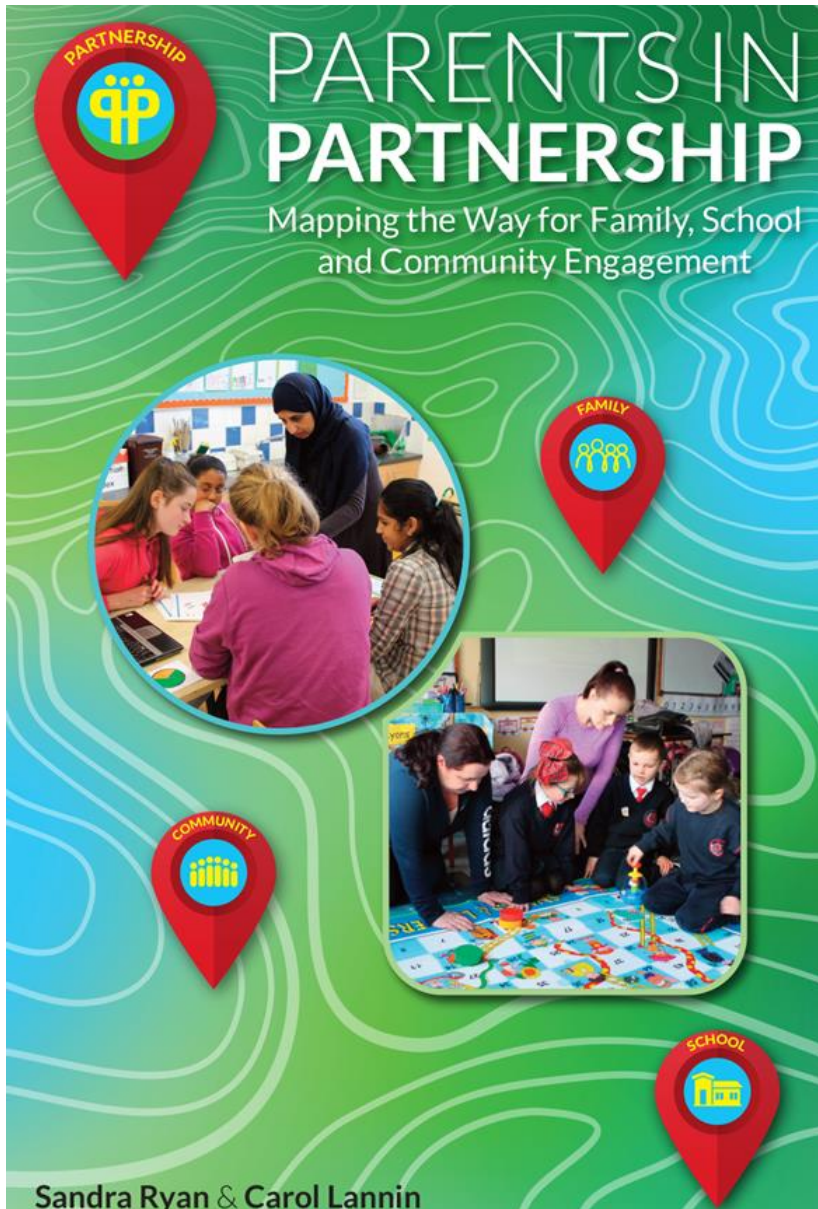
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Thank you

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