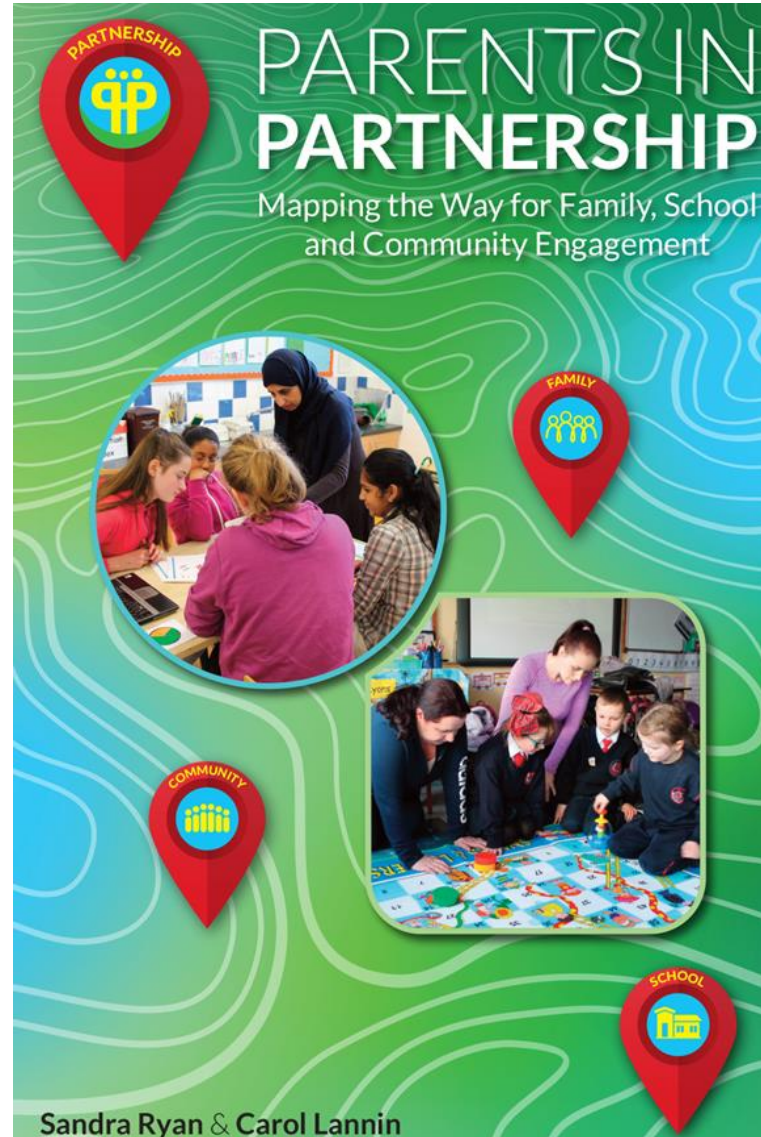# Education Scotland Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home

Dr Sandra Ryan
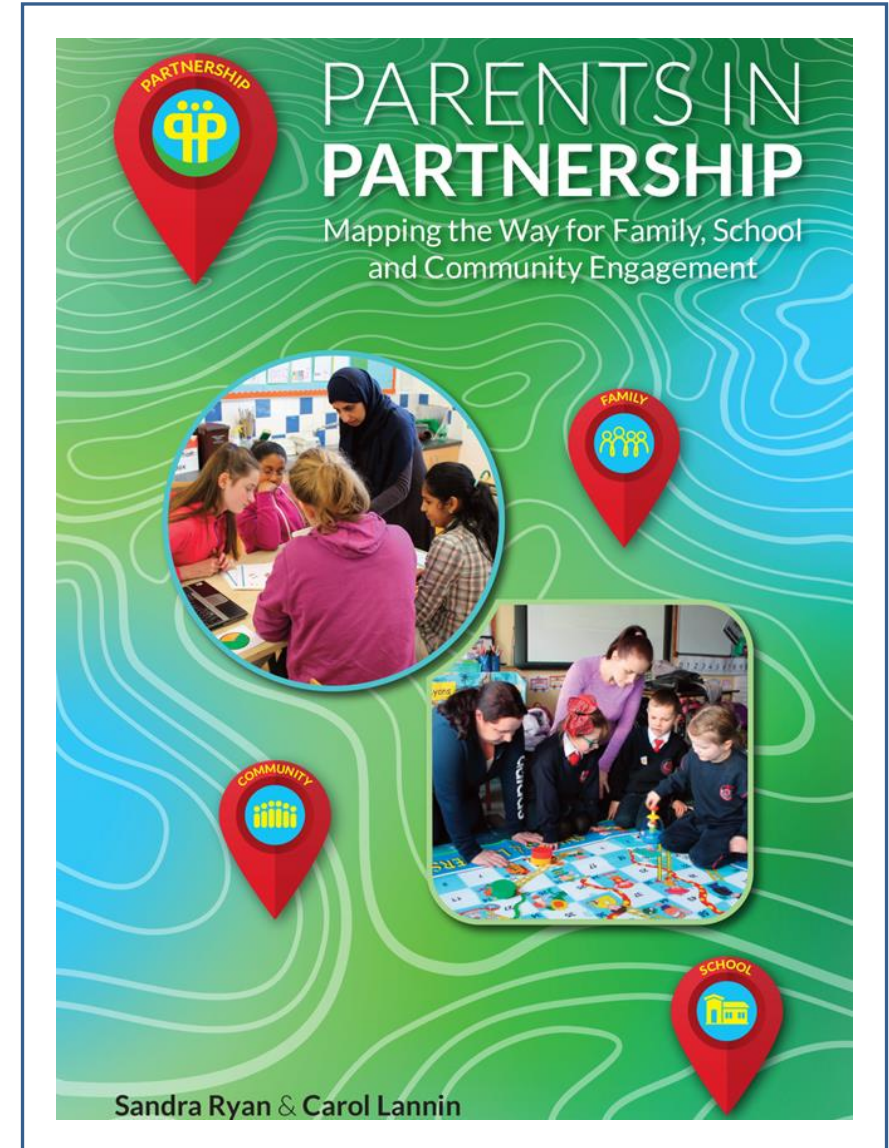
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
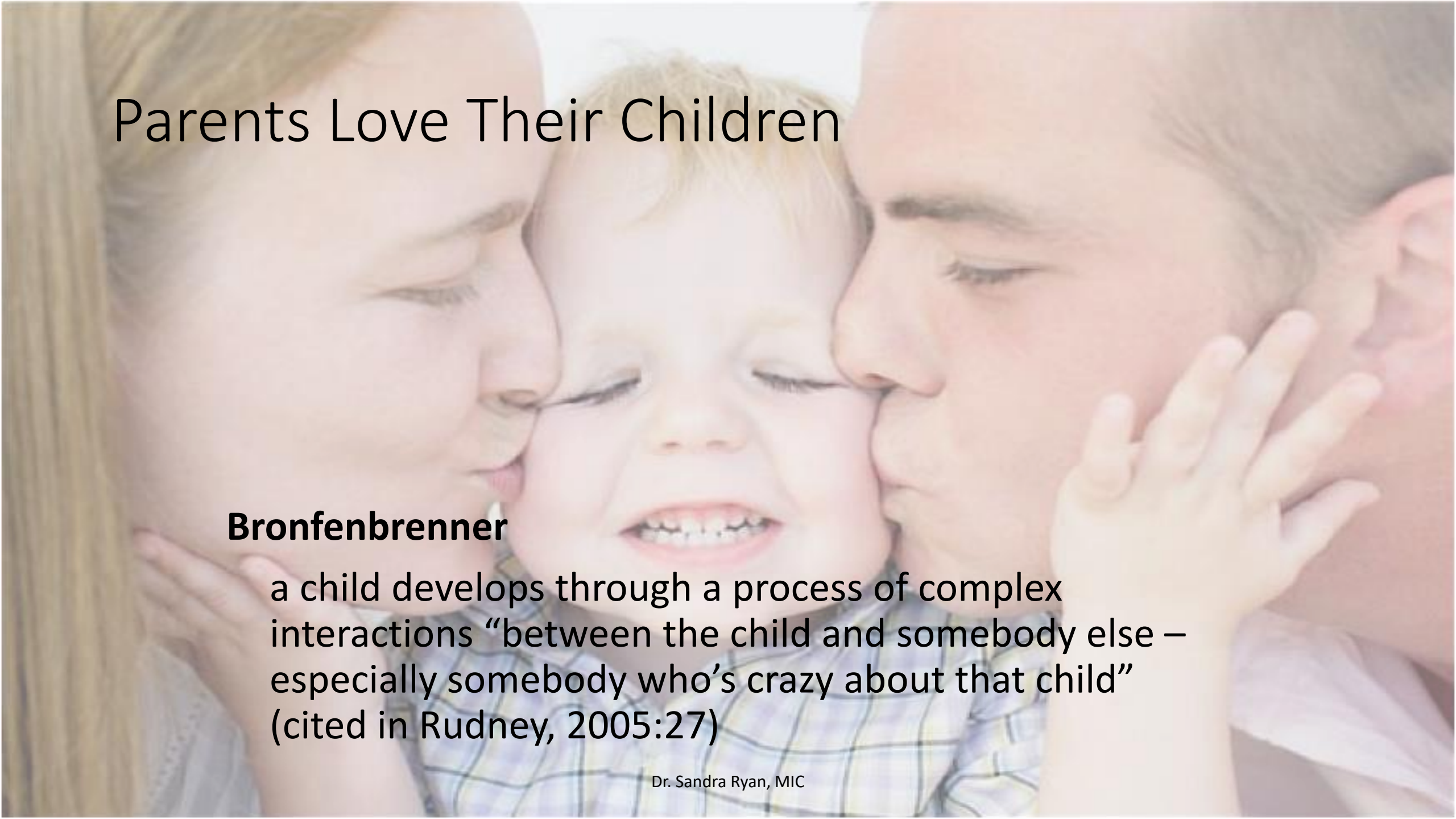
Twitter: @dripsey1

Session Overview

- Personal declaration
- Rationale for parent engagement
- Unpacking terminology
- Research findings/outcomes
- Need for teacher education
- Strategic Framework

PARTNERSHIP

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

FAMILY

COMMUNITY

SCHOOL

Sandra Ryan & Carol Lannin

Rationale for Parent Engagement

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

- Advancing democratic practices – a question of rights

- "….the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and [the constitution] guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide… for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children." Bunreacht na hÉireann, 1937, Article 42 (Irish Constitution)

Dr. Sandra Ryan, MIC

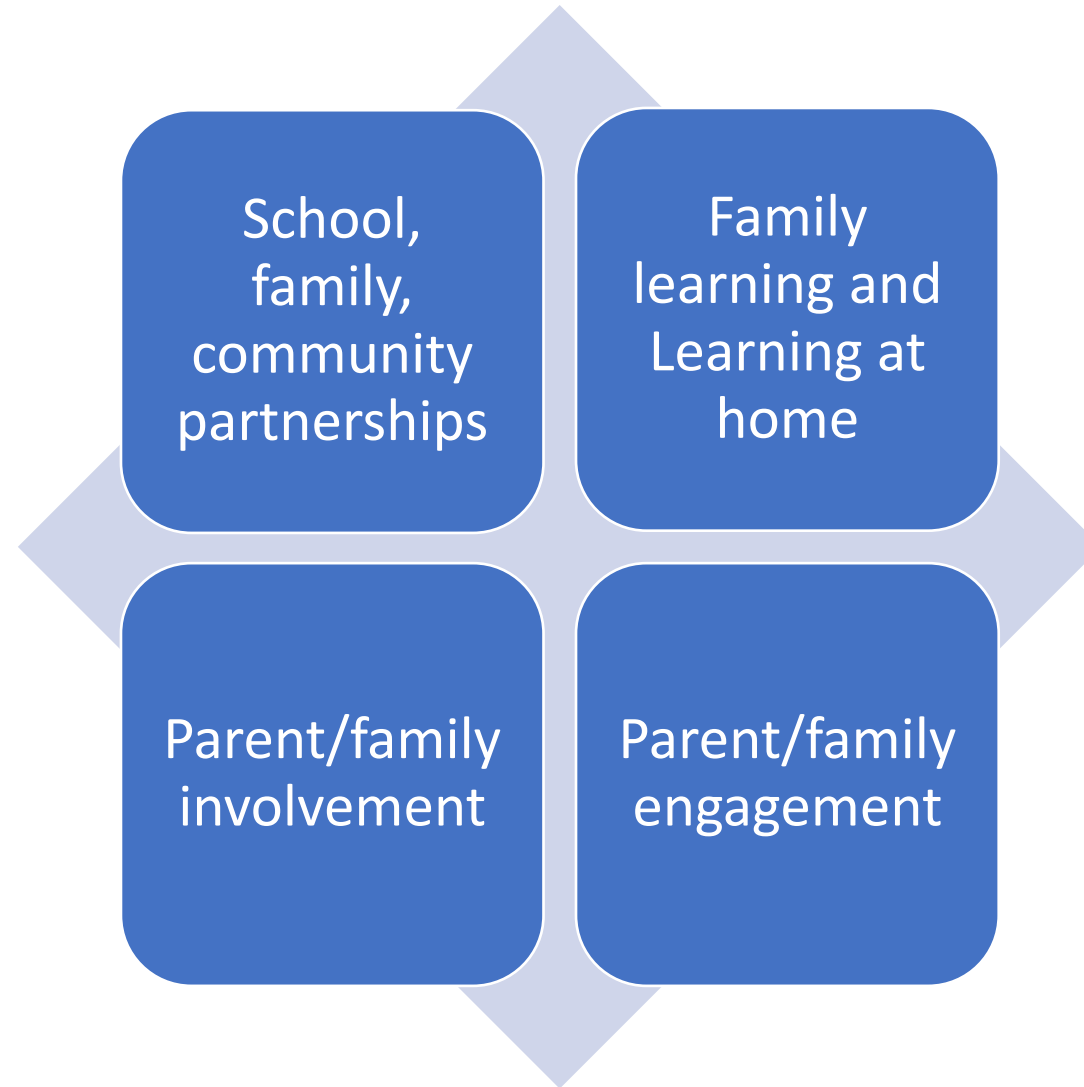# Parents Love Their Children

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)

Dr. Sandra Ryan, MIC

Overlapping Spheres of Influence
(Epstein, 1987, 2009, 2019)

Healthy communities

Strong families

Child

Excellent schools

Unpacking terminology

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).

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)

Nixon (March 2021)
Social-Emotional
and Behavioural
Outcomes in Early
Adolescence

Parenting and parent-child relationships emerged across the board as **strong predictors of social-emotional and behavioural well-being**. Promoting positive relationships between parents and children may go a long way to protect children from social-emotional and behavioural difficulties: managing conflict, promoting closeness in the parent-child relationships, and parental responsiveness and demandingness are worthwhile goals to pursue (p.102)

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

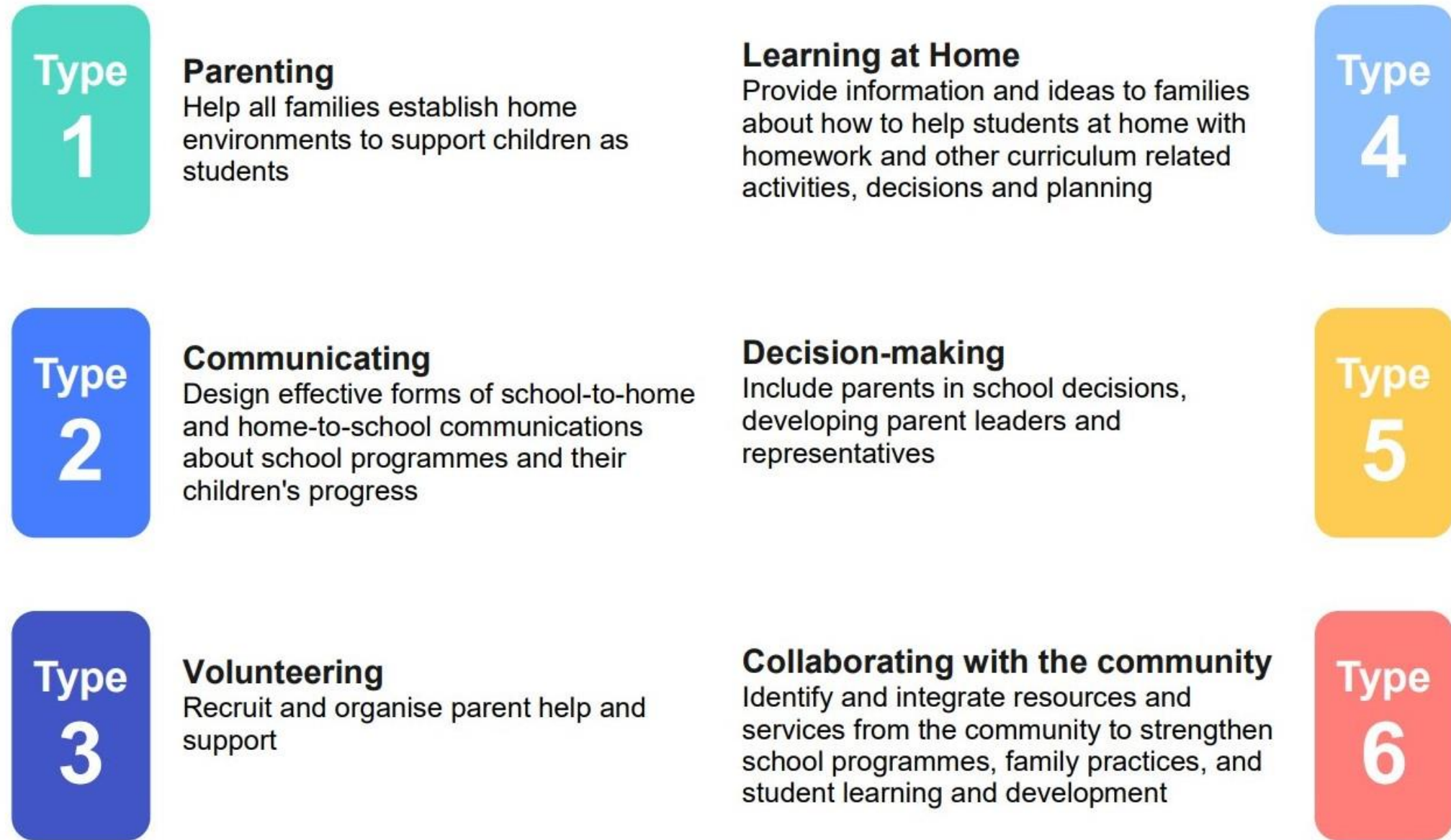Family Engagement Center, OSU   Dr Sandra Ryan, MIC
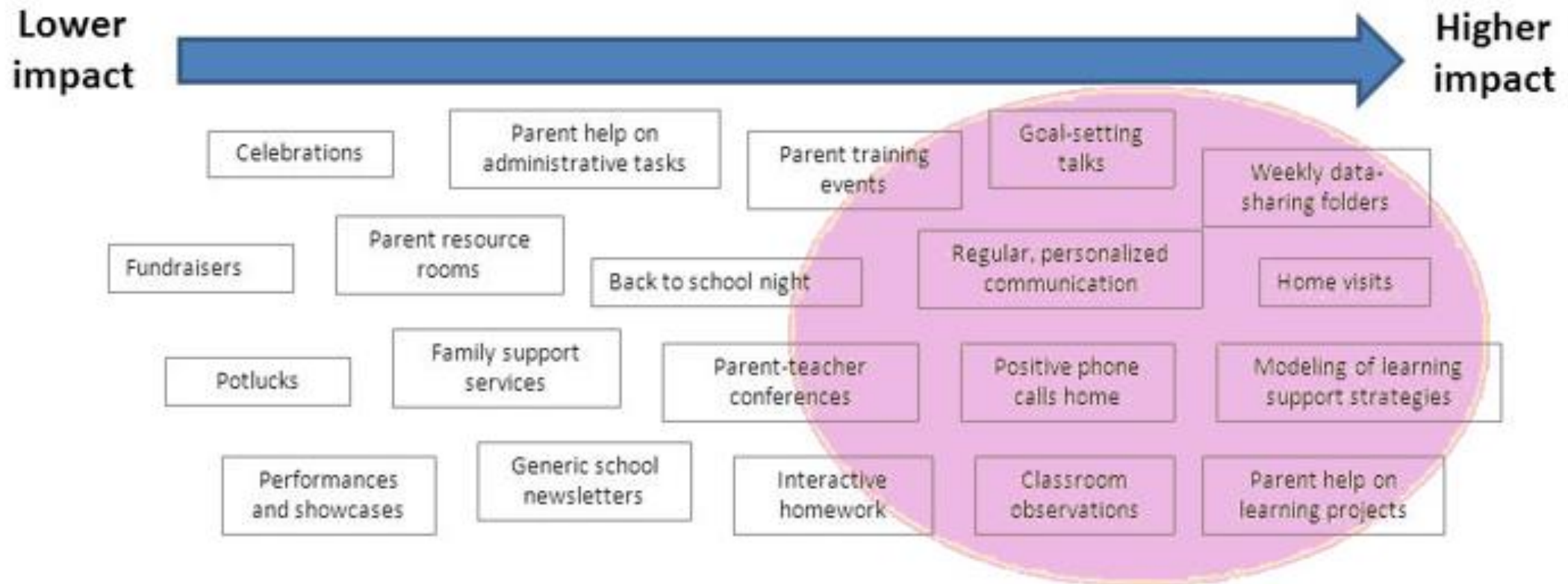
Effects/Outcomes

It is becoming increasingly clear that educators need to consider which types of involvement they will activate to attain specific school goals and desired student outcomes" (Epstein and Associates, 2019: 44)

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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

Need for teacher professional development

Teacher education programmes worldwide do very little (Epstein and Sanders 2006; Willemse et al., 2016; Ryan and Lannin, 2021)

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)

Research Objectives

1. understanding of student teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes
2. expand ways to support beginning teachers
3. inform the development of teacher education courses

(Ryan, 2019)

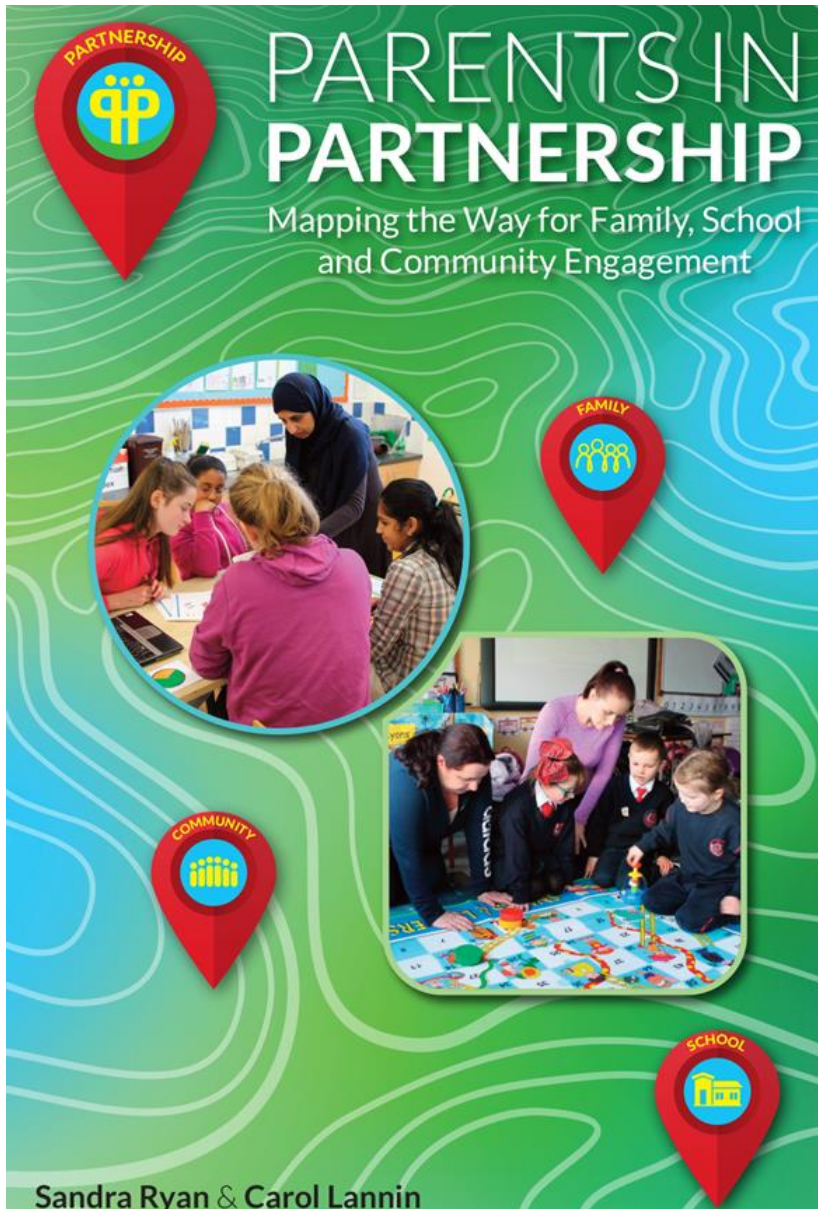|	
Implications for Initial Teacher Education (Ryan, 2019; Ryan and Lannin, 2021)	Readiness of undergraduate students to comprehend the complexities and implications of what's involved – timing within the programme
	Limitations of a single course/module to develop this – need for integration across other 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

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Sandra Ryan & **Carol Lannin**

- 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

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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
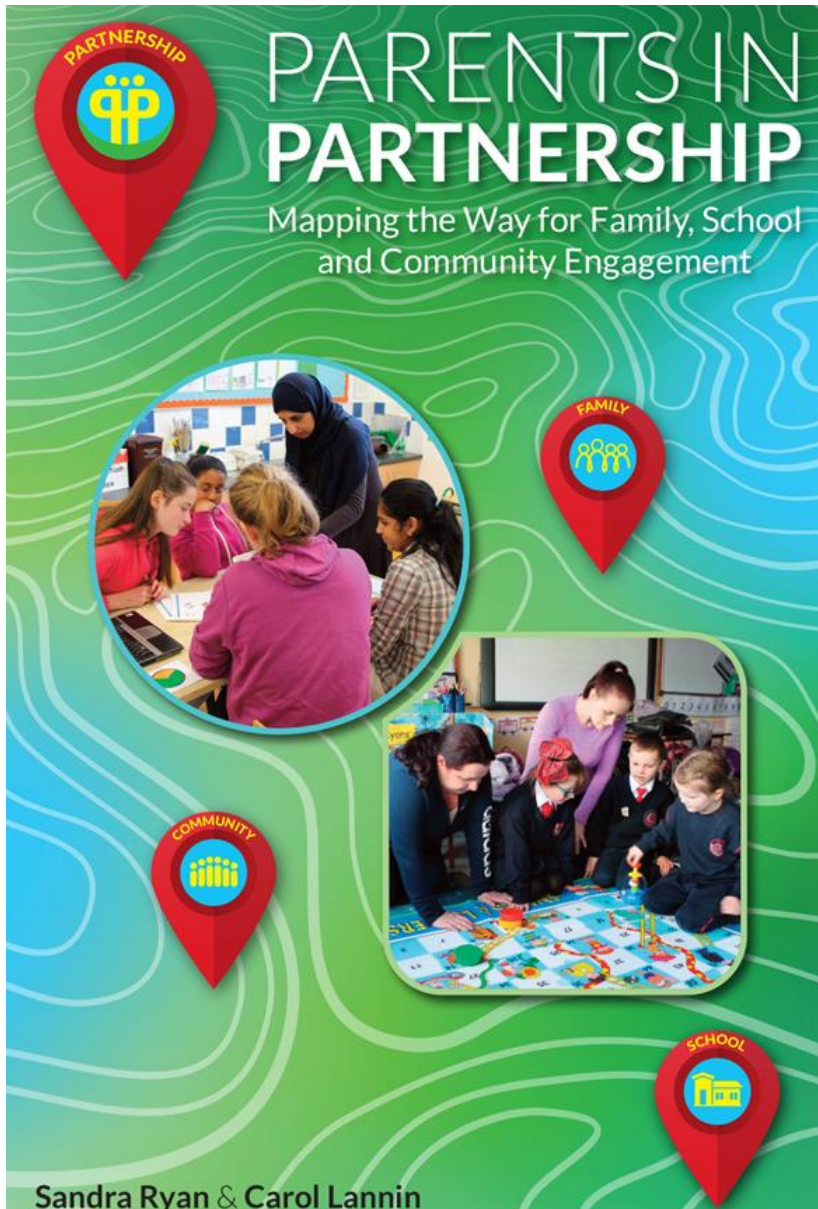
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Thank you

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