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Shumow, Lee. (Ed.) (2009) *Promising Practices for Family and Community Involvement During High School*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

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Reviewed by Nathaniel Weber
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Promising Practices for Family and Community Involvement During High School offers a collection of chapters intended for administrators, researchers and high school teachers. The book concentrates on how an interdisciplinary approach to family and community involvement works within different high school settings. The editor, through the selection of a diverse body of evidence, thoughtfully argues that parent and community involvement is just as important in high school as it is in elementary. The chapters give both theoretical and practical examples of family and community involvement. It will be of particular interest to new practitioners and those practicing secondary teachers who are concerned about a lack of involvement at their school. The book is organized by central ideas connected throughout the book. The first section, "Perspectives on Theory and Research," consists of three chapters that

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explain how a developmental framework works with adolescents, since typically we think of developmental frameworks as being applied to only young children.

Particular topics in this section include the key developmental tasks for adolescents, how families can be supportive to their adolescent in high school, key aspects of extracurricular activities that are successful, and how schools can build trusting and lasting connections with the community. The second section, "Perspectives from Practice and Policy," describes three exemplary high school programs that have strong family and/or community involvement. This section looks at how particular schools and programs are providing ways for families and community to be involved with high school students. In chapter seven, for example, Shelton describes the PACERS program that aims to bring authentic learning environments to high school student. He uses two examples of programs developed through this rural Alabama program: a community newspaper project and a rural science for life initiative. Student come together with professionals to gain valuable opportunities they may not otherwise be offered. The intent is to improve students' connections to their community while enhancing their learning experiences and giving them recognition as competent members of the community. The PACERS program has offered the community newspaper project for over two decades.

The book has a strong commitment to practice and the pragmatic application of theory. In the first section, the theory and research center on the developmental needs of the students and how family and schools need to adjust to this complex time in life. For example, in chapter two Kreider & Suizzo challenge the myth that high school students do not want their parents involved in their school lives. They admit that students may not want their parent sitting next to them in class, but assert that they do want their parents to care about and participate in school. Parents who promote high achievement through reasonable expectations, are in communication with teachers, and make cooperative decisions with their adolescent children promote autonomy, which leads to achievement at higher levels.

This book gives a solid developmental foundation for thinking about family involvement but it was sometimes less clear about how such a perspective works across cultural and socioeconomic differences. Some chapters did address pressing issues of cultural relevance in family involvement. For example, in chapter five Lampert describes a particular ninth grade transition program that, because of their community's particular needs, opened the clinic for families with little or no insurance, offered computer classes in Spanish for families, and had a Spanish language open house. Kreider and Suizzo acknowledge that the development of culturally relevant programs is significant and addresses a growing need for alternative ways to promote family involvement with low-income families and families that are cultural/ethnic minorities. Other chapters would benefit from a closer look at the role of culture and socioeconomic contexts. For example in chapter four, Hands examines how to build trusting relationships between schools and communities, but it was less successful to show how such a perspective works.

Promising Practices for Family and Community Involvement during High School introduces current theory and research into a topic that has only recently been studied. It offers a developmental framework to think about the specific issues that need to be addressed in high school and does it in a concise way. By showing developmentally appropriate family involvement programs, the editor successfully argues that developmental models need to be applied to issues within secondary education, just as they are within early and elementary settings.

About the Reviewer

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