

# School Properties that Promote Academic Achievement

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Since the seminal, comprehensive study of James Coleman (*Coleman Report*, 1966), researchers have documented the strong positive association between socioeconomic class (SES) and academic achievement. Coleman concluded that only a very small part of student achievement is a consequence of school characteristics in contrast to family background differences between communities. One of the basic challenges for educational researchers has been to find properties of schools that make a real difference in academic achievement regardless of the SES of schools, which has not been an easy task. SES consistently remains one of the strongest predictors of academic success; in fact, once the influence of SES is used to explain achievement, most other school characteristics are irrelevant. Nevertheless, in the over 50 years since the *Coleman Report*, a few significant school properties have been identified that make a difference in academic achievement regardless of SES.

What school properties promote academic achievement? In other words, what does a high-achieving school look like? We summarize its salient school features in the table below and then conclude with a description and figure to explain how these school properties work to promote academic achievement.

School Property	Empirical Support
Organizational Trust	(Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2010; Hoy, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, 2004)
Collective Efficacy	(Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, Hoy, Sweetland, Smith: 2002; Hattie, 2016; Donohoo, 2016)
Academic Emphasis	(Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Lee & Bryk, 1989)
Academic Optimism	(DiPaola & Wagner, 2011; Jackson & DiPaola, 2011; Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Wagner & DiPaola, 2009)
Organizational Citizenship	(DiPaola & Hoy, 2005; Tarter & Cooper, 2011)
Instructional Capacity	(Bryk & Schneider, 2010; Bryk, et al. 2010; Louis & Marks, 1998)
Instructional Leadership	(Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; Hattie, 2009; Heck, 2010; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Printy, 2011)
Professional Learning Community	(Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworh, et al. 2010; Louis and Marks, 1998)
Parental Involvement	(Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworh, et al. 2010; Lee & Shute, 2010)

A framework is proposed below that relates these school properties to explain how they work together to promote academic achievement. **Instructional leadership** is conceived as a process of monitoring student progress, performing active observation of teachers, providing constructive feedback, and promoting a culture of intellectual excellence. Such leadership directly influences a **culture of academic optimism** as well as the **instructional capacity** of the school in terms of the quality, engagement, creativity, and commitment of the faculty, which in turn promotes higher levels of academic achievement.

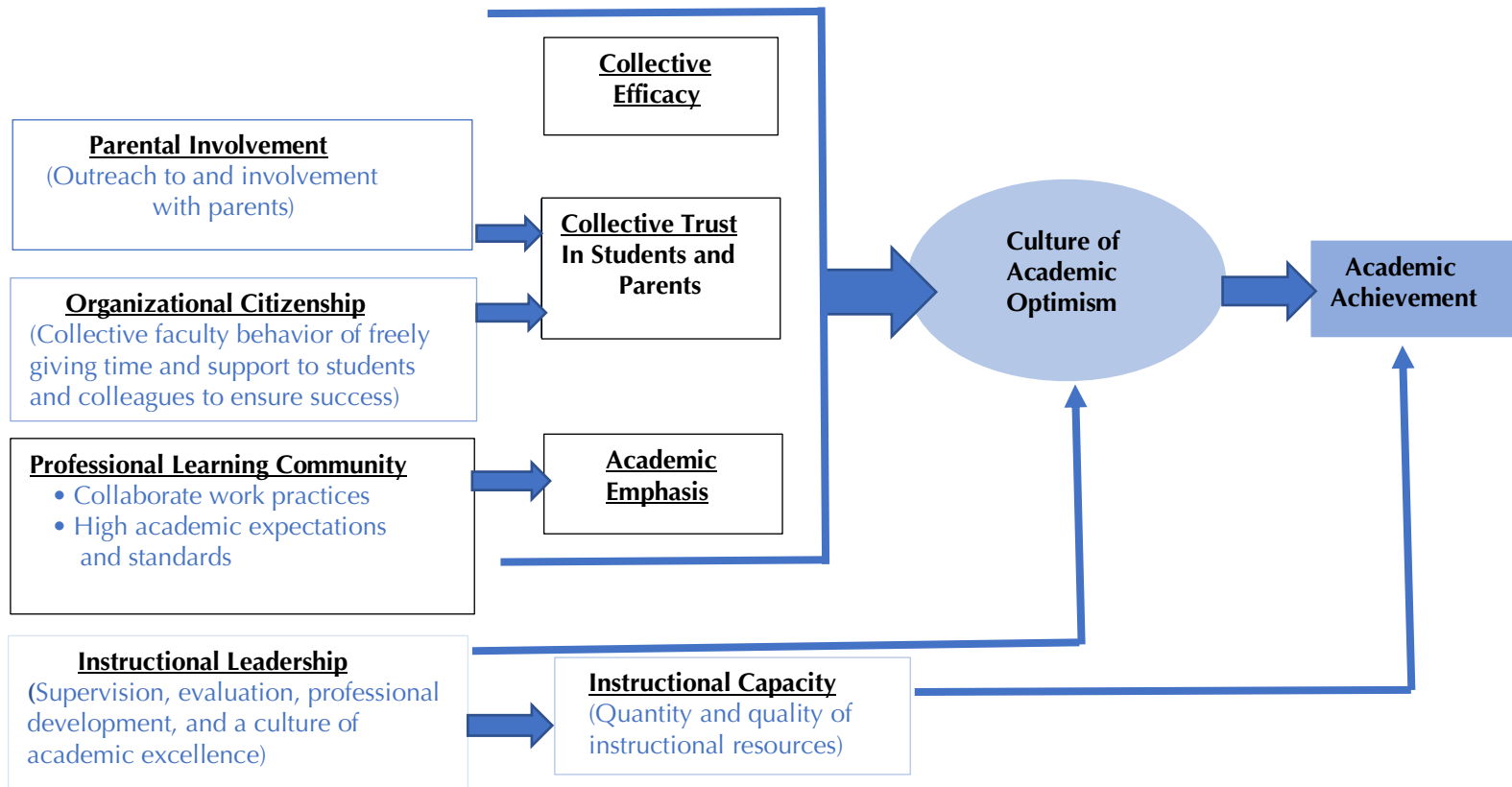
**Parental involvement** and cooperation with the school refers to the school's outreach to and involvement with parents in the growth, development, and learning of students; it is a pivotal factor in promoting a pervasive trust within the school, especially the **collective trust** of teachers in students and parents, which is major element of **academic optimism**.

**Organizational citizenship** is collective behavior that goes beyond expected obligations and responsibilities and emerges freely from teachers, without expectation of compensation or recognition, to help others achieve and be successful; such behavior is characterized by altruism, conscientiousness, fair treatment of others, courtesy, responsibility, and civility. Organizational citizenship behavior reinforces **collective trust** and through trust supports a general **culture of academic optimism**.

**Professional learning community** refers to the collective and collaborative work practices of teachers and administrators, which focus on high academic expectations and standards and reinforce a thrust toward **academic emphasis** (sometimes called **academic press**), which also supports a general **culture of academic optimism**.

**Collective efficacy** is the teachers' conjoint belief that together they have the ability in their school to make a positive educational difference with their students in spite of the educational impact of the students' homes and communities. The term captures a "can do attitude" of the faculty as a whole.

**Collective efficacy** together with **collective trust in student and parents** and **academic emphasis** form a latent construct called academic optimism, which is the basis of a culture of optimism. A **culture of academic optimism** reduces the sense of vulnerability that students and teachers often confront as they take on the uncertain tasks of new learning (see theory of academic optimism and student achievement at [www.waynekhoy.com](http://www.waynekhoy.com)). Such optimism opens up the workplace; mistakes tend not to be hidden or feared; students and teachers accept responsibility for learning; and the optimism creates strong effort, resilience, persistence, and academic achievement (Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy, 2006).



**Framework for School Properties that Promote Academic Achievement** (© W. Hoy, 2019)