Parents from an urban elementary school completed measures about engagement in their child’s learning at home (i.e., between-family engagement) and their sense of community with other families (i.e., between-family engagement). In addition, students’ reading and math scores on standardized assessments were obtained. Results from a mediational analysis indicated that between-family engagement mediated the relationship of between-family engagement and academic achievement. In other words, those parents who reported actively participating in school activities and interacting with other parents were more likely to engage in educational activities at home with their child (e.g., reading with the child). As a result, their children had higher math and reading scores.

Methods

Participants: 247 students and parents from an urban elementary school (94% Latina/o).

Procedures: Parents completed measures of between and within-family engagement toward the end of the school year. The students’ reading and math scores on standardized assessments were recorded for the 2011-2012 school year and the 2012-2013 school year.

Measures:

Parental Engagement Survey (Gehlbach & Brinkworth, 2011)

- Between-Family Engagement was measured in 2 ways:
  - 6 items assessed how frequently parents volunteered at school and attended school-sponsored events (e.g., “In the past year, how often have you helped out at school?”).
  - 4 items assessed parents’ sense of school community (e.g., “How connected do you feel with other parents in this school?”).

- Within-Family Engagement was measured using:
  - 5 items that assessed their involvement in their children’s learning at home (e.g., “How often do you help your child understand the content he or she is learning in school?”; “How often do you read to your child at home?”).

Academic Achievement

- Academic achievement was measured using standardized math and reading assessments.

Results

Using the PROCESS Macro for SPSS Model #4 (Hayes, 2012), a mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether within-family engagement mediated the relationship between academic achievement and between-family engagement. Process analysis results revealed that within-family engagement sometimes mediated the relationship of between-family engagement and academic performance. In other words, when between-family engagement was mediated with volunteered at school and attending school-sponsored events, the mediation was not statistical significant. Once between-family engagement was mediated with parental sense of school community, the mediation was significant (see Figure 1 and 2).

Using the bootstrapping procedures for 1000 samples, the findings revealed a significant indirect effect for both reading and math (b = 0.06, bootstrap SEb = 0.02, bootstrap 95% CI [0.00, 0.10]; b = 0.05, bootstrap SEb = 0.02, bootstrap 95% CI [0.02, 0.11]).