

Research Paper

# Strengthening family–school partnerships through research, training and innovation: Reflections from the MTA-DE-PARTNERED program

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Recommended citation:

Kocsis, Zs., Hine, M. G., Ceglédi, T., & Bacskai, K. (2026). Strengthening family–school partnerships through research, training and innovation: Reflections from the MTA-DE-PARTNERED program. *Central European Journal of Educational Research*, 8(1), 71–84. <https://doi.org/10.37441/cej/2026/8/1/17004>

## Abstract

This study presents the comprehensive findings of the MTA-DE-PARTNERED research and development program, which ran from 2021 to 2025, and aimed to explore and develop the theoretical, empirical, and practical dimensions of family-school partnerships. Within the framework of Epstein’s model of parental involvement, the research examined parents’ educational and learning-support activities at home, school–parent communication, volunteering, participation in decision-making, and community building. Analyses based on a review of the literature, large-scale questionnaire surveys, interviews, and case studies show that patterns of parental involvement are influenced by the child’s achievement, school type, school sector, and social background. The MTA-DE-PARTNERED program placed a strong emphasis on improving teacher training, recognizing that teachers’ preparedness and attitudes play a key role in the quality of the partnership. During the development phase, we created an evidence-based collection of best practices, a university toolkit, and an innovative educational board game based on cooperative. The board game aimed to support the positive development of asset-based attitudes among students and teachers through the simulation of various parental involvement scenarios. The results of the impact assessments suggest that the board game significantly contributes to the development of reflective thinking, a multi-perspective approach, and partnership-centered attitudes. This study shows that strengthening family-school collaboration requires systemic, research-based, and training-related innovations that will, in the long term, contribute to the improvement of student achievement and the development of pedagogical culture.

*Keywords:* parental involvement; home-school partnership; teacher training; educational board games

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## Introduction

Parental involvement has been defined in myriad ways. A narrower definition from the literature refers to parental involvement as school- or home-based activities, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of parents that directly support a student’s academic progress. At the same time, a broader definition interprets parental involvement as all activities and attitudes of parents that support students’ school careers not only directly but also indirectly. Schoolwork, therefore, can be supported not only by direct academic assistance and school-related activities, but also by the parental presence and care itself. For example, this could include general conversations or shared activities unrelated to school, even involvement in activities such as household chores

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(Bacskai, 2020; Ceglédi et al., 2024; Desforges et al., 2003; Epstein, 2018; Gál et al., 2022; Imre, 2017; Jeynes, 2005b, 2016; Killus & Paseka, 2020; Marton, 2019; Podráczky, 2012; Pusztai, 2009, 2015; Pusztai et al., 2024; Pusztai & Engler, 2020).

Special literature often distinguishes between two forms of parental involvement: school-based and home-based. School-based involvement refers to parents' presence at school, while home-based involvement refers to parents' assistance with their children's schoolwork at home (Desforges et al., 2003; Epstein, 2018; Imre, 2017; Jeynes, 2005b, 2016; Killus & Paseka, 2020; Marton, 2019; Podráczky, 2012; Pusztai et al., 2024). Epstein's (1995; 2018) Six Types of Parental Involvement goes beyond the dichotomies of direct versus indirect and school versus home parental involvement, to further expand the definition of parental involvement: home educational environment, communication, volunteering, support for learning at home, parental participation in decision-making, and connection to the community (Epstein, 1995; 2018). The model has been applied to frame both theoretical and practical approaches.

This study presents the comprehensive research and development activities of the MTA-DE-PARTNERED Parent-Teacher Cooperation Research Group (Hungarian Academy of Sciences - University of Debrecen - Parent-Teacher Cooperation Research Group), which examined and developed family-school partnerships from multiple perspectives. MTA-DE-PARTNERED was conducted as part of the Research Programme for Public Education Development of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Gabriella Pusztai between 2021 and 2025. The organizational framework for the program was provided by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Center for Higher Education Research and Development (CHERD-Hungary) at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Debrecen. The research and development team worked various international and domestic colleagues, building on partnerships across multiple generations and diverse stakeholders (academic researchers, educators, school teachers, support professionals, and parents). A significant and novel approach to this work was the inclusion of students in teacher training programs as equal partners in the program's working groups. The program aimed to foster mutual learning by bringing new scientific research findings into the world of education while integrating schools' practical knowledge and experience into university research. Furthermore, this program hoped to facilitate the transmission of traditional knowledge development beyond traditional research through the comprehensive development of pedagogical knowledge, perspectives, and attitudes (Pusztai et al., 2024b; 2025).

In this study, we outline the theoretical foundations of the four-year project, the methodological framework, key findings of the empirical studies, and the evidence-based interventions and development activities that build upon these findings. We place particular emphasis on analyzing the role of teacher training, as research indicates the importance of teachers' knowledge, preparedness, and attitudes in school-family partnerships. At the same time we also acknowledge that teachers cannot be expected to bear sole responsibility for developing partnerships, as other school staff, stakeholders, communities, and society as a whole constitute the broader context in which they work (Bacskai, 2015; Csók & Pusztai, 2022; Epstein, 1990; 2018; Hrabéczy et al., 2023; Patakfalvi-Czirják et al., 2018; Pusztai et al., 2025a; Pusztai & Csók, 2022; 2023; Pusztai & Fényes, 2022; Széll, 2018). We will discuss these developments in teacher education in greater detail, as one of the goals of our research was to make the family-school relationship much more self-evident to the new generations of teachers entering the profession.

### **Ways to Build Partnership**

Schools' partnerships with families are a critical aspect of children's education. Epstein's (1987) Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence illustrates how children navigate the home, school, and community environments throughout their development. When the three environments are pushed together, children experience cohesive and comprehensive support. When the three environments are pulled apart, however, the disjointed or contradictory information can create confusion for children. Internal and external forces can direct the overlap of spheres. Internal forces include relationships between individuals and institutions within each sphere (Pusztai, 2015); external forces include philosophies, experiences, and histories of the spheres.

To encourage partnerships across home and school, Epstein (1995) also developed the Six Types of Parental Involvement. This typology describes the various ways schools can deepen their partnerships with families through practices that support parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. These practices can help increase the overlap of the home, school, and community spheres of influence.

Research has documented how partnerships across the home and school benefit students and families. Several meta-analyses confirm the relationship between family engagement and student academic outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; 2005a; 2007; Wilder, 2014). Similar positive relationships have been found between family engagement and student behavioral, social, and mental health outcomes (El Nokali et al., 2010; Pusztai, 2015; Sheldon, 2007; Sheridan et al., 2019).

Despite this literature on the importance and benefits of family engagement, many teachers are not explicitly trained or prepared to partner with their students' families. In the United States, very few teacher preparation programs require pre-service teachers to take courses on parental involvement or family engagement. To examine educator preparation in U.S. training programs, Epstein and Sanders (2006) surveyed administrators in schools, colleges, and departments of education. They found that most leaders understood the value of developing partnerships with families for teachers, principals, and counselors in schools. However, very few administrators felt that graduates from their programs were competent in developing these partnerships.

Teachers also overwhelmingly believe that family engagement is important, but very few teachers feel that they can implement parental involvement effectively in their practice (Kirmaci, 2019). This can be compounded by the challenge that teachers may hold preconceived notions or deficit-based perspectives of students and their families (Kirmaci, 2019; Lawson, 2003). Yet, research has shown that with adequate training, pre- and in-service teachers can unlearn biases, overcome challenges, and implement effective family engagement practices (Peralta-Nash, 2003; Sanders-Smith et al., 2019; Smith & Sheridan, 2019).

This literature highlights the importance of teacher training and exposure to various family engagement practices to adequately partner with families and support students in their development. Without adequate preparation, teachers risk alienating families—and ultimately, their students—especially those from historically minoritized groups.

### **Materials & Methods**

The four-year program followed the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation), which is an evidence-based methodology that is structured around deliberate iterative steps, combining the benefits of research and development (Branson, 1978; Visscher-Voerman & Gustafson, 2004).

During the program's foundational analysis (A: Analysis) phase, we explored the international knowledge base on the topic by reviewing 2,717 sources through the coordinated efforts of 11 thematic literature review working groups. The analysis phase also included the analysis of background data (CHERD-Hungary's previous large-scale databases on public and higher education, the KINCS (Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families) Value-Creating Child-Rearing database, PISA, and the Hungarian National Competency Assessment), which provided an opportunity to thoroughly outline the current landscape and conduct a deeper examination of the various complex interrelationships that exist in parental involvement. In addition, we conducted exploratory interviews with educators (N=45), who described their current understanding of parental involvement, as well as their attitudes, intentions, knowledge, opportunities, and scope for action. We also conducted case studies by visiting schools to outline the current climate around parental involvement and create a map of problems and opportunities.

The ADDIE model is an iterative development framework, which allowed us to begin the design (D) and development (D) phases in tandem with the analysis phase. Throughout these phases, we were able to continuously draw on existing literature to validate our research and development decisions. We also continuously supported this phase with our ongoing research projects. Using quantitative data, we gave voice to the perspectives, attitudes, intentions, and knowledge of elementary school students (N=206), parents (N=1003), teacher trainees (N=1336), and educators (N=116). These data asked about participants' perspectives, attitudes, intentions, knowledge, scope of action, and opportunities around parental involvement. We developed a 313-page collection of best practices, a university toolkit consisting of three modules (communication with parents, collaboration, and learning support), and a board game to synthesize the domestic and international evidence base on family-school partnerships.

The implementation (I) took place in several phases, accompanied by research monitoring and continuous improvement. As a result, the evaluation phase (E) served not as a final step but as a source of ongoing feedback to support the refinement of the implementation. We also assessed the impact of the board game which is presented in the following chapter.

Throughout our research and development efforts, thematic working groups were used to focus specifically on target groups such as special education needs students, low-SES students, Roma students and their parents. These thematic working groups engaged with a wide range of actors who support these subgroups of students and their parents, such as in-service and pre-service teachers, and other school staff (e.g., social workers).

## Results and Discussion

In a departure from standard practice, we present a summary of the results in conversation with prior studies, including our own earlier research, using Epstein's Six Types framework (Epstein, 2010; Epstein et al., 2002). We hope that this format of presenting our findings effectively contextualizes this project in the historical body of literature to best highlight the importance of teacher training in fostering more effective partnerships between future teachers and parents.

### Parenting: home learning environment

From the teachers' perspective, strong home-school cooperation leads to significant positive outcomes, primarily because parents' positive attitudes toward the school increase students' commitment to learning (Dusi, 2012). The interviews conducted for the current study suggest that teachers tend to expect parental support when they face challenges with students (e.g., due to unwanted student behaviors). This finding is supported in the literature, which indicates that teachers benefit from additional family support in navigating challenging situations with students (Day & Travers, 2012; Sutherland et al., 2023). However, the literature also documents how teachers often view parents as "recipients of support" rather than as equal partners, ultimately limiting the role parents can play in supporting teachers and school decision-making (Bæck, 2010). If teachers want or expect authentic support from parents to help navigate challenging situations, we believe that teachers must learn to approach families as equal partners.

Parental involvement at home can increase a student's social capital at home, which can ultimately translate to success in school (Coleman, 1988; Pusztai, 2009). Our findings suggest that various factors influence parental involvement at home. Foremost, the child's gender has a significant impact. Parents spend considerably more time with girls than with boys (Fényes et al., 2022). Interestingly, we found that the impact of family structure was contrary to our expectations. Single-parent families do not lag significantly behind two-parent families: although single-parent families may have less financial stability compared to two-parent families, single-parent families may invest more in their children's education (Jacobs & Daniels, 2020). Finally, findings showed that student achievement is also important: the more successful parents perceive their child to be, the more attention and varied parental involvement they devote to the child; conversely, when academic performance is poor, parental involvement tends to be limited to academic support (Pusztai, 2025). To promote strong partnerships with all families, we recommend that teachers be cognizant of these factors that relate to home-based parental involvement.

### Communication

In Hungary, communication between parents and teachers is the most crucial aspect of parental involvement (Bacsikai et al., 2024). Unfortunately, our findings suggest that teachers felt that they had a harder time connecting with parents from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, our teacher survey indicated that sociocultural differences between families and school staff can hinder the development of harmonious relationships. Wong (2012) found that immigrant families from Hong Kong living in Australia faced many challenges in developing home-school relationships. In our context, the prior research has found that schools had challenges developing relationships with economically disadvantaged and Roma families (Ceglédi, 2024; Saraiva & Wagner, 2013).

However, our findings from the parental survey partially contradict our initial expectations from the extant literature. We hypothesized that parents of socially disadvantaged students would communicate less with teachers based on prior literature showing that social differences between two parties can make communication more difficult (Colegrove, 2019; R. Gaspar et al., 2025). Unexpectedly, we found that schools in our study tend to focus on communicating more with families from disadvantaged backgrounds. Perhaps schools in our study were proactively establishing lines of communication with historically minoritized families to create more inclusive school-family partnerships.

Additionally, our prior research showed that parental involvement in this area also decreases as students get older (Pusztai et al., 2024; Pusztai & Engler, 2020). Our data also showed that parents of students in high

school and elementary school report more frequent communication compared to vocational school. The interviews and parent questionnaires also indicated that the school's governing body plays a significant role in communications. Parents of students in church-affiliated schools perceived more frequent school communications, compared to other school sectors. In vocational schools, this poses a greater challenge for both the school and the parents (Pusztai & Rusznák, 2025; Rusznák & Pusztai, 2024).

Generally, school administrators respond quickly to parental inquiries. Partnership-based communication proves to be the greatest source of satisfaction for parents, particularly in state-run elementary schools, among rural parents with college degrees, and among those with low levels of education.

### **Volunteering**

The current study found that approximately one-third of parents engage in some form of volunteer work or make donations. The frequency of volunteering is significantly influenced by family and social background characteristics: married parents with higher socioeconomic status, particularly those with college degrees are more likely to volunteer, and parents of students in upper elementary school participated in volunteer work at the highest rate. Studies examining parental volunteering generally do not address background characteristics (Kocsis et al., 2022), but those who do emphasize the importance of parents who are traditionally excluded from these practices being able to connect with the school in this way (Pusztai et al., 2024). Volunteer participation and willingness to donate are higher in church-run and foundation-run schools, while they are lowest in vocational schools. This parental involvement type is also linked to student performance: parents of students who perform above average are much more likely to volunteer and donate. According to parents, different types of schools encourage volunteering to varying degrees: elementary schools and religious institutions more frequently request and accept parental assistance, yet preparation and support for parents to carry out volunteer tasks are often lacking (Markos & Kocsis, 2025). Our findings highlight the importance of democratizing and supporting volunteering to include more families, while being mindful of differences in background characteristics.

### **Home learning support**

We examined parental involvement at home using an adapted version of the Parent and School Survey (Ringenberg et al., 2005), which we adapted to the Central and Eastern European context. Based on our results, the effect of background variables is moderate: parents of girls feel more involved in certain areas, and single parents talk to their children more often about schoolwork and future plans. Parents with college degrees tend to be more involved in home learning support areas. Our results did not show the same degree of variation as presented in the international literature (Paseka & Byrne, 2019), where they highlight how home learning support may contribute to increasing inequalities.

Our findings also suggest that children's age was also a determining factor of home learning support. Parents of elementary school students are more active in all activities related to learning at home compared to parents of secondary school students. Parents of students at public and religious schools show the highest level of involvement at home compared to parents of students in other school sectors (Pusztai, 2025). Parental involvement is strongly associated with students' subjective and objective academic performance: encouraging daily reading and regulating digital activities are the strongest predictors, and they are particularly effective when both parents are involved. However, different forms of parental involvement support students' academic careers in varying ways and with varying degrees of effectiveness. For example, some literature has found that parental involvement in the form of control, excessive involvement, or monitoring, may negatively impact students' academic careers (Kocsis et al., 2025; Nyitrai et al., 2019).

### **Parental participation in decision-making**

We also examined parents' involvement in school decision-making using data from both teachers and parents. From the parents' perspective, we analyzed the effectiveness of partnership-based communication between principals and parents. In the sample of including parents in three Central and Eastern European countries, a quarter of parents have participated in school decision-making bodies—a proportion that exceeds the OECD and EU averages (OECD, 2020). Parents are most involved in shaping their children's academic programs, while they are least involved in the evaluation and selection of teachers. The degree of participation depends significantly on the type of school, the school operator, the parents' social status, and student performance: parents of students in upper elementary school, those attending church-run or foundation-run schools, and those

with above-average performance are the most active. Our data show that the majority of parents view communications from the principal's positively. About 10% of the parents in our survey felt uncomfortable during personal meetings with school staff, particularly parents in small towns with blue-collar jobs and parents in rural areas with lower levels of education with children academically performing average or below. The majority of parents involved in decision-making are well-versed in the legal framework governing schools, which may be related to differences in background variables.

Interestingly, our data showed that teachers typically view parents as an extracurricular resource rather than as stakeholders in decision-making. Again, our findings reinforce the idea that teachers must view parents as equal partners—including as valuable decision-makers—to build authentic partnerships that holistically support students.

### **Collaborating with the community**

A key element of Epstein's model is are the school, family, and community spheres of influence. In many Hungarian schools, the sense of "community" refers less to the community outside the school and more to developing a community within the school. We examined this in our research using data from the parent questionnaire. Previous research findings report that programs related to the parent community build trust and social capital among families from diverse backgrounds (Blair & Haneda, 2021; Hands, 2013; Keller et al., 2021). We know most about this topic from our practical experience. Many schools, without knowing the theoretical foundations, instinctively strive to bring parents closer to one another and to the school community. We must also recognize that the school is the one with the relative advantage and power—and ultimately, the responsibility—when it comes to community building. Both data from parents (Pusztai et al., 2025a) and best practices (Pusztai, Ceglédi, et al., 2024a) show the significant impact of these efforts to build parent community within schools. Moreover, our prior research illustrates the importance of the professionals who assist teachers in their work to build parent communities within schools (Csók & Pusztai, 2022). Future work can further explore the concept of collaborating with the community in the Hungarian context.

### **Development of an educational board game to foster partnership-oriented attitudes toward parental involvement**

Numerous international studies emphasize the importance of parental involvement; however, in teacher training programs, this area is often addressed primarily from a theoretical perspective. Teacher trainees have relatively few opportunities to gain practical experience with the complex situations involved in communicating and collaborating with parents (Jones et al., 2025; Monfrance et al., 2025; Pedditzi et al., 2021; Sheldon & Jung 2015).

Therefore, we hoped to create an educational board game that supports experiential learning for teachers and student teachers in professional situations involving parental involvement. In designing the K.Ö.SZ.I. board game (the acronym meaning "Thanks"), the research team drew upon the international literature on parental involvement as well as various models of family-school partnership (Epstein, 2010; Smit et al., 2007; Pusztai et al., 2024a). Additionally, we took into account international and domestic research findings on the educational use of cooperative games (Brydges & Dembinski, 2019; Frossard et al., 2012; Karbownik et al., 2016; Viray, 2016).

We believed that a simulation-based learning environment could provide participants with the opportunity to examine complex pedagogical dilemmas and test different solution strategies in a safe, risk-free setting. Board games can influence students' attitudes and behavior in line with pedagogical goals, thereby contributing significantly to the learning process (Cosimini & Collins, 2023).

The board game we developed is based on cooperation, in which participants work together to solve problems that arise during the game. Figure 1 illustrates the flow of the game and the methodological considerations associated with its various elements. Players are assigned characters representing various school stakeholders, each with different competencies and resources. These stakeholder roles model the different perspectives within the school organization and encourage players to consider multiple viewpoints during decision-making (Kocsis et al., 2025; Kocsis et al., 2024).

The central elements of the gameplay are the "challenge cards", which depict realistic school situations related to the topic of parental involvement. These challenge cards present various situations such as difficulties in communication, challenges maintaining relationships, and differing expectations. While solving the challenge cards, participants must work together to develop strategies, make decisions, and discuss the possible

consequences of their strategies. The gameplay thus not only serves to convey information but also supports reflection, collaboration, and professional dialogue (Kocsis et al., 2024).

**Figure 1.** The process of the board game and its methodological embedding



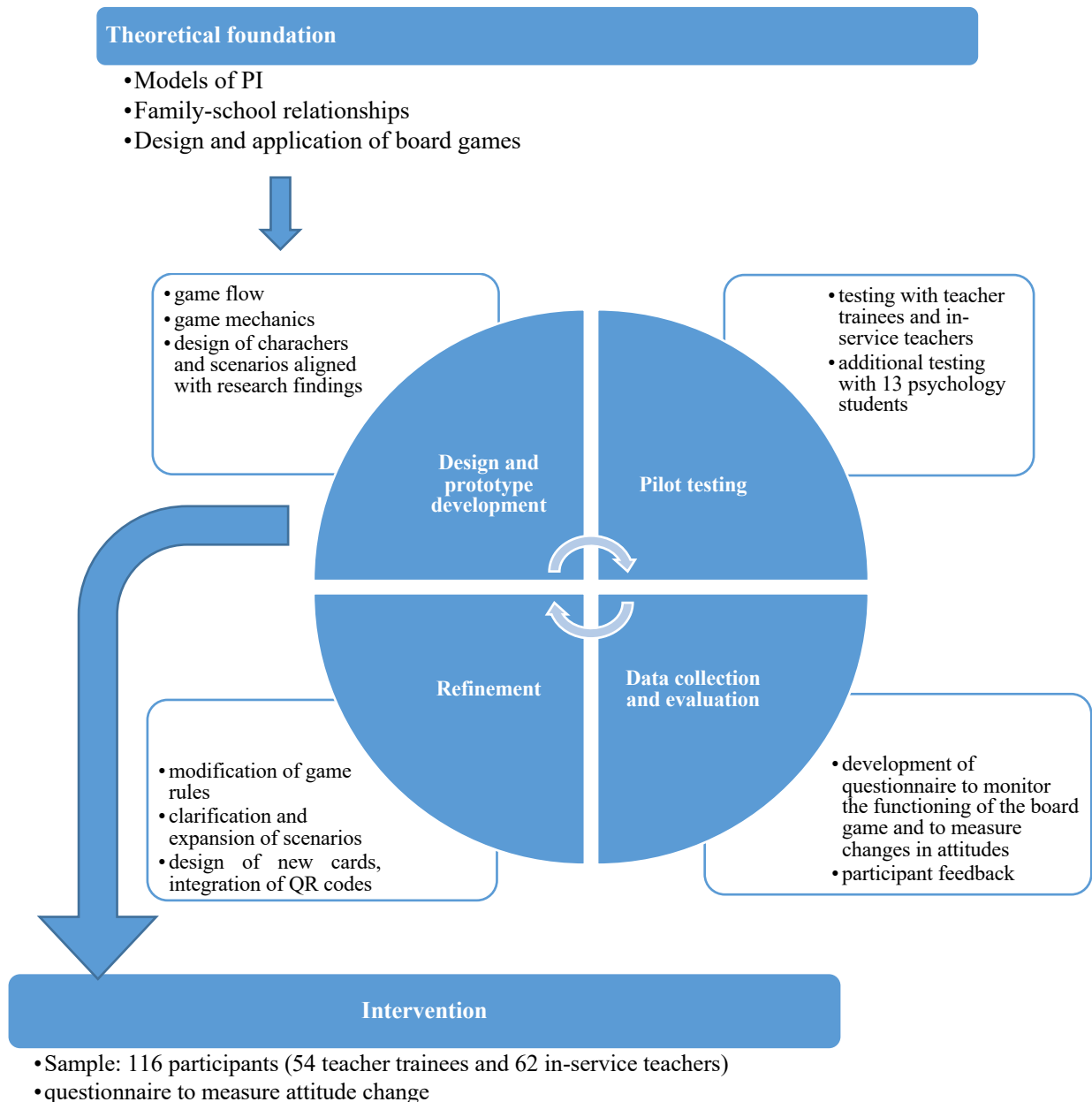
The game was developed through an iterative design process. Figure 2 illustrates the iterative design and evaluation cycle used during the development of the board game, integrating both design-based research principles and mixed-methods evaluation. Following the initial concept development, several prototypes were created. The development team and the research group collected continuous feedback on the game's functionality over the various prototypes. During the testing phases, we paid particular attention to the clarity of the game rules, the balance of the cooperative mechanics, and the realism of the situations. Based on participant feedback, several modifications were made to the game elements and the wording of the tasks to ensure that the game is both motivating and pedagogically relevant.

During the development process, we evaluated the game's suitability as a learning tool through an empirical study. This research aimed to explore how participants evaluated the game and how it contributed to the formation of their knowledge and attitudes regarding parental involvement. Two parallel studies were conducted during the testing phase. The first study aimed to monitor the functionality of the board game using a short questionnaire completed by players immediately after testing the game. The second study aimed to measure changes in attitude. Players completed a questionnaire we developed to measure attitude change, before and after playing the board game. The latter data collection was part of the impact assessment.

The first questionnaire, designed to monitor the board game's effectiveness, included Likert-scale questions regarding the game's educational value, enjoyment, and relevance. In addition, we used open-ended

questions to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences and impressions in greater detail (Kocsis et al., 2024). When analyzing the responses to the open-ended questions, we created categories that captured recurring themes in the answers, such as the cooperative nature of the gameplay, the realism of the situations, the support for the learning process, or the role of emotional engagement. Overall, participants rated the game positively. In particular, they highlighted cooperative gameplay, realistic situations, and the opportunity for collaborative thinking as important learning elements. The feedback suggests that the game may help refine pre-service teachers' perspectives on parental involvement and help them understand the viewpoints of different stakeholders (Kocsis et al. 2024; 2025).

**Figure 2.** Iterative Design and Evaluation Process of the Educational Board Game



To measure changes in attitude, we used a self-developed questionnaire consisting of five main sections. The first section included an information sheet and a consent form, ensuring voluntary and anonymous participation. In the second section, respondents created an anonymous identification code, which allowed the data to be linked without personal identification. The third section included demographic questions as well as an open-ended question about impressions of parents. This was followed by questions regarding the respondents' field of study, their knowledge of parental involvement, and their preparedness to implement parental involvement practices. The next section measured attitudes toward parental involvement across various dimensions. The

questions aimed to determine to what extent respondents viewed supporting parents in various pedagogical situations as part of their role and to assess the importance they attributed to parental involvement in school practice. The items were rated on a 10-point Likert scale. The final section focused on the evaluation of teacher training, with particular attention to the extent to which respondents consider it necessary to incorporate training components addressing parental involvement.

A total of 116 participants (54 student teachers and 62 teachers) took part in the intervention, participating in facilitated play sessions lasting 70–100 minutes. Based on the anonymous identifier codes, we were able to match 31 participants who completed both pre- and post-tests.

In the combined pre- and post-test sample, 33.3% of participants were male and 66.7. The sample comprised 17 teacher trainees and 14 practicing teachers, resulting in a nearly balanced representation of both groups across the two measurement points.

The results indicate that the board game-based intervention led to positive attitudinal changes, particularly among practicing teachers. Participants were more likely to view parental involvement as a shared professional responsibility, and there was increased recognition of parents' roles in school processes and decision-making. Positive changes were also observed regarding PI in secondary education, although attitudes remained generally less supportive than in primary education. A more moderate shift in attitudes was observed among student teachers, suggesting that professional experience plays an important role in reflective learning within a playful environment.

### **Methodological contribution**

From a methodological perspective, the development process demonstrates that educational board games can be effectively used in teacher training to model complex pedagogical situations. The choice of board games as a methodological tool was partly motivated by the fact that—unlike traditional, time- and resource-intensive training formats, such as accredited continuing education courses or workshops—they can be applied flexibly, reused multiple times, and are accessible to a broader target audience. This enables the more effective dissemination and scaling of pedagogical innovations.

**Table 1.** Phases of board game development, implementation, and dissemination in teacher education

Development phase	Pedagogical aim	Methodological solution	Measurement/ evaluation tools	Related publications
Board game design	Establishing the pedagogical conceptual framework of parental involvement	Synthesis of international and Hungarian literature	Literature review and synthesis	Kocsis et al., 2024; 2025a,b
	Ensuring the physical and didactic functionality of the game	Development of cards, game board, and rule system; alignment of visual and content elements	Prototype testing; revision based on feedback	
Data collection and impact assessment	Examining attitudes, knowledge, and preparedness related to parental involvement, as well as collecting opinions about the board game	Questionnaire-based data collection; combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions	Self-developed questionnaires	Fényes et al. (under review)
Implementation in an educational context	Integrating board game-based learning into teacher education practice	Development of a modular handbook	Handbook	Kocsis (Eds.), „GYAKORLAT TESZI A PARTNERSÉGET!” A szülői részvétel támogatása az oktatásban

One of the main contributions of this research and design program is the development of a board game that integrates our research findings, real-world practical situations, cooperative problem-solving, and reflective processing. The development process was accompanied by questionnaire-based data collection.

The pedagogical handbook developed in connection with the methodological development was specifically designed for multiple target groups (teacher candidates, practicing teachers, and instructors), and its modular structure allows it to be flexibly adapted to various training contexts. Each chapter of the volume contains a brief theoretical overview, review questions, practical exercises, and directly applicable methodological tools that support the integration of theory and practice. The primary goal of the handbook is to bridge the gap between theoretical approaches and pedagogical practice and to promote the conscious application of parental involvement.

Together, the board game and the handbook form a complex, multi-component methodological system that can be applied not only in teaching parental involvement but can also be adapted to other pedagogical areas requiring complex communication and collaboration.

### Conclusion

Experts in the field agree that active communication between parents and the school, shared responsibility, and community involvement play a key role in effectively supporting a child's education. This approach goes beyond the traditional view that sees education solely as a two-way process between teacher and student, in which the role of parents is sidelined or overlooked. Research findings show that fostering closer collaboration and aligning educational goals has a positive impact on all stakeholders: students, teachers, other school staff, parents, the local community, and society as a whole (Bacsikai, 2020; Coleman, 1988; Desforges et al., 2003; Epstein, 2018; Jeynes, 2016; Killus & Paseka, 2020; Koltói et al., 2019; L. Ritók, 2009; Lannert & Szekszárdi, 2015, 2015; Nyitrai et al., 2019; Patakfalvi-Czirják et al., 2018; Podráczy, 2012; Pusztai, 2024). Developing these collaborations require ample opportunities for interaction between the community, the parents, the

teachers, as well as school staff, in both formal and informal settings (Csók & Pusztai, 2022; Epstein, 1990, 2018; Pusztai et al., 2024b). It is also important to build relationships based on trust, adopt a truly collaborative approach, work together for the benefit of the child (as a shared goal), and share responsibility (Bacsikai, 2020; Ceglédi et al., 2024; Killus & Paseka, 2020; Koltói et al., 2019; Lannert & Szekszárdi, 2015; Podráczky, 2012; Pusztai et al., 2025a).

Overall, the findings of the MTA-DE-PARTNERED project are consistent with findings from international literature indicating that the school plays a key role in the community-school-parent relationship, particularly in taking the first steps toward parents. Schools, in the relative positions of power, must share the necessary knowledge and empowerment to implement effective family-school-community partnerships. Partnerships are successful when goals are jointly defined in the best interest of the child. Essential to this are adequate infrastructural resources at the institutional, local, and societal levels, as well as human resources, for which the development of teacher training is indispensable (Bacsikai, 2020; Desforges et al., 2003; Epstein, 1990; Jeynes, 2005b; L. Ritók, 2009; Pusztai et al., 2025a; Pusztai et al., 2024b). Therefore, this board game based on research findings enables educators and students to expand their knowledge of family-school partnerships, develop related attitudes, and strengthen the competencies necessary for cooperation. The advantage of the developed board game is that it can be used flexibly, reused multiple times, and compared to traditional training methods, supports the development of a partnership-oriented approach in teacher training in a more widespread and engaging manner.

**Funding Information:** The research on which this paper is based has been implemented by the MTA-DE-Parent-Teacher Cooperation Research Group and by the MTA-DE Future Awareness Development Research Group (University of Debrecen, Faculty of Humanities) and with the support provided by the Research Programme for Public Education Development of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This research was supported through the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, T. C., Zs. K. and K. B.; Introduction: C. T. and M. H.; Methodology, C. T.; Results, Discussion K. B.; Development ZS. K.; Writing—original draft preparation, T. C., Zs. K., K. B. and M. H.; Writing—review and editing, T. C. and M. H.; Visualization, ZS. K.; Supervision, M. H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Ethics Statements:** The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the ethical committee of the University of Debrecen (protocol code 1/2022, approved on January 2022).

**Acknowledgments:** We thank Johnathan Dabney for the English language editing.

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