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AUTHOR	Elliott, David L.
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ABSTRACT

The program described in this paper illustrates the extension of teaching to parents and older children. Project 88, so-called because of the 88 children who were involved during the first year of the program in 1969, is a parent participation program that included a kindergarten, a first grade, and an interage 4-5-6 combination at the Castro School in El Cerrito, California. Five of the minimum conditions that must be met in organizing a parent participation program are: (1) the teachers involved must have classroom programs that are attractive to parents and children and flexible and varied enough to allow others to share in the instructional role; (2) provisions must be made for many different kinds of participation by parents and volunteers in ways that fulfill important needs of both adults and children; (3) provide training and consultation for participants to foster understanding of children's behavior and learning, various knowledge areas, and the ways in which schools and classrooms function; (4) provide leadership and organization to insure that the planning and administrative functions necessary to coordinate the resources are carried out; and (5) obtain administrative support from the local building principal and central office personnel to facilitate operation and integration of the program into the overall school program. Parent participation grew in the three years of the program beyond the Project 88 classrooms, and it is felt that increased involvement will continue. (DB)

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PROJECT 88: PARENT PARTICIPATION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

David L. Elliott
Berkeley, California

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Many parents would like to see the educational programs of the elementary schools so improved that, at the very least, more children would reach high levels of competence in such basic areas as reading, writing and mathematics -- and enjoy themselves in the process. Others would add to these basic goals in-depth knowledge in areas not usually part of the regular curriculum, skills in creative self-expression, and abilities related to imaginatively adapting existing ways of living to rapidly changing conditions in life and society.

Where there may be agreement on goals and objectives, however, there is often wide disagreement on the best means for achieving them. This lack of agreement is based in part on differing convictions concerning the conditions under which children develop the understanding and competency we want them to have. Some believe that these conditions can best be met by making changes in the ways in which children are taught in classrooms, and that the running of school programs should be left entirely to professional educators operating with-in guidelines set by boards of education. Others think that the schools have become largely ineffective (or effective in the wrong ways) as institutions, and should be replaced by some other arrangements.

Somewhere between these two extremes, there is a growing number of people who believe that, while schools are necessary,

education involves a good deal more than schooling. They believe that there are forces which influence the course of children's development in their homes, in neighborhoods and communities, and in the mass media, as well as in school classrooms. This means that the best educational settings for children are those in which these forces are exerted planfully rather than haphazardly and where they are coordinated as much as possible. This is to minimize gaps and duplications of effort, and undesirable influences, and to see that children receive help in making the most of the experiences they do have. This means that teaching is most effective for children when teachers share it with others -- both adults and children; it means closer working arrangements among home, school and other educating institutions.

The program described in this paper is a good example of the extension of the teaching role -- in this case to parents and older children. What germinated in the spring of 1969 as an eight-week "Saturday School" for kindergartners and their parents blossomed into "Project 88" (so-named for the 88 children who were involved the first year), a parent-participation program that included a kindergarten, a first grade, and an interage 4-5-6 combination at the Castro School in El Cerrito, California, part of the Richmond Unified School District. This project was conceived by the kindergarten teacher and run for three years by the parents and teachers involved, with the help of grants from the Rosenberg Foundation of San Francisco.

When the three years of foundation support came to an end, the Project 88 participants wanted some kind of summing up of their experience that might be shared with others as well as applied to

continued activities at the Castro School. They therefore commissioned a study, which was carried out during May and June of the final year. This study drew upon two main sources of information: written records kept by project participants and school staff, and interviews with teachers, parents, and children. The results of this study are available in two parts. In a separate report, descriptions of various aspects of the project which were written by participants each of the three years have been edited together. This paper represents an attempt to describe Project 88 in such a way that those who might be interested in carrying out a similar endeavor in their own school might benefit from the experience of those who were involved in it.

What Was Project 88?

Project 88 was at least an organizational arrangement in which the children of parents who wanted to participate were grouped together in the classrooms of three teachers, all of which were housed in a single wing of the Castro School. This was accomplished, on the initiative of the teachers, by making the program known to parents in the spring preceding each year of the project and assigning to each of the three classes only those children whose parents were interested in the type of program being carried on and who were willing to contribute their own time and energy. Most of the grant money was used to hire part-time resource teachers who, in addition to providing their own inputs to the children three afternoons a week, released the first grade and interage group teachers to meet with parents for planning and training. (The kindergarten teacher had only one morning session, so could meet parents after noon.) The balance of the money helped finance field trips, purchase materials,

and cover other costs associated with running the program.

But Project 88 was much more than the re-deployment of people. What attracted parents (and many children) to the project as much as the parent participation component was the type of classroom program which the teachers, each in her own way, had been running prior to the project, and which many thought became richer and more attractive as the project developed. Although the project was to its participants greater than the sum of its parts, this description will deal with each part separately, including the conditions under which each part can function, so that others may be able to understand them well enough to put some or all of them together in ways which are appropriate to other school-community settings.

Parent Involvement

The most distinctive aspect of Project 88 was, of course, the sharing of the teaching role in a relatively planful and coordinated way compared to the usual relationship between in-school instruction and that which takes place elsewhere. The parents of almost every child enrolled in the project classes participated in the instructional program in some way. Although willingness to participate was a requirement for having their children in the project, just how and when parents actually contributed varied quite widely, and the range of options made it possible for even those parents (especially fathers) who were not available during regular school hours to take part. Parent activities included sharing classroom teaching by helping with subject areas such as math and reading, introducing subject areas not otherwise provided on a regular basis (such as art or music), or making special presentations to extend children's experience and to provide enrichment. Other kinds of activities included taking turns

helping in the school library, arranging and helping supervise field trips, and preparing materials --such as multiethnic kits -- for use in the classroom and at home. Another variety of participation did not involve parents directly with students, but was essential to keep the whole operation going. This included serving on committees responsible for planning and arranging activities in all the categories previously mentioned, keeping records, typing, making telephone calls, and correcting student papers at home. In addition, many parents participated in presentations about Project 88 which were made both to the Castro community and to many groups around the San Francisco Bay Area.

A number of participants thought that just having additional adults on hand regularly for children to relate to, and children besides their own for parents to relate to, made a significant difference in interpersonal understanding. In addition, those parents who participated regularly could be in continual communication with the teachers about their own child's behavior and developmental progress. There was no need either to make a special appointment to talk to a teacher, or to wait for the yearly parent-teacher conference. This close communication also facilitated the teachers' efforts to coordinate the various kinds of educational experiences each child was having.

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Student-teaching-student was the principle which brought all three Project 88 classes together in a sort of subproject called "Student Partners". Students from the older (4-5-6) class worked with individual students at the kindergarten and first grade levels at least once a week in much the same way that participating parents work with them: coaching the younger ones in handwriting, math-

ematics, reading and language arts; making plans for each tutorial session and keeping records of what took place; and gaining in self-confidence and pride, as well as in their own skills. Each child who participated in this effort met regularly with one of the adults to make plans and to talk over any problems which arose. (During the final year of the project, when there was no first grade class, the older children worked with a regular first grade group across the hall from their classroom.)

Making It Work

Sharing the teaching role involves more than merely inviting parents to help out in classrooms. Anyone interested in organizing a parent participation program -- or any other teacher-role-sharing idea -- must understand that there are a number of minimum conditions which must be met. Coupled with the further description of Project 88 that follows are descriptions of five of these conditions: (1) teachers whose classroom programs are attractive to parents and children, as well as flexible and varied enough to leave room for others to share in the instructional role; (2) provisions for many different kinds of participation by parents and volunteers in ways which fulfill important needs of adults as well as children; (3) training and consultation for participants to foster understanding of children's behavior and learning, various knowledge areas, and the ways in which schools and classrooms function; (4) leadership and organization within the group immediately involved to insure that the planning and administrative functions necessary to coordinate the use of a wide variety of human and material resources are carried out; and (5) administrative support from local building principal and central office personnel, both to facilitate the operation of the program and

to make it as much as possible an integral part of the overall school program.

Room for More than One Teacher

The most important requirement for a successful program in which the teaching role is shared is teachers whose classroom programs are large enough to include others, be they aides, parents, older children or children in the classroom. Of course, teachers must be willing -- even eager -- to have others in their classrooms while they are teaching. But mere willingness is not enough; certain basic competencies are also needed.

Willingness involves working in full view of others: admitting ignorance and errors; learning from others; trusting in self and others (especially children) so that they may be allowed autonomy to plan, carry out and evaluate learning activities; and spending time in preparation, consultation, and planning. Competence involves clarifying goals and objectives and communicating them to others; conceptions of subject areas that are rich enough to enable the teacher to recognize a wide variety of situations (not just textbooks, workbooks and lessons) for children to get into them; understanding of children's development and important development tasks appropriate to each stage of development; organizing classroom (and other) activities to facilitate people working alone, together and with needed materials and equipment; evaluating learning activities and children's progress in a variety of ways and keeping clear and complete records that can be understood by others.

If the teaching role is to be shared successfully, there must, above all, be a number of equivalent ways of working towards agreed upon objectives. In order for this to be possible, the teacher (and

as far as possible all others) must conceive of what is to be learned, and how it is to be learned in ways that transcend any particular textbooks or sets of materials or lesson sequences. All who are involved need to know what it is they are looking for and how to recognize it when it appears in each subject area, not only in the classroom, but often on the playground, at home and elsewhere.

In any case, no matter what else it was to the children and parents who participated, Project 88 was three creative, energetic, and dedicated teachers. More than any other single element, it was the kind of instructional program that each of the teachers offered children, and the kind of people they were, that attracted both parents and children to their classrooms. How did they describe what they found appealing? Well, many said, learning in these classrooms is fun and interesting. There are so many different ways to learn, (not "just books") and the teacher explains things so well, said others. Students liked the rich range of experiences, which they thought went beyond "regular" classrooms, and they liked being given more freedom and responsibility for their own conduct and for getting work done. Some parents saw children who were doing poorly in school, or had just lost interest, revive as students and go on to make good gains. (This was particularly true of the 4th-6th graders.)

Beyond these kinds of similarities, however, each of the three project teachers had her own personal style of teaching. In the kindergarten, many parents were impressed with the teacher's stress on cross-cultural understanding and her skill in setting up learning centers where children were introduced to the fundamentals of mathematics, language arts, and reading. Parents who participated in this classroom had a hand in devising multiethnic kits of materials

to be used in the classroom and at home; they shared their own family's ethnic heritage with the children -- especially foods, music, dance and special occasions; and they manned the learning centers and tutored individual students. Since this was a single-session kindergarten, there was time within the school day for parent-teacher consultations, including monthly Parents Leader meetings and Tutors" Workshops, and for home visits, as well as for all-day field trips. The parents also shared heavily in making presentations about Project 88 to other parent and teacher groups in the area.

In addition to introducing ethnic foods and taking after school and weekend "mini field trips", (e.g., fishing with fathers and baking with mothers), the main emphasis in the first grade class (which functioned only during the first two years of the project) was on parent orientation and training -- especially for tutoring in reading and mathematics. This on-the-job training conducted by the teacher usually took place in three phases. First the parents observed in the classroom, then they helped individuals and small groups carry out simple tasks (such as cutting and pasting), and then they took on small groups and individuals for instruction. Training sessions, which were held after lunch two days a week, stressed understanding of what reading and mathematics are all about and the development of simple games to facilitate independent learning. Several parents from this group later became regular Title I tutors in the Castro School and elsewhere in the district.

At the 4-5-6 level, the teacher possessed special skill in helping children talk together about their feelings and work out interpersonal misunderstanding and conflict. Descriptions of both the first grade and 4-5-6 programs sound very much like descriptions of

"open classrooms," where the emphasis is on student interests and initiative, on individualization, and on helping children build understanding in school subject areas as much through multi-faceted activities as through specific lessons and exercises in those subject areas. The teacher of the 4-5-6 combination specifically asked that her students be grouped that way so that children might know children of other ages, might help each other learn and in the process help themselves, and might be followed by the teacher through more than one year to lend continuity to the teaching process.

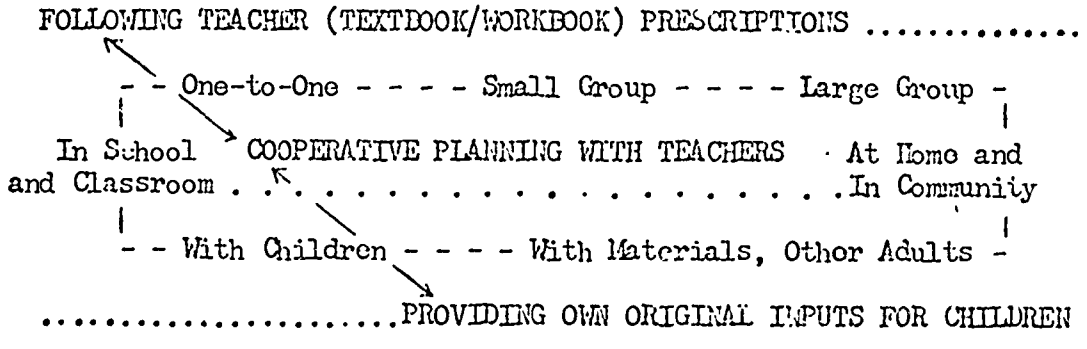
Meeting Participant Needs

Like children, parents and other volunteers come to classrooms with a wide variety of interests and talents. Although he or she has much in common with others in his or her peer group, each one may have a personal style of working with others, special subject area strengths and preferences, or differing degrees of dependence on specific structuring or interpersonal support. Some parents, for example, felt at home in the classroom almost immediately and could tailor their activities to the requirements of virtually any situation, wh e others found just the idea of being with a group of children a rather uncomfortable one. So, the greater variety of ways there are to share in the classroom program the better. Modes of participation should be individualized for volunteers just as they are for students in order to achieve maximum satisfaction and productivity. The fewer ways there are to make a contribution, the fewer people there will be who will volunteer their services for very long.

Parents and others who come to help in a classroom come for a broad range of reasons. Some are motivated by a desire to perform a social service which they see as part of a wider plan to reform schools

and society. Others have a specialty which they enjoy sharing with others, or they just like to be out doing things with other people. Still others like to have something useful to do, but prefer doing it on their own time and, often, alone. Some parents want to be in group situations with children, others prefer one-to-one encounters, and still others would rather not be with children at all. The range is wide, and yet it is possible for all to participate, if the instructional program is flexible enough (as suggested earlier) and if the format for actual participation is not too restricted.

The teacher remains as the chief educator, the one whose responsibility it is, finally, to see that everything works for the children as much as possible, but other adults (and the students) must feel that they are capable of carrying on by themselves much of the time. The variety of ways in which these others may share in the teaching role can be diagrammed as follows:



For some Project 88 parents over the three years, the activities in which they engaged added up to more than the usual experiences of parents who volunteer to help in school classrooms in their community. For these parents involvement in Project 88 was a deeper one for a number of reasons. Those who wanted to be were actually included in the planning of the instructional inputs of each classroom, and did

not merely come in to do what the teacher wanted done each day. Planning with teachers added up to what one parent called a "mutual commitment" among parents, teachers and children, which made the participation more important and meaningful to all concerned. For a nucleus of as many as two or three dozen parents, involvement in the Saturday School built a foundation of mutual trust, respect, open communication, freedom of expression and frankness between themselves and the teachers which became the basis for mutual commitment. Teachers trusted parents to be objective about children (other than their own) and their differences. In addition, planning with teachers included joint work among parents on the various committees. This, combined with coming together on field trips, led to getting together with other families outside of school and to working together on other projects such as P.T.A. committees, a number of school election campaigns, and other projects.

Training and Consultation for Participants

Some parents and volunteers will possess competencies that teachers do not have, particularly in selected subject or knowledge areas. Some will also be able to work quite independently, either in the classroom or at some other location. However, for most parent participants, aides, and other volunteers, some training and a good deal of consultation with teachers will be necessary and desirable. Indeed, without adequate training and preparation, a classroom with volunteers can become a chaotic, tension filled place. Needs will vary, but volunteer training should be available in such areas as subject matter content, children's learning and development, instructional and management strategies for both tutorial and group situations (including classroom and school routines), the location

and/or development of instructional materials, the use of specialized materials and equipment, evaluation and record keeping. Regular consultation between teachers and other participants is needed for carrying on planning of activities, discussing problems, keeping track of children's progress and, in general, coordinating the efforts of all those involved with the children.

Many teachers will also need instruction and guidance in the use of volunteers. The kind of help needed will range from relatively simple matters of organization and logistics through the development of materials to the re-learning of various knowledge areas and the devising of flexible evaluation and record keeping methods. Such help can be provided by fellow teachers, principals or central office personnel specializing in the recruiting and training of aides and volunteers.

Project 88 teachers were able to meet with parents and to carry out other tasks connected with their teaching during the school day. Providing this kind of time for teachers was, in effect, a recognition that time spent with other "educational agents" in their students' lives, was just as important as time spent directly with the students themselves. All three teachers agreed with a number of parents that, as rich as their programs may have been before they had parents participating, the richness was multiplied many times over by having other adults in the room. Without the time to plan with the teacher, to be oriented and trained. to discuss and evaluate what went on day by day, and to have the teacher visit each home, parent participation usually does not have this multiplying effect, or so the project participants thought.

The time which the teachers had to meet with parents to plan

classroom activities and to consult about their children - or at least a goodly percentage of it - was provided by employing two part-time Resource Teachers to take over the grade one and 4-5-6 classrooms three afternoons per week. The major part of the Rosenberg funds was spent on the salaries for these teachers, who in addition to releasing the teachers, provided significants of their own, especially in the areas of social studies, science, and arts and crafts. One of these teachers was a man who, together with the fathers who were able to come to the classroom, meant a lot to students who spend most of their time with women. The same two teachers served both of the first two years of the project, and both were recruited by project teachers. During the third year, at least three different people were involved at different times, so there was less continuity for the children.

Logistical and Administrative Support

One crucial function in a parent participation program (as in most others) is the making of the arrangements necessary to keep a multi-faceted enterprise going: planning ahead, seeing that needed resources will be available at the right times, contacting people, scheduling activities, troubleshooting and evaluation. There can be two main levels to this support function, one within the immediate group of adults and children who are working together most directly, and the other in the official leadership of the schools -- principals, supervisors, and others. At both levels budget can be a very important consideration, since the allocation of materials and staff time usually involves the allocation of money.

Parent leadership and organizational ability is crucial at the informal level; since teachers cannot be expected to take care

of all the many details of running a participant program, many of these should be handled by other adults. This not only gets the job done but also opens up a range of modes for participation which may fit the needs and talents of those parents who might not otherwise see roles for themselves. The tasks include telephoning, arranging schedules of participation, setting up field trips, keeping records, and answering the inquiries of interested outsiders.

In Project 88 parents were involved in matters ranging from writing project proposals to obtain funding to the final evaluation and write-up. Although there were a good many organizational problems the first year -- mostly because lines of communication and responsibility were not clearly established, the second year flowed well, according to most reports. The 4-5-6 parents, for example, had regular officers and standing committees in charge of areas such as art, library, classroom participation, resources and clerical work. There was also a Parent Council on which sat representatives from each class, and which contained committees that were responsible for such things as applications, funding, and evaluation. A number of general meetings were held during each year to help keep parents in touch with all that was going on in the project, including some sessions which involved parents and teachers not in the project.

At the official, or formal, level there needs to be at least a minimum amount of administrative and financial backing/support, if a parent participation program is to operate. At a minimum, of course, the school authorities must approve of having adults other than the school staff involved with children and some provisions must be made for seeing that the additional adults are accepted in the building by other staff and students.

Using volunteers in classrooms and around the school means added effort on the part of both the teachers most directly involved and other staff. The work load for the principal and school secretary will increase, if only to the extent of handling additional telephone calls and inquiries. Certain provisions may have to be made to meet liability, health, and certification requirements. If a special budget category is involved, there will be vouchers to complete and sign and accounting to be done. Teachers will have to spend time planning and preparing with the adult participants as well as consulting with them on many different matters. Most of this will have to be done at times when neither teachers nor parents are directly involved with students. Special orientation and training programs for volunteers require additional staff time (and some school districts employ regular central office personnel to provide such training).

But more than minimum measures are desirable. The more that a school program element, be it parent participation or programmed instruction or a textbook series, is an integral part of a school's overall curriculum and staff development effort, the more productive it is likely to be for students. What a single teacher does in isolation, no matter how rich it is, can be made richer if extended and built upon by others. And a school staff whose members are continually in touch with one another to share methods, materials and problems and to seek solutions to problems is more likely to develop professionally (and thus to offer better services to children) than a staff whose members function in isolation. Like consultation with parent volunteers, regular consultation with fellow teachers requires time outside of the daily classroom sessions with students.

To ask teachers regularly to add such activities on top of their full teaching loads is really asking too much of even the most dedicated and self-sacrificing professionals. It is important, therefore, that such activities be made part of the regular teacher job and teaching day rather than an overload. Here is where official administrative support can be most crucial.

There are a number of ways to build curriculum and staff development into the school day. Among these are arranging for "minimum days" (when students are not in school all day) and paid workshop sessions, providing replacement or substitute teachers (and volunteers), having specialists in areas such as physical education and music regularly take over groups of children, hiring teachers on eleven month contracts and having them teach nine months on a rotating basis and do development work the other two, and using student teachers to release regular teachers during the school day.

In any case, a new component should eventually be sufficiently built into the wider program of which it is a part that it is no longer considered an "extra". One advantage of having special money to hire Resource Teachers, as was done in Project 88, is that something such as parent participation can be tried out with minimal teacher time and effort outside of regular school hours. In due course, however, room should either be made for the new element as part of the regular teaching load, or it should be dropped. Making room usually involves taking time and/or money (or the human and material resources these represent) away from something else. Often the "something else" is (or was once) considered important to someone, thus a setting in which all practices are continually in the process of being evaluated in relation to objectives and outcome

is the most productive in the long run.

A school project which depends upon short-term funding beyond what is provided in the regular school budget probably has one of three main purposes. Sometimes extra funds are sought merely because they are available: someone wants to do something and funds are available, so they do it, or, special monies are supplied in order to meet a special problem which can be solved in a relatively short period of time. For example, funds might be sought for stocking a library, or buying specialized equipment or materials, for hiring personnel to provide service on an interim basis, or for carrying out one-time training of some staff members in a needed area of competency. However, most educational problems require long-term efforts if they are to be solved. In these cases, special funding can be introduced to pay the cost of trying out an approach or set of materials or procedures which, if they prove promising, can be incorporated into the regular budget of the school system for further development. The assumption here is that the additional money allows for something to be tried for which there would not be sufficient support in the regular budget but which, if it turned out to be more useful than some things already covered by that budget, would either replace them or result in a budget increase.

Project 88 certainly meets the first purpose, since foundation funds were obtained to run it for three years. Whether the last purpose -- that of adding something to the Castro program which will continue -- is fulfilled remains to be seen.

What this larger role for the project would mean is that there could be at Castro School a viable alternative program: parents who wanted their children to be involved with them in the type of

classrooms represented in Project 88 could elect to have them enrolled in the same way that they have been for the past three years. In addition, other teachers might move in the same direction as the project teachers, and with help from various sources move to involve parents, or to adopt one or more of the other Project 88 ideas (multicultural emphases, student partners, etc.). Still other teachers could be encouraged to develop alternatives of their own which might be attractive to parents and children not interested in something that involved parent work in the classroom. In any case, there could be a good deal of sharing of ideas (and problems) among teachers and parents on a regular basis in a climate where self-criticism could be carried out comfortably as a step to continuing growth.

Project 88 did have a good deal of positive influence on a number of parents and teachers. It did get a lot of parents well-experienced in tutoring and other forms of classroom participation. Many "alumni" of Project 88 have been working in other rooms and will continue to do so next year, and in the spring of 1972 there were at least four teachers using parents who never had before. So, parent participation grew in three years at Castro considerably beyond the Project 88 classrooms, and there is every sign that this increased level of involvement will continue. In addition, more than a dozen parents reported that they or their friends have become more involved in other school and community affairs than they had been before having been a part of Project 88 -- and they are now more willing to come to school with problems, to speak out when they have a question concerning something that is going on at school. In short, more and more parents are coming to expect to have a part in deciding what

happens at Castro School as well as in helping to carry it out. The future of this depends, again, on the attitudes and interests of the in-coming principal, the teaching staff, the parents and the Richmond central office.

Finally, the Richmond Unified School District already has a support program for efforts of the sort described here. The Richmond School Volunteers Program (RSVP) has been recruiting and placing volunteers in district schools for some years now. And recently a training component has been added to this program to prepare volunteers for classroom service.

Conclusion

Parents and teachers who might be interested in seeing whether educational alternatives along the lines of those described in the first section would fit their own objectives and situations will need to confront an issue that is more inclusive than those described in the second section and to become clear just where they stand. The larger issue is one of educational philosophy, and the alternative sides of the issue run something like this: Is education something that is built into the fabric of the whole community and culture to which the schools can make a contribution, or is education synonymous with schooling with the schools at least potentially able to train children in ways desired by society on their own? Can the world of knowledge that is considered essential for children to master be successfully packaged so that it can be brought into classrooms to be administered by teachers who are trained in the use of certain motivational and pedagogical devices, or do other influences in the child's environment have such an important bearing on the course of his development that they must be included in his formal

education? Can a narrow range of methods largely preplanned under a teacher's control effectively reach children with a wide range of interests, abilities and experiential backgrounds, or is it important that each individual student be given some of the initiative and responsibility for finding ways to nourish his own development? Is the only major choice between "child-centered" education and "subject-centered" education, or is there a way in which the standards of scholarship of the knowledge fields can interact with the many interests and involvements of childhood to enrich each child's development with the powerful tools for understanding that are contained in the knowledge fields?

To those who believe that educational programs ought to be based on the child and his wider environment, programs which are restricted to classrooms and books seem narrow. To many who believe that proper educational programs involve sequences of lessons, textbooks and workbooks, and relative quiet and order, programs of the first kind do not appear to be educational at all.

Project 88 has not proven either side of this issue right or wrong. It was not set up as a carefully controlled educational experiment. Yet there is a great weight of evidence from other sources accumulating on the side of projects like Project 88. A number of studies, including the well-known Coleman Report and the more recent Jencks Study in this country have presented evidence that differences in home background and peer group factors may account for more of the differences in school achievement than differences in school programs such as per pupil expenditure, teacher training and experience, class size, and buildings. A study in England which was just as comprehensive as the Coleman Report recommended that

what it called the "pacemaker"schools be the kind of school to which all others should aspire to become. (These are the schools in England which have programs that we in the United States now call "Open Education", following the lead of Charles Silberman in his book Crisis in the Classroom.)

Involvement of family, neighborhood and community in a child's education is what is of crucial importance. For the successful school child this is already largely a fact, but even the successful child (in today's terms) might benefit a good deal if he were relieved from the restrictions of what Urie Bronfenbrenner has called age (or generational) segregation, as well as segregation by ethnic and social class status. For the unsuccessful child, and especially for the one we have come to call "disadvantaged," the involvement of parents and neighbors is very important. This means, if it is to be taken seriously, going further than Project 88 ever attempted. It means extensive training and help in child-rearing for parents; it means teachers working even more intensively to use the everyday experiences of the child to help him build the understanding that he needs in areas like mathematics, language arts and reading, science, and social studies, as well as personal knowledge and understanding of others; it means helping parents and neighbors capitalize on the child's experience outside of school and help him turn it to good developmental advantage; and it means finding many, many ways of honoring and celebrating each child's cultural background and helping minority children develop in their own language and culture at the same time as they are being introduced to "majority culture."

The kind of school programs which are implied would seem "far out" to many, but so far most of the attempts to work with a

model that restricts itself to just teachers and children in classrooms has not brought about hoped for improvements.

The early childhood program recently passed by the California Legislature with its provisions that parents join in the development of plans to reform educational offerings for children aged four through nine offers an opportunity which the parents and teachers at the Castro School ought to be well prepared to take up, thanks to Project 88.

August 1972