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ABSTRACT

This document discusses parental involvement in public elementary schools, particularly those in poverty and minority areas. The need for more parental interaction in the classroom is described, along with the social, psychological, economic, and educational advantages for the parents themselves, the children, and the teachers. Included is a list of parent orientation activities, a daily class schedule, descriptions and evaluations of six parent participation programs, and comments on future trends. (SET)

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A LABORATORY FOR LEARNING
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL PRIMARY CLASSROOM

BY

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Presented to the General Faculty of
the Claremont Graduate School in
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Master of Arts.

We certify that we have read this
document and approve it as adequate
in scope and quality for the degree
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Abstract

The moral obligation to assimilate the underprivileged elements of society into its mainstream will have a profound impact on the present technology used in our public education system. Since this system exists only to serve the public needs, and is financially supported by those it serves, it must provide a total service for all elements of society, particularly the underprivileged. Historically, the public school has neglected to provide a proper academic and psychological climate to the disadvantaged groups. Further, the educational processes and techniques were developed without benefit of "system" analysis and design and, therefore, did not consider the total learning environment. Thus, many of the elements in the system have never been considered. Educationists must depart from their business as usual approach and become innovators in their attempts to improve the educational system, and in so doing, produce a better educated, socially integrated, psychologically adjusted product.

Education should be the process of producing a well adjusted person, armed with the academic skills required to achieve dignity and self realization within the framework and standards of the society into which he was born. In the past, these standards have not been made available to

all elements of our society. The educational system must take the leadership in correcting this deficiency by creating new techniques for improved human development. The researcher has accelerated advancement of science by use of the laboratory. In the laboratory the processes of postulation, investigation, experimentation, discovery, and finally, application have resulted in significant advancement in the physical world. This critique addresses development of the educational laboratory, namely the primary school classroom as a "laboratory for learning" for all elements of the neighborhood community--all races, colors, and age groups, with parents participating with their offspring in their childrens' primary phase of education.

Parental involvement in the public school primary classroom, particularly in poverty and minority areas, is the innovative technique to be described herein. The observations and manifestations which precipitated development of this approach are discussed, coupled with an analysis of the benefits which can be anticipated. The social, psychological, economic, and educational advantages for parents, children and teachers are postulated. Generic methods for implementation are included. Case histories of pre-school parental participation are described which have been attempted throughout the United States to date. Evaluations of some of these pilot programs are included.

Finally, the reader will be provided insight into the trends of the 70's for increased application of parental participation in primary education.

Observations Precipitating Need for the Technique

The home and school environments have a great impact upon the parent and child. The concept of drawing together all resources including the family, community and school, can help contribute to the child's total development.¹ Though it is recognized that the family is fundamental to this development, it has been observed that disadvantaged children have fewer satisfying contacts with home and "impoverished" parents gain little in their minimal contacts with the school. It is imperative that this trend be reversed in the very early years.

The gap between home and school continues to grow, for increasingly parents are being taken from the home in an effort to financially stabilize the household. In poverty areas, absence from home is even more acute for not only are hours of employment longer, but the work is generally harder. The "family hours" are negligible leaving little enthusiasm or time for school or teachers. This lack of association not only creates apathy, but also greater insecurity and hostility in the parent and child for the educator is viewed as the "untouchable authority."

¹Pamphlet No. 6, Project Head Start--Parents are Needed (Office of Economic Opportunity), p. 7.

Authoritarianism is not a myth. The educational system has neglected to recognize the need to fully utilize adult assistance beyond pre-school phases. The classroom teacher alone cannot give impetus to the children particularly those who emanate from the poverty background. The teacher cannot motivate or do more than superficially educate such children. The teacher needs the collective assistance that can be provided by the families of her children, no matter how limited the parents' background. Talents such as sewing, typing, wood-working, and cooking have been looked upon condescendingly. This feeling has been imposed upon the parent and transposed to the child. Adults with these resources must be infused in the process of educating children. These are valuable assets which can make the parent feel needed and in turn give the child a positive feeling toward his parents and their efforts.

Oftentimes, particularly in the culture of poverty, there is a disparity in marital values.¹ Husband and wife appear to each other as society sees them. There is often friction, contempt and deprivation. The single-parent family becomes inevitable. With only one parent in the home, the child is either left with outsiders to care for him; or as in many instances, he shifts for himself.

¹Lola M. Ireland, Low Income Life Styles (U. S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, 1967), p. 17.

The need for a "parent substitute" in the formative years is acute. Involvement of adults in the school classroom would provide a measure of what is absent in the home. Moreover, it has become apparent that racial and socio-economic barriers have created powerless, meaningless and helpless life styles for much of the population. Realizing their submerged position, these adults (parents) have felt apart from society, rather than a part of it. They are convinced of their impotence and their attitudes are logical results of real circumstances. Parents who come from poverty often lack an adequate education.¹ Language disabilities are deterrents to helping their children at home or being appreciative of their classroom activities. With painful memories and distraught feelings regarding their own educational shortcomings, there is little reason for parents to encourage their children to be educated for the same failure. Their participation in the classroom can improve these attitudes.

¹Ibid., p. 9.

Advantages to be Derived

The previous section discussed the apparent and obvious needs for parental involvement in the primary school classroom through observations. The advantages to be gained from this involvement are multi-lateral in that all elements of the system are benefited: The student, the parents, and the teacher all learning together in a cooperative process. The benefits for each are numerous and can be categorized into social, economic, psychological and educational. Each of these has an interfacing effect on the other as the inter-relating dynamics are continually at work.

Parental benefits in the socio-psychological category begin with the breakdown of prejudicial barriers. In and near urban centers, some neighborhood school districts contain a mixture of cultures, religions, and ethnic groups. Involvement by the adults in a common activity provides a catalyst for increased relationships which foster understanding and diminish prejudice. Group dynamics is the vital factor. The significant common denominator involved is, of course, that all are parents as well as adults. As such, they begin to realize through cooperative effort that each has similar problems in rearing their offspring.¹ Sharing

¹Dorothy Walter Baruch, Parents and Children Go To School (Scott, Foresman and Company, 1939), p. 33.

these feelings and anxieties with others develops the realization that they are not alone and tensions are diminished by the dilution therapy process. All of these inter-relationships decrease prejudices, making for a better neighborhood and environment for the educational process in the school and home. Involvement by the parent in the classroom also tends to foster their involvement in other local community activities, thus expanding interest and mutual contribution toward improvement of understanding. The enhancement of the local communities overall well being is, of course, a fall out. Most important is that involvement has a marked impact on the psychological spectrum of the parent.¹ Gradually an improved self-image becomes apparent. Breathing faith into parents and helping them build faith into themselves is the most beneficial "medicine" for culturally deprived parents.

In the process of participation in the classroom, the parent subconsciously surfaces latent abilities which can oftentimes open the doorways to self-improved earning capacity, leadership roles in the community, and increased security.

Another very important advantage is that of improved understanding of, and relationship with, the offspring. While there are many factors and aspects of the social

¹Lola M. Irelan, Low Income Life Styles, p. 44.

environment which contribute to the child's achievement behavior, perhaps the most crucial of these is found in the interaction with parents. Authorities have come to agree that if the atmosphere of education is to be changed for children, the attitudes towards education must be changed in parents.¹ One way to change is by devising ways to involve the parents. The by-product of the involvement is a greater appreciation for the importance of education in improving the probability for a better life. The parents' participation is also a learning process for them in the understanding of what is going on inside their children and themselves. In helping the teacher meet their children's needs, the parent gains insight into all children as well as his own, and gains a new respect for fatherhood/motherhood as a "profession." The parents begin to realize that their children are products of the home and school environment. They learn that children emulate their parents' attitudes, goals, despair; their approach to life. Learning to understand their offspring can, to some extent, remedy the parental malpractices in the home environment and thus provide an educational involvement on all fronts.²

¹William G. Stucky, "Poverty is the Consequence of Obsolescence," Working with Low Income Families (American Home Economics Association), p. 81.

²Catherine S. Chilman, "Child Rearing and Family Life Patterns of the Very Poor," Working with Low Income Families (American Home Economics Association, 1965), p. 51.

Parental involvement in the educational processes of the primary school classroom benefit the students in several ways. The cross-cultural adult-child relationships that are fostered by the process minimize the prejudices that exist in the young as well as in the adult world. This increases acceptance of one another and thus develops a less hostile environment. Increased cooperation and bi-lateral understanding enhances the process of learning from each other. Obviously, a decrease in hostility automatically improves the general decorum of the student groups, and learning is assimilated more readily with increased enthusiasm and desire for achievement.

The psychological improvements are evident when one can observe the positive impacts of parental participation in the classroom. It has been proven that those educators who have had the greatest apparent success in dealing with emotional problems of the disadvantaged consistently set a high priority on involvement of parents.¹ Their participation generates security and improved motivation, which are conducive to better understanding.

The variety of parental backgrounds, color and races introduces the students to new aspects of their society and local community. In Arroyo School, Pomona, California, for

¹ Harold Howe II, Summer Education for Children of Poverty (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Government Printing Office, 1966), pamphlet No. OE 37006, p. 14.

example, white, black, and brown races can be found in many classrooms. They are exposed to a spectrum of cultures, habits, and ideas that expand their learning base, for they absorb information from many different types of adults. One teacher in the classroom can never provide such a diverse and beneficial learning situation. It has been shown that such a learning environment stimulates improvement in the attainment of the educational goals established for each primary grade.¹ More importantly, it develops the foundations for achievement of objectives which motivates the student throughout his lifetime.²

There is a distinct relationship between the attainment of goals and the self image that an individual possesses.³ The more positive the image, the greater the motivation. Parental influences in the classroom, in consort with the teacher enhances the self image; the self contentment; the decrease of fears, and frustrations.

It is unfortunate, but true, that teachers are also human beings. As such they frequently exhibit the same deficiencies as other adults. These shortcomings can be a

¹Ibid., p. 16

²Ibid., p. 40.

³Ibid., p. 43.

detriment to educating and humanizing every pupil in the classroom.¹ One of the most serious of these is prejudice. Participation in the classroom by parents who are of varied races and backgrounds will help break down prejudicial barriers exhibited by some teachers. This is paramount if each student is to receive equal educational and psychological treatment in the classroom. Teachers and parents working together to educate the "primary schooler" will improve the teacher's social acceptance of all elements of society. This cross-cultural exposure then works on each of the three elements of the educational laboratory, the parent, the student, and the teacher. The teacher is integrated into the parental peer group of the classroom and can provide equal relationships with each of the students.

¹Harold Howe II, A Chance for a Change: New School Programs for the Disadvantaged (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Government Printing Office), pamphlet No. 20402, p. 32-33.

Implementation Techniques

The improved learning dynamics of the classroom results from parent participation. Stimulating the disadvantaged parent to participate in the primary school classroom is initiated by developing a feeling that they are needed; by communicating the idea of providing a useful service to their own children as well as the offspring of other similarly disadvantaged parents. The educators must relate to parents in such a way that the authoritative image is reduced so that early discussions can take place. The feeling of "caring" must be developed so that these parents will cross the schoolroom threshold and become involved.

The initial contacts should be made through a very personal, individual letter from teacher to parent, preferably handwritten. Follow up phone calls will enhance the probability of affirmative responses. School newspapers will be used to advertise the innovation. Back-to-school and "open-school" weeks permit some face-to-face communication. Oftentimes, in the primary grades, the children are transported by their parents. This permits additional opportunity for dialogue between parents and the teacher.

Each of these situations provides an opportunity to discuss participation by the parent, to dispel the fears and suspicions of the "educational goliath"--the school and instructor.

A well designed parent orientation approach must be implemented for all parents who evidence interest in participating. Integration of disadvantaged parents immediately into the classroom environment will only reinforce their fears, and any involvement will have been lost. Their confidence in this new activity must be gradually enhanced through a step-by-step introduction, which will instill a feeling of understanding the school environment and their role.

Typical orientation activities are listed below:

1. Tour of school complex and detailed exposure of classroom facilities.
2. Introduce principal and other administrative personnel.
3. Short presentation by principal as to the significance of their participation.
4. Detailed description of classroom activities.
5. Determination of special talents.
6. Assignment of preliminary responsibilities.
7. Workshops on each job.

8. Observe a typical daily classroom routine.

9. Guidance on problems at home; extrapolation to the classroom process.

One orientation plan is shown below. The design of such a plan will vary depending upon the numbers of parents involved at any one time. Larger groups would require more sessions in order to spend sufficient time with each participant.

<u>Activity Number</u>	<u>Number of Trips to School</u>	<u>Time of Visitations</u>	<u>Location in School</u>
1	One	Evening	As indicated
2	One	Evening	Teachers Lounge
3	One	Late afternoon	Classroom
4	One	Evening	Cafeteria
5	One	Late afternoon	Classroom
6	One	Evening	Classroom
7	One	A.M. or P.M.* Sessions	Classroom
8	As required	After school	Parents' Home

*Team teaching techniques will enable one teacher to be available most of the time for guidance discussions

When accepted with enthusiasm by a few parents, the process of participation can be started. The responsibilities of decision-making, programming, planning and administration are assumed by individual parents commensurate

with their abilities. The successful completion of the daily tasks required in the primary classroom contribute to the personal learning of the parent and to his confidence. As a teacher helper, or parent participant, the following schedule might be suggested:

<u>Daily Class Schedule</u>	<u>Parent</u>	<u>Teacher</u>
8:30- 9:00	Set out art supplies, e.g., paint, clay	
9:00- 9:20	Attendance, milk money or lunch money	Flag salute, song sharing
9:20- 9:40	*Take small group I **for special game, walk or story	Indoor activities
9:40- 9:50	Assist with clean up	Clean up
9:50-10:00	*Same as above with **group II	Science Math exploration
10:00-10:20	Break	Music and Rhythms
10:20-10:40	Supervise outdoor play	Break
10:40-10:50	Assist with toilet and wash up	Toilet and wash up
10:50-11:10	Assist with milk	Milk and rest
11:10-11:30	Ready activities for next session or next day	Stories, dramatic play Dismiss

*If parent is able, Reading or Math Readiness may be substituted

**If parent is male, carpentry, outdoor games may be substituted

↑
When does
parent have
to be male
to teach carpentry
outdoor games?

The aforementioned plan for stimulating parental participation in the primary school classroom may not be totally effective in reaching all parents. Economically deprived adults may require financial inducement to effect their involvement. The author suggests that it would be possible to establish funds allocated for this purpose from Federal and State sources. The local school district would administer the program. Each district would assess the financial status of parents who desire to participate in the primary classroom. Minimum yearly incomes of \$3000.00 or less would qualify the parent for financial remuneration. A maximum number of hours per week per family could be designated, i.e., fifteen hours in the classroom for both parents. The national minimum rate for hourly workers would be used for the pay scale.

Parents whose annual incomes exceeded the minimum could be provided with other inducements to stimulate their active participation. Many adults have never graduated from high school, but have successfully completed some of the requirements. Classroom participation in combination with selected adult education courses could fulfill the criteria for obtaining a high school diploma. This approach would require an evaluation of their records and a specific set of requirements tailored on an individual basis. Each teacher would then attempt to utilize the

participating parent in classroom disciplines and child instruction that would permit the parent to earn some of the credits required to satisfy the requirements.

Application of Techniques.

There have been many pilot projects attempted throughout the United States in recent years. All were designed to stimulate the interest of disadvantaged parents in the educational process and its benefits. Many different techniques have been employed to develop the inter-relationship between the home and the classroom. All attempts have been designed, of course, to improve the self image, motivation, and achievement of the disadvantaged child. In addition, special workshops have been sponsored to educate teachers in the specialized methods required to promote the implement parent participation. All of these programs have had varying degrees of success. Although the programs have been on a pre-primary school level, they illustrate the validity of the basic concept, namely, parental participation. A summary of some of the programs that have been documented are included.

The Philadelphia Story.¹ The Philadelphia Elementary School is located in Pomona, California. This school has an enrollment of approximately 1100, and although not considered a typical Title I (disadvantaged area) school,

¹Darrell Morrison, Principal of Philadelphia Elementary School, Pomona, California, Direct interview.

it does contain children from varied ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds.

In the fall of 1969 a group of mothers volunteered their services to assist in the classroom. The staff was extremely happy to accept the offer. The parents selected the grade levels and worked as aids throughout the school year. The average weekly time spent in the classroom was six hours. These mothers were so stimulated by their participation that they enrolled in a formal course given by the school district. Their actions prompted other parents to become involved and a chain reaction developed.

This year, twenty parents (75% from minority groups) are involved in the primary classrooms from 6-9 hours per week. Evaluations made by the school and District administration indicates improved performance of the classes in which these parents participated.

The Arroyo School Happening.¹ Arroyo Elementary School is located in Pomona, California. It is a Title I school consisting of approximately 70% black, 20% Mexican, and 10% white. The school is located in a low income area.

In 1968 the school psychologist conceived and implemented a project which was called "Operation Awareness." Its purpose was to improve relationships between home, family, and school. The project was clearly defined and

¹Arline Steiner, Operation Awareness (Pomona Unified School District, 1969).

described in a brochure which was sent to the parents at the beginning of the school year. Plans, objectives, and procedures were identified. Handwritten letters were subsequently sent to the parents. Simple language was used. The text was structured to evidence a sincere interest in behalf of the parents.

An example of this type of communication is shown on the following page. The letter was also written in Spanish.

Initially, parents were called together at the school to discuss their children and plan for classroom visitations. Upper grade students acted as baby sitters, if requested. Parental inputs indicated the need for additional types of meetings. Discussion groups at home and at the school were formed. The psychologist acted as the moderator in the school groups. A schedule for these meetings was formulated well in advance so that the adults could apportion their time accordingly.

The home meetings were held monthly at various times of the day to suit the needs of the groups. Sundays were frequently specified. The groups were broken up into grade levels. The sessions at Arroyo School addressed topics requested by the parents.

OPERATION AWARENESS
ARROYO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

February 3, 1969

PLEASE DON'T THROW THIS AWAY!

Read it! Answer it!

Your school wants to please you.

We want to offer what is helpful to you.

But we cannot do it alone.

We need to know what you prefer.

Do you realize how many parents have shown

enthusiasm and interest?

JOIN US!

Come to our meetings.

Please help to improve communication by answering and returning the lower part of this page. This can be your opportunity to correct ideas, air feelings or thoughts, and share your experience with others. Join us at OPERATION AWARENESS meetings and help us to enrich your lives and your children's.

Many parents have expressed a desire for evening meetings. Some have asked that definite topics for discussion be announced ahead of time, instead of leaving the meetings open for discussion on just any topic that comes up. Which would you like?

Everyone: Please return this part.

1. When would you prefer to have meetings?

Mornings _____ Afternoons _____ Evenings _____

Other _____ Makes no difference _____

2. Please list topics or problems you would like to have discussed.

Name

It is not necessary to sign this but it would be appreciated

A year end evaluation demonstrated that some of the parents who in past years had been the most difficult to reach were now very active in the groups, offering their homes and their assistance. The school community was evidencing a greater interest in participation, particularly those who were most disenchanted in previous years.

Pacific Oaks Pasadena.¹ Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena obtained funds from the United States Office of Education for the 1969-70 school year. This money was designated for a seminar: "Involving Parents in Children's Learning." Those participating in the seminar were teachers preparing themselves to work with disadvantaged parents in an effort to enrich the learning environment which the parents provide at home. Of concern to those evaluating the program were the teacher benefits, for it was evident that the professional must be made more aware of the positive applications of the parents' involvement. The need for the teacher to learn how to work with disadvantaged parents is vital. The professional sometimes has pre-conceived ideas and prejudices which must be modified or totally eliminated wherever possible.

Previous studies at Pacific Oaks have indicated that parent involvements in the school is essential for children's

¹Hilde Bruch, M.D., Parent Education or the Illusion of Omnipotence (Pacific Oaks College, 1969), p. 5.

growth, learning and development.¹ Consequently, Pacific Oaks is planning to sponsor this seminar again using college funds in an effort to continue to reach teachers who feel the urgency of this educational process.

Baltimore's Early Admission Project.² The first attempt to bridge the gap for much needed parental involvement in the poverty areas of Baltimore was to establish Children Centers. Each center provided day-care for 35 children; serving not only their physical and daily needs but the emotional and psychological needs as well. The criteria for Children Centers as set up by the Health, Education and Welfare Department were employed. These guidelines indicated that adult volunteers, preferably parents, participate on a regular basis. Daily scheduling of participants was urged. Many of the children enrolled at Children Centers were of a single-parent family. This decreased the possibility of using the parent as a volunteer helper, but did provide a parent substitute which was necessary for the well-being of the child.

In reviewing the progress report of the Story of the Baltimore Early School Admissions Project, it was noted that

¹ Pacific Oaks College Brochure (Pacific Oaks College, 1969), p. 3.

² Alice Currie Harding, The Story of the Baltimore Early School Admissions Project (National Education Association of the United States, Sept. 1964), Microfiche No. ED 001860.

the parent involvement technique was a partial answer to what was necessary for that area. The usual organization meeting, workshops and formal activities were completely disregarded. If discussions were held, it was always on an individual basis with the professional and parent, and always pertained to the parent's goals, aspirations and hopes for the child. If direct participation was needed, it was requested for specific things such as field trips, holiday festivals, and carnivals. This assured the parent of some involvement without imposing rigid requirements for formal participation. Hundreds of parents participated in fifteen centers. This program was a small step forward in the involvement of very impoverished, hostile and disadvantaged adults in the backward areas of Baltimore's black belt. Although it was only a beginning it did demonstrate that communication and involvement can be initiated.

State of Indiana Pilot Programs in Elementary Guidance.¹ The research done in regard to the fifteen pilot programs involved in the State of Indiana was primarily concerned with counselling and guidance of students. Interestingly, parent involvement in this area did not

¹Rolla F. Pruett, Fifteen Pilot Programs in Elementary Guidance in the State of Indiana, 1965-66 (Indiana Public Schools Department of Instruction, 1967), Microfiche No. ED 012072.

foster participation in the classroom, but limited itself to study groups. The outcome of these study groups, however, was the result we are trying to effect from all phases of parent-child-professional relationships.

Evaluation of compiled data indicated that the study group participants had greater understanding of the characteristics, motivations, and hangups of children after exposure to the study group curriculum.

Denver-Stanford Project.¹ During the first three years of the program parents of 5th grade Spanish students were invited to participate by viewing the televised instruction with the child using parent guidebooks and phonograph records provided for the course.

The superior performance of students whose parents participated was indicated by the results of listening comprehension tests. There was a definite correlation between the parents' presence in the classrooms and the achievement of their offspring. Of interest in this experiment was the fact that the parents did not have any academic background or training in the language being studied. This led to the conclusion that psychological factors were

¹J. L. Hayman, Causative Factors and Learning Related to Parent Participation (Denver-Stanford Project, Report No. 13), Microfiche No. ED 018168.

at work that provided a sense of security and a motivational desire to achieve. It was noted that increased family unity became apparent under these conditions and parents displayed a vital interest which gravitated to other facets of classroom learning as well.

Evaluation of Results

The advantages to be realized by parental participation in the primary classroom have yet to be quantitatively evaluated. The author has researched the literature with little success to find any descriptions of controlled assessments being made to determine the positive and lasting benefits that have been achieved.

Some of the programs discussed in this paper have been superficially evaluated on a strictly qualitative basis by participating teachers and administrators. Assessments have been made through short term, intuitive, and therefore subjective observation. Further, these conclusions have been primarily related to the advantages derived by the students only.

A recommended method for determining the impacts of parental participation in the primary classroom is to use the control group concept. This approach consists of setting up similar groups of students with and without the benefit of parental participation. The schools chosen for the experiment must be in like neighborhoods so that each class selected would have a similar profile of students. Schools in both poverty and more affluent districts would be included. The experiment requires the gathering of data

over an extended period of time to determine the extent of the effects on both children and parents.

Children entering the primary school should be tested for psychological and intellectual performance. These tests must be repeated annually for several years. If such tests were performed on a mass basis in many school districts throughout the United States, a tremendous quantity of data would be made available, permitting a thorough analysis and accurate conclusions.

Students who have had parents participating in their classrooms and those who have not would be compared in terms of their educational and psychological achievements over several years. The influences on participating parents must also be determined. Many adults emanating from poverty environments exhibit similar characteristics including lack of motivation, despair, negative self image, minimal acceptance of responsibility, and a general lack of desire to improve. These characteristics can be assessed by school and district psychologists, supplemented by social workers to determine the effects.

Case histories would be prepared prior to parental involvement. Subsequent analyses over several years of participation could provide some visibility in terms of psychological changes, advances in economic status, and improved participation in community life.

A standardized method of assessment and evaluation must be employed in all school districts. Testing must be identical, assessment yardsticks must be similar and the central groups must have the same characteristics.

Recent Trends

The previous section described some of the earlier projects throughout the country which tried to increase home-school communications through parental involvement. More recently, newer techniques have been employed, particularly in lower income and poverty areas, to improve upon the past methods, and obtain better results. Three such programs are described which have gone beyond the pre-school period, and have involved children and parents in the primary grades. Funding has come from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to support these pilot projects, under Title I of Public Law 89-10, "The Elementary and Secondary Education Act." These programs are described below.

Home Start.¹ Woodward-Granger Community School, a 658-student system located 15 miles north of Des Moines, Iowa, hired a special teacher to give small group instruction to mothers whose children would be eligible for public school in the fall semester. Titled "Home Start," this program

¹Harold Howe II, A Chance for a Change, p. 3.

allows the school to extend its influence in the home rather than take the child from the home to strengthen his educational foundation in the formative years.

The teacher, experienced in many fields, including social work, instructs the mothers on a variety of topics such as discipline, nutrition, behavior patterns and activities related to school.

These mothers also have the opportunity to discuss some of their own problems and profit from the experiences and knowledge of other parents participating in the program. By strengthening the home educationally, all of the children within the family benefit. The parents gain the satisfaction of contributing to this vital process. Individual as well as group contacts are made to enable the school specialist to discover the particular needs of each family. This program also provides a means for early identification of physical defects or psychological problems which may hinder future school performance. It is hoped that Home Start will lessen remedial needs at a later date.

Head Start Follow-Thru.¹ In Weco, Texas, children who have graduated from the Head Start program are getting enriched instructional follow-up services which will give them the equal educational footing they desperately need.

¹Ibid., p. 41.

These children, now first-graders, will have included in this ten month academic program health services which became apparent to school personnel earlier in the Head Start program. Many are in need of tonsillectomies, hernia operations, orthopedic correction, and dental work. School administrators recognizing the special needs of these disadvantaged children have placed parent aides in each of the follow-thru classrooms for small group instruction. Due to the unexpected enthusiastic response of parents whose children have benefited from this program, school personnel have currently implemented a home-school relations program.

An Enrichment Program Involving Parents: Kindergarten to Third Grade.¹ In a small Midwestern city, an enrichment program involving parents has been conducted at four schools where children of the poor are concentrated. In these schools, the academic achievement of children who were old enough to go to Junior High School had fallen three to four years behind the national level. School officials decided to focus corrective measures on the early grades. A major element was wide-scale involvement of parents. To start the program, testing was done prior to enrollment to

¹Sergent Shriver and Harold Howe II, Education: An Answer to Poverty (U.S. Office of Education, Office of Economic Opportunity, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 26.

determine the readiness of the child. Parent interviews were held so that a record of each child's experience could be evaluated in respect to his home and neighborhood environment.

Classes for parents and visitations to the school were encouraged before the actual date of enrollment. Parents who had unpleasant memories of unsuccessful school experiences were surprised but grateful that parental interest was fostered. When school began, teachers had monthly meetings. They talked about learning and behavior. They were invited to the class to see projects that the children had done. The success of the children was gratifying to the parents. Many volunteered to come to school to help; others volunteered time for projects on Saturdays. The program became so apparently successful that a trained worker was hired in addition to the teacher to meet with parents and encourage expression of problems as well as to coach parents to stimulate the minds of their children.

Forecasted Trends

The programs described under "Recent Trends" are just the beginning, the seeds of parental involvement in the primary school classroom. All that has been gained from these projects is but preparation for the continuing development and application of the principles in the coming years.

The writer has advocated, in this critique, the use of the primary classroom as a laboratory of learning. It is anticipated that this decade will see a significant expansion of parental participation in grades one through three. It is expected that this application will be given impetus by the Federal Government through allocation of funds to expand these pilot programs.

The author anticipates modifications to present college curricula in order to ready prospective primary teachers for the changes in teaching techniques required to work with participating parents in the classroom. Special courses will be designed to assist school administrators in implementing these projects, and lastly, primary school courses of study issued by State Board of Education will be upgraded to include consideration of parental involvement in the classroom.

Conclusion

Our nation is really now for the first time admitting the existence of conditions within its borders which so incapacitate great numbers of its citizens that their life circumstances are nearly hopeless. Within the past two decades we have become aware that the early years of a child's life play a fundamental and pervasive role. It is therefore essential that anyone interested in education must give full attention to the early years, for here are the beginnings, the roots of many things to come. A realization of what has gone before contributes to a deeper, more fundamental understanding of what follows. An understanding of the early years gives deeper, more significant meaning to interpretations that bear on life at other periods.

Experiments conducted with preschool students and parents indicate that the child is not a separate entity. The child's family is a part of the child. He is so closely linked with his parents during the early years that their satisfactions, anxieties, frustrations are felt by him and influence his characteristics. Therefore, the development of children at home and school must be treated as a whole. Helping parents gain a measure of understanding and security is the basic goal of parent education.

The benefits that may result when home and school work together have been discussed herein and examples given. This paper has recommended an extension to preschool programs which have been designed to involve parents in the pre-educational processes of their offspring. Parental involvement in the primary school classroom is a natural and logical continuation. It is paramount that we improve the debilitating circumstances that prevail in the home of the underprivileged families, otherwise the incapacitating conditions will continue unabated. Pilot programs need to be instituted in all poverty areas throughout the land. A plan for accurate evaluation of the results must be developed. The beneficial results should be documented so that cross fertilization among local educational districts can be accomplished. Government, state, and community legislators and educators require tangible evidence of positive and justifiable results in order to gain public support and the resources to expand the techniques and application to envelop the majority of disadvantaged and hopeless parents.

The challenge before mankind today is to cooperate in creating a nation and world that is really good for all human beings--not just for certain people therein--a world democracy in the widest, truest sense. In this era of violent social conflicts disadvantaged parents participating in the educational process permit sound individual

development, the collective use of group creativity, and the atmosphere for developing constructive ways to diminish conflict and differences. The primary school laboratory for learning may hold in its small compass one evolving image of the secure and life-giving world we seek.

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