ABSTRACT
                 This paper examines the potential impact of parent
involvement in the formal education of their children and suggests
ways that teacher education can be restructured to prepare teachers
to work with parents. This paper attempts to answer five questions:
(1) Why should parents be involved in the formal education of their
children? (2) Why should teachers be trained to involve parents? (3)
What competencies do teachers need for working with parents? (4) How
can teachers be helped to achieve these competencies? and (5) What
can be done to enable schools of education to meet the challenge of
preparing teachers for parent involvement? Schools of education need
to broaden the concept of what teachers do and change the existing
conception of "professional status". The paper concludes that it is
essential that teachers who work with parents have a value
orientation which is non-elitest and which accepts and respects the
parents and community of the children they teach. (CS)

DEC. 1 6 1974

PREPARING TEACHERS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

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October 1974

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PREPARING TEACHERS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

This paper asks and attempts to answer five questions:

I. Why should parents be involved in the formal education
of their children?

II. Why should teachers be trained to involve parents?

III. What competencies do teachers need for working with
parents?

IV. How can teachers be helped to achieve these competencies?

V. What can be done to enable schools of education to meet
the challenge of preparing teachers for parent involvement?

I. WHY INVOLVE PARENTS?

The involvement of parents in the formal education of their
children is good for the children, good for the parents, good
for the teachers, good for the schools, and good for the com-
munity. This generalization is elaborated below.

A) Good For The Children

Children profit from almost every opportunity parents may
have to demonstrate an interest in them. Parents' increased
understanding of school programs and their participation as
school resources and change-agents contribute to better pre-
paration of preschoolers and to schools more responsive to
children's needs.

Stearns has published an excellent framework for examining
the potential impact of parent involvement on the achievement
of children in compensatory education programs. (1973) She
analyzes three roles commonly played by involved parents:

tutoring their own children; paraprofessional employees;
decision-makers. Dr. Stearns outlines the hypothetical links
in the chain leading from an aspect of each role to increased
child achievement. The framework is based upon the assumptions
of parent involvement advocates and the rhetoric of project
proposals and various agency guidelines. In some cases it
is hypothesized that children do better because of improved
self-image; in other cases it is because of improved parent
self-image; in still other cases it is due to program adap-
tations brought about by parent perspectives' influencing
decisions.

Dr. Stearns summarizes the research in these areas and indi-
cates where research has been conclusive or insufficient.
A high degree of the research cited uses test scores as the
measure of how "good" parent involvement may be. Unrecorded
but pervasive empirical evidence suggests that parent in-
volvement is "good for the children" irrespective of test
score criteria.

B) Good For The Parents

The benefits accruing to parents from their involvement in
their children's educational programs ranges from individual
self satisfaction to the ability to prevail over oppressive
circumstances. In addition there are vast learning opportun-
ities whether in formal parent education programs or through
informal interaction with staff and their materials.

C) Good For The Teachers

How parent involvement is good for teachers can be summed up

as follows:

1) it enables teachers to draw upon supplemental and often unique adult resources; 2) it provides teachers with additional information on the children they teach; 3) it permits teachers to understand more about the community served by the school; 4) it opens up opportunities for dialogue between the providers and consumers of educational services, encouraging teachers to recognize other perceptions of what they do; 5) it makes possible political alliances between teachers-as-workers and parents-as-consumers in contending with school bureaucracies.

D) <u>Good For The Schools</u>

Though negative, an appropriate question may be: "Is uninvolvement and apathy good for the schools?" Public and private schools require effective community support for maintaining or expanding educational services. Few groups comprising the general public have the potential that parents have for mobilizing support for (or, at times, opposition to) school activities and affairs. Parents have the power to shut schools down (as the tragic battles over integration in Boston and textbooks in Charleston can attest) or keep an entire educational program in operation without financial assistance (as the Mississippi Head Start parents demonstrated in 1966 and 1967).

Parents are capable of devoting considerable energies to schools in the non-political arena as well. Tutoring programs, playground construction, fund raising are but a few of the contributions parents make to the improvement of schools -to say nothing of the role which parents play in demystifying the schools via the questions they ask.

E) Good For The Community

Since many of the social benefits of parent involvement are
implied in the above paragraphs, only a few additional examples
will be cited here. What parents learn about schools and
teachers is rarely kept a secret. Whether it's called "gossip"
or the "diffusion of ideas," parents spread the word about
what schools are doing. Involved parents will spread that
word accurately reducing the possibility of disruptive and
demoralizing rumors. On the positive side, few people can
sell the community's educational resources to prospective
residents as persuasively as parents of school children. In-
volved parents tend to have a stake in the schools and, when
the schools are good, parents are eager to proselytize.

For many parents, involvement in school affairs leads to their
participation in other areas of civic responsibility. The ex-
periences of interacting with school personnel and with other
parents during meetings offer parents a form of "reality
training" in citizenship. Bad or good, these experiences are
learning opportunities for parents to test out and strengthen
their leadership capabilities.

Schools can become community development institutions. A
significant portion of the community's human and financial
resources are already engaged in providing educational services.
With effective and creative parent involvement, any school
can be the catalyst for a community's improvement -or survival.

There are those who may look at these paragraphs and decry the implications of additional work for the "overburdened" teacher or the "undertrained" administrator. Others may moan that to pay all of this attention to parent involvement negates the mission of the schools: to educate the child. The assumptions on which this paper is based are that the child is (1) brought up by the family, (2) lives in the community, and (3) attends school -in that order. No slap at the school is intended. Educators simply need to be reminded that their perspective is institutionally centered. A <u>child centered</u> perspective necessitates parent involvement and community development.

There is another reason for parent involvement which, because of the highly publicized confrontations between parents and schools, should be obvious. Edgar and Jean Cahn, writing in the late 1960s, pointed out that "Citizen participation is a nuisance. It is costly, it is time consuming, it is frustrating."

> (Yet) citizen participation -real, genuine, meaningful, total- is probably the only guarantee, frail though it may be, that people will be willing to abide by the terms of today's social contract and have sufficient faith in the system to feel that it is in their best interest to wait for the next round of negotiations to press for still better terms within the framework of orderly dialogue and negotiation. Otherwise, the dialectic, the bargaining process shifts to the streets -and the barricades. And citizen participation takes on another and more sinister meaning: civil disorder. The participants term it <u>rebellion</u>. (1968)

Notwithstanding the fact that "rebellion" is a scare-word even to citizens of a nation born of rebellion, there is a more immediate historical context within which to advocate parent involvement. The 1960s provided us with a legacy: the rebirth

of national experimentation in social programming; the Civil Rights Movement; new forms of minority group consciousness and the growing awareness by consumers of the need for collective action. These "social actions" provided a basis for revitalizing citizen participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of human services. In education, parents, particularly members of ethnic minorities, began to challenge large public school systems to make local schools responsive to local traditions and values. ("Began" is not to be taken literally. Recent efforts by minority parents are more like a renascence. See Nicolaus Mills' "Community Schools: Irish, Italians and Jews," in Society, March/April 1974, for a brief study of New York City's "troubles" during the past 120 years.)

In the mid 1960s the Federal government legitimized parent involvement through its policies and guidelines for the Head Start and ESEA Title I programs. Public and professional interest in parent involvement were further aroused by the controversies over decentralization and community control, controversies which clearly are still with us.

As the 1970s began state education agencies developed their own policies on parent involvement. In a survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Parent Involvement in 1973, fourteen states indicated the existence of legislation demanding or recommending some form of parent involvement. The same survey asked each SEA for information on

> any policies or regulations specifically regarding.
> parent involvement in the classroom, in the local
> school, on school advisory committees, on district
> advisory committees, in curriculum development, in
> principal selection, in budget determinations, in
> school design, and in teacher contract negotiations.

Eighteen states reported some kind of policy in at least one
of these nine examples. Significant in its own way was the
fact that 48 SEAs responded to a four-page, mailed question-
naire entirely devoted to parent involvement. (Safran 1974)

Thus, in recent years, state and federal education agencies,
researchers, ethnic constituencies, the organized teaching
profession, and the general public have been paying consider-
able attention to parent involvement. During 1973, three
organizations with a national perspective on the subject
were created or revitalized: the Institute for Responsive
Education (Yale University); the National Committee for
Citizens in Education (Columbia, Maryland); the Center for
the Study of Parent Involvement (Berkeley, California).

While certainly not of "movement" proportions, it is clear
that a momentum has been building to encourage, mandate, and
study parent involvement. Yet, somehow, incredibly, this
tide of activity and concern seems to have been rising
around teacher education virtually unnoticed. For despite
the growing interest in and demand for parent and community
participation in schools, despite the continuing controversy
over school governance issues and the extent to which parents
should or should not be involved, teachers are no more being
prepared to work with parents and facilitate community par-
ticipation now than they were ten years ago.

Teachers, particularly elementary school teachers, must be
trained to understand and work in the "community domain" if
parents are to be involved and the anticipated benefits of
this involvement are to be realized.

II. WHY TRAIN TEACHERS TO INVOLVE PARENTS?

Why not forget the teachers and train the administrators, parents, community liason workers or other paraprofessional personnel? A decade of work with parents (in many parts of the United States, of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds and with a great variety of school experiences when they were children), convinces me that teachers can play the most significant role in educating, activating, and involving parents.

Parents tend to have a "wishful respect" for their children's teachers. That is, parents want to believe that their children's teacher is skillful as an educator, sensitive to the needs of individual children, successful in moving "my" child at a pace equal to or better than other children, and competent to supplement parental guidance and authority. For most parents the teacher is the significant link between them and the education of their children. While many parents are "sophisticated" enough to see the influence of systemic, institutional, and cultural forces on their children's formal education, the vast majority of parents want to see the teacher as the key component.

But perhaps there is something akin to a love-hate relationship between parents and teachers. Waller's observations in his classic Sociology of Teaching, written over forty years ago, may sound quaint but they have a familiar ring:

> From the ideal point of view, parents and teachers have much in common, in that both, supposedly, wish things to occur for the best interests of the child; but, in fact, parents and teachers usually live in a condition of mutual distrust and enmity. Both wish the child well, but it is such a different kind of well that conflict must inevitably arise over it.

> The fact seems to be that parents and teachers are
> natural enemies, predestined each for the discomfi-
> ture of the other. The chasm is frequently covered
> over, for neither parents nor teachers wish to admit
> to themselves the uncomfortable implications of
> their animosity, but on occasion it can make itself
> clear enough. (1932)

Elements of this conflict are still with us. Waller points
to the reinforcement parents and teachers receive from their
respective social groups. As a result, he sees futility in
parent-teacher work since it is so often directed "at
securing for the school the support of parents, that is, at
getting parents to see the children more or less as teachers
see them."

In his 1932 work, Waller proposed a solution which, though
simple, could to this day contribute much to improved relations.

> If parents and teachers could meet often enough and
> intimately enough to develop primary group attitudes
> toward each other, and if both parents and teachers
> might have their say unreservedly, such modifications
> of school practice and parental upbringing might take
> place as would revolutionize the life of children
> everywhere.

In 1969 Humanics Associates of Atlanta, Georgia received a grant
from the Office of Child Development to provide training and
technical assistance on parent involvement to parents and
teachers in Head Start programs in several southeastern states.
The proposal for which the grant was awarded suggested that
training be applied differentially in each setting to see
whether different impacts may be perceived. Thus, in one com-
munity assistance was provided in each Head Start center only
to parents, in another community only to teachers, in a third
community to both parents and teachers. In a fourth community,
assistance was provided differently on a center by center

basis.

The emphasis in this project was training, not research. But
the project staff (who were early childhood and adult educators)
wanted to assess the impact of their efforts. What they dis-
covered was that any training for teachers in working with
parents produced new awareness on the part of the teachers,
an increase in parent-teacher dialogue and more parent involve-
ment. When parents alone were trained, teachers were ill-equipped
to engage in dialogue and the parents, who with their newly developed
competence and self-confidence, perceived the teachers' behavior
as arrogant and reacted with hostility. Training for both
parents and teachers produced the best results: there were
major changes in the behaviors and attitudes of both parents
and teachers and the changes seemed more enduring than
when training was directed toward one group or the other.

Perhaps, to overcome the "enmity" cited by Waller or the apathy
and anxiety observed by so many, parents and teachers must
receive special assistance. Inservice training, I have found,
is not only too little, it is too late.

Teachers must be prepared for work with parents before they
start teaching. By the time most teachers are on the job,
they have been prepared not to work with parents. Teacher
educators must begin to specify competencies for teachers
which will enable them to reach out to the community and
involve parents.

There is a model which may be useful for the task of develop-
ing the competencies advocated here. The following list was
designed by the author to "train the trainers" of community

development workers:

Community workers must be...

1. conscious of their own values, how they perceive
others and how they, in turn, are perceived by others;

2. skillful in making meaningful individual contacts
with people of diverse backgrounds and personal capabilities;

3. capable of bringing people together around common in-
terests and common problems;

4. perceptive in understanding group behavior and skillful
in assisting and strengthening a wide variety of groups;

5. knowledgeable about existing community resources, con-
fident in the always vast potential of human resources,
and creative in facilitating the development of new
resources;

6. capable of enabling individuals and groups to under-
stand and prevail over dehumanizing institutional behaviors
and oppressive social conditions.

With the help of this framework it may be possible to specify a

useful sequence of competencies expected of teachers' working

with parents.

III.   WHAT ARE THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMPETENCIES?

Seven competencies are listed below. These are proposed as

"working statements," and are neither polished nor complete.

Teachers must demonstrate the ability

A) to understand and overcome the barriers to open communica-

tions between teachers and parents

B) to engage in one-to-one communication with parents in a

variety of settings so that the judgmental nature of the exper-

ience is minimized and the parent's sense of competence is

maximized

C) to interpret various educational and institutional practices

to parents of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds

D) to define and explain specific meaningful tasks for parents in their roles as educators of their own children, as school resources and as decision makers

E) to bring individual parents together and facilitate their addressing and resolving common problems

F) to work with parent groups and develop the leadership skills of their members

G) to understand the nature of educational systems and assist parents in comprehending and modifying the schools so that they can better serve the needs of the children and the community.

The professional socialization of most teachers is a process which confirms the prevailing role model of "school teacher" -a role which emphasizes the mystique of classroom programming and all but ignores the community context of education. The teacher possessing the competencies listed above will understand the importance of family and community variables to the development of the whole child. This understanding must be profound enough to compete with -and overcome- the constraining parochialism common among the subculture of many elementary school teachers.

Future teachers must recognize that they are but one factor affecting the life of a child. This recognition is not advocated as a means of humbling teachers (too much of that goes on already) but rather to make more explicit the multiple factors affecting the child's development. As the most significant professional persons contributing to child development, teachers should be

attempting to facilitate and integrate many variables which optimize a child's life chances. The family and community are key variables which demand certain minimum skills and knowledge.

Teachers need to be aware that they "walk in a long shadow." That is, teachers are perceived as "teachers" and this perception affects from the start the interactions they may experience with parents. As much as they may wish to escape from the "shadow," it remains intact since the role model and behavior of "teacher" are a familiar, almost indelible feature in our social consciousness. Future teachers need to recognize the impact of this social perspective on their role and the effect this will have on communications with parents.

Teachers will also need to understand what lies behind certain parent behaviors in their contacts with the schools. For example, when speaking with teachers for the first time many parents tend to be deferential, even a bit passive. Teachers, on the other hand, are perceived by parents to be confident and, at times, arrogant. Yet, when a problem arises involving the safety of the child or an issue suggests culpability of the school, parents become aggressive while teachers assume a passive/defensive posture.

One of the prime occasions for parent-teacher communications is the conference. Rather than serve to exchange information about the progress of the child (which many conferences are purported to do) ,and, as such, be a source of mutual good will, conferences tend to be formal affairs and a time for mutual anxiety. Teachers often feel ill-prepared and parents feel judged. In fact, many

parent-teacher transactions are formal and somewhat uncomfortable. Titles and last names are used, social amenities are sparse, and the parameters of conversation are very limited. Teachers must learn to elevate these communications to a more humane and productive level.

Teachers have been the traditional "sole proprietors" of their respective classrooms. Future teachers need to learn how to work as educators and facilitators of parent aides and volunteers. An understanding of task analysis is essential so that assignments to parents serve to meet the educational goals for students as well as to increase parent interest, skills and confidence. An _adult_ relationship must be established with parents. Too often, many teachers forget this and "treat parents like kids."

Teachers need to learn group formation skills in order to help parents work on school and community issues. The value of using individual parents as resources can be multiplied by drawing upon their cumulative talents. Moreover, the job of organizing a parent education class or policy council is too important to be left to chance. These groups need help in getting organized, in maintaining themselves, in focussing on common needs and problems, in discovering and utilizing community resources, in evolving responsible and effective leadership.

Teachers, functioning as they do in a social context, need to recognize the community development potential of the school. The children they teach ultimately will be far more affected by social, economic, and political forces in the community

than by the latest changes in curriculum or teaching method-
ology. This statement is not intended to negate the essenti-
ality and validity of "what teachers do" but rather to suggest
that societal pressures on the growth and development of a
child bear far more attention from teachers than hitherto has
been the case. What this means is that, at least, teachers
need to learn how to assist parents in improving the educational
services provided to their community. Teachers need to know
how to build upon the concerns parents have for their children's
welfare, how to involve parents with one another in insuring
that welfare through educational and social action, and how
to take the risks required by these tasks and implied by a
professional calling.

IV.   HOW CAN TEACHERS ACHIEVE THESE COMPETENCIES?

The college or university which includes in its teacher pre-
paration program a component on parent development will have
to start by helping their students unlearn some major con-
ceptions of what a teacher is and what a teacher does. Few
other occupations are so clearly conceived in the minds of its
novices as is the job of "teacher." From the moment that
students identify with the image of teacher, the training
they receive will be influenced by the experiences they've
had throughout their own school years. A new role model must
be established immediately and vividly. Students should be
encouraged to scrutinize "classroom" and "community" models
of "teacher" (as well as any other concepts of the role of
educator) in order to discern the openness any concept has
for interpretation. Students must be helped to refer to their

feelings about becoming a teacher, drawing upon both the fears and the promises.

A more difficult "unlearning" which must take place is the alteration of existing conceptions of "professional status." Students must learn that professionalism can be a liability in that it sets the teacher apart from ordinary people, particularly the parents of the children they will teach. Teacher education has the task of assisting student-teachers to realize the dangers of professionalization as well as its benefits. It is essential that teachers who work with parents have a value orientation which is non elitist and which accepts and respects the parents and community of the children they teach.

Schools of education must continue the progress they've made in treating their students like adults. Professional elitism pales next to <u>professorial</u> elitism!

There are three techniques familiar to teacher education which could be extended to the new objective of preparing teachers to work with parents:

    A) Role playing to simulate teacher-parent interactions and enable students to experience some of the emotional dynamics.

    B) Supervised fieldwork with parent and community groups.

    C) Working with "master teachers," not necessarily as role models to be emulated but as representatives of existing professional values to be challenged.

Role playing is described by Matthew Miles as

> ...essentially an action, <u>doing</u> tec. .ue....Role
> playing members react to each other s .at neously
> within the framework of a defined si uation which
> is provisional, or "not for keeps." In this way,
> behaviors of people can be examined with a minimum
> of threat, and their approach to the problem can
> be improved after discussion and analysis. (1959)

At a minimum, teacher preparation should include the following

role playing situations in preparing teachers for the competencies

proposed above:

-a parent-teacher conference

-encountering an angry parent

-encountering a passive parent

-encouraging parents to participate as classroom observors

-encouraging parents to perform specific "educational" tasks

with children at home and in school

-encouraging parents to participate with other parents

in existing school or community organizations

-assisting a parent chairperson in planning a meeting

-maximizing the value of chance meetings with parents

These experiences, while simulated, should enable the students

to appreciate the multiple human relations factors in teacher

parent transactions. Moreover, many of the subtle dynamics of

these interactions can be addressed during the analyses succeeding

each role playing experience.

Supervised fieldwork with parent and community groups should

combine students' observation and participation in "other"

groups with increasing their sensitivity to their participation

in their <u>own</u> groups. Prospective teachers should be encouraged

to reexamine their own group experiences -in social clubs,

professional associations, church groups, etc. -in any formal settings. Student teachers should have the opportunity to work with parents on "real" community issues. Moreover, students and parents should be helped to meet together to share their perspectives of school activities.

The technique of working with "master teachers" is a little more complicated than obtaining guidance from an experienced professional. In this case, the professional is less the guide than the participant in a dialogue. Many of the suggestions made in this paper have been criticized for "leading the lamb to slaughter." Or, to quote a colleague, "Do you realize that the minute your parent involvement teachers get to their schools the old 'warhorses' will cut them to ribbons?"

Student teachers need to be prepared for encounters with the old warhorses. They need to be strengthened for the culture of the school, particularly the debilitating and depressing aspects of institutional behavior which tend to dampen the ardor of new teachers, especially those with "innovative" approaches. One exercise, which has provided support to new teachers in inservice training, I call "The Teachers' Lunchroom Experience."

"The Teachers' Lunchroom Experience" places a new teacher in the midst of Anyschool's teachers' room during his/her first week. In the exercise, the student is encouraged to engage other teachers in conversation about a "serious" educational issue such as irrelevant text books, inadequate services, incessant demands for records, insufficient parent involvement. The

student is urged to make some recommendations rather than to simply gripe about the problems. The "other teachers" (usually fellow trainees or training staff) have been preprogramed to respond in a number of "typical" (usually mildly exaggerated) ways. Most of these responses are thus "tedium," "impatience," "don't bother me," "silence." Finally, one of the "teachers" will come over to the "new teacher" and, placing a hand gently, but firmly, on one shoulder will say: "I used to be enthusiastic like you are honey, but you'll learn; just stay here awhile and you'll learn!"

Can the student teacher be prepared for this kind of encounter? Or should new teachers be permitted to "cut their teeth" on reality when they arrive at their first job?

The culture of the schools can be made an overt subject of teacher education. "Master teachers" can be engaged in dis-cussions not as supervisors having evaluative control over student teachers' freedom of speech, but as professionals whose views are sought and whose perceptions are accepted as interpretations rather than truth. The simulation described above can be made a part of students' experiences before they leave teacher education. Value conflicts can be exposed rather than glossed over.

But, perhaps the best preparation student teachers can have for contending with experienced teachers is to establish links with parents from the outset. Such links can demystify the gobbledegook which students teachers get as part of their indoctrination. A concept of accountability can be created

based upon mutual trust between teachers and parents so that
new teachers have someone other than old teachers to whom
to turn.

V.   HOW CAN SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION BE MOVED IN THIS DIRECTION?

In its study, State Education Agencies and Parent Involvement,
the Center for the Study of Parent Involvement found that only
five states responded "yes" to the question: "In teacher
preparation and certifying activities are there any specific
competencies identified which address themselves to work with
parents?" (N=48; Ohio and New York never responded.) Among
the fourteen states reporting legislation on parent involvement,
only two said that they had such competencies; of the eighteen
SEAs with policies or regulations on parent involvement, there
were three possessing parent involvement competencies. No
states indicated any legislative or state education agency
compulsion on schools of education to extend teacher training
to the community domain.

There is an impressive record of institutional change having
been brought about through legislative and administrative
mandate. Local school districts and many individual schools
have "gone through some changes" since the advent of Head
Start, Follow Through, and Title I. Many other human services
institutions have changed their practices because of external
directive -including colleges and universities. Schools of
education could use such directives in order to extend their
concept of what kind of teacher they are preparing.

My first proposal for moving schools of education toward a

greater parent and community awareness in teacher education
is to mandate some form of consultation with parent and
other lay groups in the design, implementation and evaluation
of teacher training activities. This is currently taking
place -in a modified form- in California.

The Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing (Ryan
Commission) requires the following prior to approving program
plans for teacher education:

> 1.1.2 <u>Cooperating communities, school districts, teachers,
> and teacher candidates, carefully selected, involved
> in, and committed to program development.</u>
>
> Between the institution, school system, and community:
> The involvement of school district personnel, teacher
> candidates, and community agencies in program develop-
> ment, implementation, and evaluation should be reflected
> in the program activities as stated. School districts
> should insure minority participation in proportion to
> minorities in the communities served. Communications
> from the school district should include responses from
> parents and groups in communities served. Evidence
> should be provided to show that contributions from all
> groups were included in developing the program.
> <u>(Manual for Developing, Evaluating, and Approving Pro-
> fessional Preparation Program Plans for Multiple and
> Single Subject Credentials, rev. 8/7/73)</u>

Though there is a burden on the teacher training institution
to document the involvement demanded above, the effectiveness
of the intended participation is in question. Schools of
education have had so little experience in working with lay
groups that, without either more directive guidance, technical
help, or both, there is little likelihood that parents and
other community representatives will play a meaningful role.
The Commission has, at least, established the principle of
inclusiveness. Time and experience may see parent and com-
munity involvement in teacher education planning become a fact.

My second proposal for reorienting schools of education toward
parent involvement is to include parents as teacher educators.
Parents are resources for student teachers; they can be paid
consultants and perform formal roles as lecturers or seminar
leaders; they can participate in discussions of methodology,
curriculum development, classroom management, and professional
development. They can even supplement the work of field in-
structors observing classroom performance and participating
in supervisory conferences. Student teachers should be able
to experience parents as people with diverse interests,
values, perspectives, talents, etc; stereotyping would become
more difficult and the process of professionalization could
proceed on a less elitist basis.

My third proposal begins with the implementation of the ideas
discussed above. Parents could be involved as <u>teacher educator
educators</u>. While institutional practices must change if
schools of education are to prepare teachers to work with
parents, so must the perspective and practices of individual
faculty members. I am not proposing that education faculty
enroll in any classes or field work activities -that is because
such a proposal would go unheeded save for the least status-con-
scious professors. I am proposing that interaction be facil-
itated between parents and education professors so that these
faculty members, who operate far from the community and its
reality, have the chance to reorder their concepts of the
teacher.

Some form of training would be valuable for teacher educators
if they are to rethink and restructure the preparation they

offer to others. Thus, a fourth proposal is to invite teacher educators to attend workshops designed to draw upon their experience and knowledge so that we can get about the job of preparing teachers to work with parents. Such workshops are already taking place to assist practitioners and staff development personnel on an inservice basis. (The Home and School Institute, Washington, DC and the Center for the Study of Parent Involvement offer educational opportunities of this kind.) Associations of teacher educators may need to be nudged a bit if teacher trainers are to take advantage of this form of training.

My final proposal is to place the burden, once again, on parents. Parents can ask some amazing questions of the right person in the right place. Perhaps they should begin to attend meetings of teacher educators, maybe even a faculty meeting. After all, the teachers being produced this year will be teaching their children in the years to come. It is very possible that the restructuring of teacher education so that teachers are prepared to work with parents will begin like this:
(Spokesperson for thirty parents assembled peacefully in the hall outside the office of Dean Strumpht of the School of Education of Happy Valley State) "Good Morning, Dean Strumpht. We had a discussion at our meeting last night and decided to talk to you about teacher education."
(Dean Strumpht) "But...What...?Who...?"
(Spokesperson) "Yes, I realize that you are a busy person, but everyone thought that if anyone knew the answers to our questions it would be you. Some of us have been getting tired

of the same old hassles at the school every year. In fact,
several of our parents said that they have had the same kind
of hassles at the other schools their children went to before
moving here."

(Dean Strumpht) "What...?Where...?"

(Spokesperson) "We don't want to bore you with the details,
but we do want to know how teachers are being trained here at
Happy Valley. After all, some of your students may be teaching
at Kinder Hollow Elementary Schoo: next year or the year after
and we want to know whether you're preparing them for what they're
going to face."

(Dean Strumpht) "Kinder Hollow...? Is that far from here?

(Spokesperson) "Now, Dean Strumpht, let's not get off the
subject. We want you to tell us what you do here. Isn't that
right parents?"

(Thirty Parents) "Right." "Sure." "Right on." "Let's hear it,
Deano!" "Tell us what you do here!"

(Dean Strumpht) "Well, you see, that's a very complicated question.
First, there are philosophical, psychological, sociological,
methodological, geographical...considerations to be considered."

(Spokesperson) "Dean Strumpht, we just came from the Dean's
Office at the University; they ran the same stuff on us and even
said 'phenomenological'; now are you going to talk with us or at
us?"

(Dean Strumpht) "Uh....Umm...Nothing like this has ever happened
here before. Would you like to visit some of our classrooms and
talk to our students and faculty members?"

(Spokesperson and Thirty Parents) "Hey-hey, Deano, you're okay!
The Dean is together; we're finally getting inside to see what
they do. Far out!".   00026

Such a scenario is unlikely because so few parents see the school of education as the most immediate cause of woe. Their problem is their children's teachers and the local school. However, I predict that parents will soon be taking on the places where teachers are trained -not because training results in "bad" teachers but because parents need strong teachers with whom to ally in fighting the educational inadequacies and inequities in their communities.

The teacher -as a professional person and as a concerned human being- is in a unique position to improve the life opportunities for children. Schools of education need to broaden the concept of what teachers are and what teachers do so that dialogue is the mode through which teachers and parents interact. A professionalism based upon self-interest is a far cry from the ancient "calling" to which people have always responded in their desire to become teachers. Dialogue with parents draws teachers toward the community where all must strive together on behalf of all our children.

> Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith,
> dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of
> which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the
> logical consequence.
>
> > Pedagogy of the Oppressed
> > -Paulo Freire

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