

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 388

PS 013 684

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TITLE Planning for Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education: A Guide for Teachers, Administrators, Parents & Parent Coordinators. Early Childhood Education Resource Guides.

INSTITUTION New Jersey State Dept. of Education, Trenton.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Human Development Services (DHHS), Washington, D.C.

PUB DATE Sep 81
GRANT H-2C185-B
NOTE 30p.; For related documents, see PS 013 685-686.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Activities; Day Care Centers; Early Childhood Education; Guidelines; Motivation Techniques; *Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; *Program Development; Program Evaluation; Program Guides; Resource Materials
IDENTIFIERS PF Project

ABSTRACT

This guide offers suggestions for cooperation between the school or child care center and the home, and provides guidance to parents for their participation in centers and schools. It describes the necessary steps in planning for varied parent involvement and includes examples of parent involvement activities. Topics addressed in planning the program include: (1) reasons for involving parents; (2) broad program goals; (3) concerns and interests of parents; (4) general and specific ways to involve parents; and (5) resources. Sample work plans of ways to involve parents are presented which include a goal, a broad objective, specific objectives, activities, materials/resources, and comments. Also included are ways to motivate parents, benefits of parental involvement to children, a discussion of formative and summative program evaluation, and a five-item bibliography of references. Appendices include a parent involvement evaluation questionnaire and a directory of sources of written materials which cites seven New Jersey state sources and 12 national sources. (DC)

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New Jersey Department of Education

PLANNING FOR PARENTAL
INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
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Early Childhood Education Resource Guides



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Abstract

Early Childhood Education Resource Guides

New Jersey State Department of Education

The Early Childhood Education Resource Guides consist of three related booklets: Planning an Educational Program for Young Children; Planning for Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education; and Easing the Child's Transition Between Home, Child Care Center and School. Written for teachers and administrators of preschool, kindergarten, and primary classes, the booklets present principles and planning steps which are generic to all programs for the education and care of young children.

Purposes and content of the three guides are as follows:

Planning an Educational Program for Young Children is a systematic planning guide designed to assist early childhood teachers in two of their major responsibilities--planning the educational program and designing classroom activities.

Planning for Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education provides assistance in developing objectives and activities for parental involvement as one component in the total program of early childhood education.

Easing the Child's Transition Between Home, Child Care Center and School is designed to help teachers in preschool programs and kindergartens to enhance communication and cooperation among themselves, so that young children may more easily adapt to the differing environments in which they develop and learn.

Planning For Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

**A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, PARENTS
& PARENT COORDINATORS**



Published by:

**New Jersey State Department of Education
225 West State Street
CN 500
Trenton, New Jersey 08625**

PLANNING FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A Guide for Teachers, Administrators,
Parents, and Parent Coordinators

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September 1981
P.T.M. 200.17

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Funding was provided under the Capacity Building Project through Grant #H-2C185-B of the U.S. Office of Human Development, Department of Health and Human Services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Appreciation is expressed to the staff of the Bureau of Licensing, New Jersey State Department of Human Services, for their helpful suggestions; to Lois Galpern, Office of Early Childhood Education, New Jersey Department of Education, for her guidance and creative ideas; and to Inge Andrews and Lillian White-Stevens for their assistance in editing the manuscript.

PREFACE

This booklet is a product of the Interdepartmental Capacity-Building Project, a program through which two departments of state government--Education and Human Services--have worked cooperatively in areas of mutual interest and responsibility. During 1978-79, the project conducted a pilot study in which the quality of child care center programs was analyzed and evaluated by teachers and parents of young children. Six components were identified as significant for planning and evaluating early childhood programs: the educational program, adult-child interaction, staff relations, parent participation, staff training, and allied services. These components were incorporated into a Self-Study Process for Preschool Programs (Warrence and Kornegay, 1980), which provides staff and parents with procedures for determining priorities and evaluating progress toward chosen objectives.

In this guide, principles for involving parents and using allied services have been adapted to help teachers and caregivers, parent involvement coordinators, and family life coordinators plan effective ways to involve parents in early childhood education programs.

The guide offers suggestions for cooperation between school or child care center and home and provides guidance to parents for their participation in centers and schools. It describes the necessary steps in planning systematically for varied parent involvement in an early childhood program, includes examples for clarification, and an appendix and resource list provide further assistance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

There are many ways in which parents can enrich the programs of early childhood education for their children. They can help by serving as teachers, resources, learners, decision makers, and advocates.

Parental involvement is a very important aspect of early childhood education. Young children identify strongly with their parents, and parents are learning to share the care and education of their children with other adults. Children's growth and development are more readily assured when home and school work together. Parents are truly the child's first and continuing teachers, and teachers "parent" as they teach through love, affection, and guidance. Planning for the linkages between the home and school will be beneficial to all -- parents, teachers, administrators, and especially the children.

The steps in planning for parental involvement are the same as those for planning all other parts of an educational program: establishing a philosophy or rationale, developing goals, assessing needs and resources, defining objectives, designing program activities, identifying necessary resources, and evaluating what was accomplished. Ideally, parental involvement will be planned as one component of the total program of early childhood education.¹ Systematically planned parental involvement can assure that early childhood educators achieve their goals for home-school partnership -- by either having parents assist in the classroom, help with a class project, learn about child development, participate in developing a program philosophy, or seek community support for additional resources.

¹For a detailed application of the planning steps, see Planning an Educational Program for Young Children (Frierson and Hills, 1981), a guide for teachers and caregivers in schools, child care centers, etc.

II. PRELIMINARY PLANNING STEPS

Before offering activities for parents, early childhood educators should ask themselves several questions. The answers provide the basis for seeking the involvement of parents.

A. Why Is It Desirable That Parents Be Involved in the Early Childhood Program?

In recent years, many educational programs for young children have strongly emphasized participation of parents. From their background of experience, teachers and parents know some extremely important reasons to encourage parents to participate.

1. Parental participation helps the children.
 - ... When parents know the program well and support it actively, their children are more likely to feel comfortable and ready to learn.
 - ... Children's learning and future achievement are enhanced by well-planned parental involvement.
2. It benefits the educational program.
 - ... Parents can offer welcome assistance in regular classroom activity and in special projects and events, sharing their interests and special skills.
 - ... They are more likely to become supporters of the program, advocating its continuation and, perhaps, its expansion.
3. It is rewarding to the parents themselves.
 - ... Participation in the child care center or early childhood education program gratifies the parents' natural wish to know what and how their children are doing.
 - ... Contribution of time, talents and opinions reassures parents that the program will reflect some of their own family values for their young children.

B. What Is To Be Achieved?

Almost all programs want to inform parents about the educational program and the child's progress. However, the greatest mutual benefits result from more ambitious and comprehensive goals. For example, parents' participation may be sought to:

- provide a link between home experiences and the education program
- encourage and maintain communication between parents and staff
- give the parent the opportunity to observe his/her child interacting with other children and adults.

- include parents in planning, implementing and evaluating the education program
- include parents in a variety of activities in the early childhood program, e.g., language arts, music, storytelling, field trips, meal time, indoor or outdoor play
- provide situations in which parents can meet and share ideas, concerns, and activities with parents of other children
- strengthen the parent's ability to provide a positive and happy home environment for the family
- help parents expand their understanding of the principles of child development in the areas of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development
- help parents learn about resources available to them as needed, e.g., local, state and national child care services, food programs, counseling, consumer information, etc.
- encourage parents to reinforce and enrich children's learning through suitable parent-child activities at home

The goals suggested above are broad enough to involve parents with their children, the educational staff, and other parents in many ways. The goals shown are examples only. Personnel of each program will want to establish those goals which are the most relevant, realistic, and beneficial to the parents and the children.

C. What Interests Do the Parents Have In Being Involved?

Assessing concerns and needs is necessary to ensure that planned activities are relevant to parents' lives. Developing a parent program without consulting the parents can result in low interest and participation. Parents, children and staff can all provide information for assessment purposes.

1. Parents are deeply interested in their children.

Children are the subjects of the strongest and most persistent attention of parents. Parents want to know about the particular interests and abilities of their own children and the developmental characteristics of children in general.

Ideas for parent group discussions, parent-teacher conferences, newsletters, and parent projects can be found in informal classroom observations; anecdotal records of individual children; tape recordings, films and photographs of classroom activities; articles for parents in popular magazines and newspapers; TV programs about families (and other mass media); educational films on child development and child rearing; and books on normative child development and learning.

2. Parents have compelling personal and family concerns.

Parents' interests are not limited to the young son or daughter in the program. They are also concerned about other family members, social and economic matters, and personal talents. The teacher will want to know as much as possible about the parents' own interests, skills, and ideas for participating in the program.

The interests and needs of parents may be assessed through telephone or face to face interviews; a suggestion box; a written questionnaire or "interest finder"; application or registration information; an evaluation of previous activities; formal and informal conferences with staff and other parents; discussion groups; letters, notes, or other written comments; and observations of parent-child-teacher relationships.

Other factors to be considered are the circumstances in which the children and their families live, the racial and ethnic characteristics, the family structure, and the occupations and educational backgrounds of parents.²

In developing the plan for parental involvement, the teacher will want to know which parents are employed, which ones are new to the school or community, and what time they have to participate. This kind of information is very useful. For example, the teacher may see a need to have flexible parent-teacher conferences and flexibly scheduled discussion groups for working parents. The teacher may identify parents with certain skills and hobbies and invite them to share with the children, thereby enriching the children's educational experiences.

3. Community agencies and professional groups can provide suggestions for activities and topics.

Besides the information teachers obtain from children and parents, they may consult additional sources of ideas for parental involvement such as community resources, e.g., health, social services; professional journals; appropriate workshops, seminars, conferences; legislation concerning families, human services, institutions; advocates for children and parents; parent groups and organizations; bilingual, ethnic, cultural organizations; and other representative neighborhood groups.

²Specific information pertaining to individual children and their families should remain confidential. Teachers should avoid discussing children and their families in the presence of other children and parents, or informally among staff persons. The staff should establish a policy pertaining to places and special times to discuss confidential matters. At no time should teachers take information out of context and casually discuss it, in the center/classroom or the community at large. Omitting the name of a child or family, while discussing a private matter, is a risk, because the listener can often identify the person(s) involved and speculate incorrectly, which can prove harmful to an innocent party. (Gardner, 1973)

Making an inventory of available resources comprises a very important part of needs assessment. The same instruments and procedures which have been used to identify the needs and interests of parents and staff (see above) may also serve to help teachers and administrators uncover resources, for example, the skills and interests of parents and staff which have been reported on questionnaires and in conversations. The community resources, mass media channels, community organizations, and governmental agencies mentioned earlier also provide clues to available resources.³ Examples of ways to use human resources are discussed in detail on pp. 7-9.

D. How Will the Goals of Parental Involvement Be Achieved?

The goals a program has for parent participation will guide the development of ways in which parents will be involved. The following objectives are examples of ways in which the goals suggested on pp. 2-3 can be achieved:

- ... Parents will share information about the child and the relationship of this information to school experiences in formal and informal conferences.
- ... Parents will deepen their understanding of the relationship of various class activities or curriculum areas to a child's growth and development by attending parent meetings and workshops, observing the classroom, reading magazines and journals, etc.
- ... Parents will participate in a variety of school activities that interest the child, e.g., social activities, workshops, classroom experiences, field trips.
- ... Parents will become involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the educational program, through participation on a planning committee or as a classroom volunteer, by helping with special classroom projects, assessment, evaluation, etc.
- ... Parents will foster development of a wholesome self-concept for the child by praising the child, displaying interest in the child's home and school activities, providing nourishing meals, etc.
- ... Parents will help children learn at home by reading to them, using teacher-suggested home activities, taking short trips to museums, movies, libraries, etc.

The objective of parental involvement should reflect the purposes and philosophy of the school or center. However, if parents' participation is to benefit their children, themselves, and the program, the objectives must be broad enough to assure those outcomes. Parents and staff will understand the program better if its philosophy, goals, and objectives are shared through leaflets, newsletters, memos, parent handbooks, or parent bulletin boards.

³Working With Community Resources, a guide designed to help staff members find and work with available resources, is available from the State Department of Education (see References, p. 17)

E. In What Specific Ways Will Parents Be Involved?

The diversity among parents and the variety of their needs and interests require variety in activities. Parents may or may not be employed outside the home, married or single, English-speaking or bilingual, new to the program or "repeaters." Each parent brings a different experience to the program, with individual likes and dislikes. Knowledge of this diversity enables the staff and parents to select activities which meet the needs of all the parents.

1. **Parents Are Teachers.** Learning-training activities for parents and child occur in the classroom, center, and home. The parent is the child's first and most significant teacher, a role that can be enhanced by the early childhood program.

Parents may:

- serve as a room parent with rotating responsibilities
- volunteer in the classroom for special events
- share a special skill or hobby with the children
- assist as a teacher's aide or substitute
- enrich classroom activities at home, e.g., read stories, sing dance, encourage creativity and self expression, etc.
- model desirable verbal and non-verbal behavior for the child
- take the child on short field trips, e.g., grocery store, neighborhood walk, parks, etc.
- provide varied stimulations for a child

2. **Parents Are Learners.** Parents are involved in providing the child the kind of home environment which can assure school success. The parent can be helped to develop a better self-concept, a better attitude towards school, and an understanding of such things as the child's capabilities, ways in which learning is enhanced, the effect of the home on the child's learning, and the importance of good nutrition.

Parents may:

- take classes which would enhance their attitudes, skills and knowledge
- participate in workshops on normative child development and behavior
- discuss family life and parent-child relationships
- join in health and consumer information forums
- learn about nutrition and its relationship to learning
- confer with teachers on school readiness and achievement

3. **Parents Are Resources.** The individual talents, skills and insights of parents can be used to enrich class activities and to strengthen two-way communication between home and school. Diversity of age and ethnicity can enrich the experiences for all persons involved.

Parents may:

- share information about the child with the teacher
- share cultural, racial or ethnic traditions, e.g., by exhibiting ethnic dress, providing or teaching music, preparing foods, showing or teaching ethnic art, etc.

- build, repair, and maintain equipment
 - help plan, implement and evaluate the program
 - suggest activities, e.g., picnics, luncheons, skating parties for parents and/or children
 - help write a parent handbook
 - write, edit and circulate newsletters
 - establish and maintain telephone communication between parents and school, e.g., weather emergencies, meeting reminders, etc.
 - establish a "buddy" system, cluster group or parent car pool for attending meetings, etc.
 - organize parent support groups
 - facilitate or lead workshops
4. Parents Are Decision Makers. Parents can participate in decisions about program planning for their children since they are "experts" regarding their own children. They can also be involved in the needs assessment and evaluation for the class or center by providing their statements of needs and their perceptions about the effectiveness of the program.

Parents may:

- express support or concerns in parent-teacher conferences
 - participate in parent or advisory groups
 - observe and comment on the educational program
 - contribute ideas and suggestions to staff
 - assist with assessment and evaluation
 - be board members
 - write articles or edit a newsletter
 - write position papers
 - join local, state and national parent and early childhood/child care organizations
5. Parents Are Advocates. Parents may assume advocacy roles to help outside agencies and community leaders respond to children's needs and to the home-school relationship. Parents can take a pro-active stance in regard to the welfare of all young children and appropriate programs to enhance their growth and development.

Parents may:

- organize special events in the school/center and invite other community representatives to attend
- join community organizations and work on committees to create or focus attention on young children
- meet with persons who affect programs for young children
- hold a "coffee klatch" for politicians, or other community agencies
- communicate to employers the need for flexible working hours or released time for parent-teacher conferences
- prepare and circulate appropriate articles to businesses, and various levels of government and its agencies
- write letters to the editor of the local newspaper
- communicate ideas about effective home-school relations through the use of television and radio
- attend conferences and workshops on the local, state, and national level

To be effective, the program must be tailored to parents' needs and schedules. Effectiveness is gauged by needs met and interests stimulated, rather than by numbers. A large group does not always mean a productive parent program. If the program is responsive to parents' needs, the parents can be the best public relations agents, telling other parents about the program activity, motivating them in turn to become more involved.

F. What Resources Are Needed To Carry Out the Plan?

Most parental involvement activities do not require money to function. In fact, parents can be viewed as a resource: a source of additional information on enrolled children, an ally in cooperation with the program objectives, a potential source of classroom assistance, and an advocate for widespread community support for the program goals.

Available funds must be used for purposes which cannot be met by volunteers, donations, and "found" items, for example:

- purchase or rental of audio-visual materials for parent education classes in child development, child-rearing, and family relationships
- honoraria for consultants to work with parents and staff on subjects of parent-child relationships, child-rearing, economic issues in the family, mental health referral possibilities, etc.
- support for parental activity in teaching, learning, decision-making, and advocacy (e.g., mailing, travel costs, fees for workshops and conferences, etc.)
- scholarships or loans for families in need
- special projects which enhance the ways in which children, staff and parents interact, e.g., observational facilities, printing and mailing costs for newsletters, a parent room for relaxation, reading, visiting, etc.
- refreshments for parent meetings

Parents and staff may contribute materials and services to the program themselves and may solicit donations from businesses and private citizens. Contributions may include:

- durable used play equipment for use by the children
- paper supplies and "beautiful junk" to add to the creative art experiences
- educational and consumer materials for distribution to parents
- facilities for large parent and community meetings
- assistance to the classroom program through tutoring, preparing materials for special projects, observing and recording, arranging interest centers, etc.

- leadership for parent workshops, contacts with new parents, home visits and phone calls
- service on advisory boards, committees and community outreach efforts
- advocacy activities to affect legislation, regulation and community support for effective programs for young children.

Appendix B, p. 19, lists state and national agencies and organizations which offer publications and informative materials about parental involvement.

III. ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

After the foregoing preliminary steps have been completed, early childhood educators can offer parents opportunities to participate in a variety of meaningful ways. The particular activities chosen will depend upon the goals and objectives for parental involvement and the needs and interests of parents, children, and program personnel. It is helpful to make a year or half-year plan, which will guide the planning of each activity.

A. Examples of Work Plans

A work plan will ensure that essential steps are carried out, that the individual needs and interests of parents are respected, and that necessary materials and time are provided. The following pages provide three examples of work plans with the objectives, activities and material resources designed to help achieve the identified goals. They serve as a planning guide.

Goal: To encourage and maintain communication between parents and staff.

Broad Objective: Parents will participate in formal and informal conferences with the staff about the child before, during and/or after school.

<u>OBJECTIVE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>MATERIALS/RESOURCES</u>
L. Formal conferences will be arranged with parents based on mutually convenient schedules of parent(s) and staff.	Stagger pre-arranged conference time to allow for ample parent discussion of the child and the program.	Written schedule, reminder memo, posted schedule, observation records, and other relevant data.
2. Parents and teachers will have informal conferences at the discretion of both parties.	Teachers and parents can engage in an informal conference about the child or program for several minutes, providing children are properly supervised.	Recall of observation records, child's activities and experiences, and visible classroom projects or involvement by the child.

COMMENTS:

Conferences, both formal and informal, enable parents and teachers to meet and share their observations of the child and to gain knowledge of each other's values and philosophy of child rearing. In such settings, parents may recommend activities and equipment that they have enjoyed with their child, reveal skills and talents that could be valuable resources for classroom participation, and shed light on needed changes in the daily schedules, menus, or teacher-child relationships. Teachers may find that a quiet, relaxed discussion with parents enables them to describe the children's behavior with adults and peers, their strengths and interests, and any areas of special needs. Anxiety will be reduced and cooperation will be enhanced when both teachers and parents come to understand that they share a mutual concern, i.e., trying to do whatever is best for the child.

Goal: To encourage parents to reinforce and extend children's learning through suitable parent-child activities at home.

Broad Objectives: Parents will become acquainted with learning experiences appropriate to the developmental status and interests of their children.

<u>OBJECTIVE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>MATERIALS/RESOURCES</u>
1. Parents will be informed about games, songs and play activities popular with the children.	Invite parents to an open house. Give them a chance to use the equipment, try the activities, and discuss reasons for the children's interests and the educational benefits they receive.	Song and finger play sheets for use at home; a toy and game library; instruction folders for at-home play activities, such as clay, dough, simple crafts, etc.
2. Parents will learn and apply basic principles in choosing and reading story books for young children.	Present demonstrations of story "hours" with children, book displays or fairs, and parental discussion groups for children's favorite books.	Local library books and staff; book collections in the center or school; brief book reviews in a parent's newsletter; children's dictated stories of personal experiences.

COMMENTS:

An open-door policy in the school or center will serve to encourage parents to learn about their children's school experiences and to communicate to teachers regarding important home experiences of children.

Some parents will wish to retain a sense of privacy regarding home affairs, and their wishes should be respected. However, many parents will seek ways to link the child's home life with his/her activities in school. The sense of continuity which results can help children learn.

Goal: To help parents expand their understanding of the ways in which children grow, develop, and learn.

Broad Objective: Parents will observe the behavior of children in routine and in novel situations and discuss their observations.

<u>OBJECTIVE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>MATERIALS/RESOURCES</u>
1. Visiting days will be offered for both mother and father to observe regular routines in the classroom.	Arrange for flexible "drop-in" times of durations convenient for parents. Have parents observe typical learning behaviors of children: use of senses and movement in using materials; play, exploration, and repetitive activity; etc.	Invitations and explanations; written suggestions for observation of children; logs; books and articles on child development and learning.
2. Parents and teachers will discuss behaviors of children in situations new to them.	Schedule parent discussions of children's reactions to the beginning of school, promotion to another class, new teachers, family problems and crisis. Respond to the spontaneous needs of parents for such discussions.	Invitations; parent's anecdotal records; articles and books on children and illness, divorce, new siblings, death, moves, etc.

COMMENTS:

Often parents are somewhat isolated in carrying out their child-rearing responsibilities. The smaller size and the mobility of many contemporary families may severely limit a parent's experience with children and with child-rearing. Such parents may find reassurance and develop understanding by observing other children and by discussing child behavior and parent-child relationships with other parents.

B. Motivating Parental Involvement

In many cases, communication between home and school is negative in spirit: parents may complain about the program or its effects on their children, and teachers are likely to tell parents about children's short-comings. Contacts which are primarily negative frustrate and threaten open communication and its mutual benefits. So, too, does an attitude conveying "don't call me; I'll call you."

Early childhood educators who are convinced of the importance of parents' participation will demonstrate an openness to parents' opinion, a respect for their needs and interests, and a desire to involve them directly and indirectly.

When parental roles and responsibilities make parental involvement difficult, the following strategies can be employed:

- frequent telephone conversations as well as face-to-face conferences
- brief, spontaneous (informal) conferences
- parent coordinators, room parents, parent liaisons
- "adopt a parent" program
- news memos from teacher to parent, relating a child's accomplishment or need
- activities which involve parents and children simultaneously, e.g., programs, pot-luck suppers, etc.
- car pools and cooperative babysitting to ease parent's participation
- home visits
- newsletters which describe classroom activities, events, and "milestones" in children's learning
- circulation of cassette recordings of a parent activity
- offering of incentives, e.g., door prizes, favors obtained from businesses, etc.
- "support" meetings, a smile, and genuine welcome
- refreshments and meals which are compatible with a regular family schedule

Although parents' needs, interests and time will vary, as evidenced in the assessment data, every attempt should be made to promote involvement which satisfies the parent and supports the child and the program.

C. Benefits to Childrer

Well-planned parent involvement benefits everyone, especially the children, regardless of whether they are infants, toddlers, or preschool or kindergarten children.

- Communication between the home and school or center is strengthened.
- Parents and staff demonstrate role models of adult interaction for the children.

IV. EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

Evaluation of the parental involvement program identifies strengths and weaknesses. Were the goals and objectives achieved through the planned activities? Why not? Such questions must be answered to assess what has been accomplished. Everyone involved in the parent program should help evaluate it.

A. Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation is an on-going process, a way of assuring that the program is progressing as planned. Each parent activity should be evaluated soon after its completion to ascertain the extent to which the objectives were met. Even with the best of plans, there will be occasions when attendance is low, participation is strained, equipment breaks, or criticism is negative. Parents or staff may feel the program is near failure. It is important to avoid taking a defeatist attitude. This is the time to review the goals and objectives of the program and study the events and circumstances which compete for parents' time or prevent their participation.

It is important to learn the reasons for the unenthusiastic reception of a plan, from both those who took part and those who did not or could not. Information gained through evaluation may show that the topic, time, date, or place of a planned parent meeting needs to be changed. The topic may not generate great interest or it may be misunderstood. Perhaps parents can take part on a weekend morning or afternoon, have supper meetings, or meet every other month. The place may be moved to a parent's home, community center, public library, or other area which is more convenient or accessible to parents.

Sometimes an entirely new approach to parent-teacher discussions is necessary. Some early childhood programs have given up large meetings, finding small, interest-focused meetings for those parents who wish to participate to be more effective. For such programs, the sum of the participation over a year and the intensity of interest are keys to success, rather than large numbers of parents at particular events.

Other information gained from an evaluation may indicate a need for baby sitting services. Perhaps an invitation should be extended to the entire family. Food may help, or shorter meetings may be more welcome. Parents will probably enjoy and appreciate a program which involves their own child or children, i.e., programs about the children's activities such as recordings, slides, movies, or photographs. Parents may be more comfortable in small cluster meetings with the child's individual teacher, rather than in one large meeting of the entire school or center.

Formative evaluation may emphasize the need for flexibility in planning so that agendas or modes of a program can be changed as needs and interests arise. Many aspects can be altered throughout the year to keep the participation strong and the enthusiasm high for staff as well as parents. (See Appendix A for a sample parent involvement evaluation.)

B. Summative Evaluation

At the end of the year, a summative evaluation should be done. Goals and objectives are critiqued and progress toward them evaluated. Questions to be answered are: Were the overall purposes accomplished? How? Which activities were most or least effective in fulfilling them? Was the overall program a success or failure? Responsible suggestions for change should be reflected in the summative evaluation.

Accomplishments are easier to measure if standards or criteria are established at the time the goals and objectives are written. For example, parents and staff may decide that each parent will be involved in some way; that a certain number of parents should participate in a given activity or yearly event; that there should be a requisite number of meetings; that parents should be measurably more informed about child development; or that behavioral changes will be exhibited by parents as a result of the parent involvement program. If criteria are established, evaluation data can come from the attendance records of every event, from the sign-in sheets of parent volunteers, from observation records of parent volunteers, from parent comments on questionnaires, and from written statements to document whether or not parents were more informed about child development.

Evaluation data may also be obtained from the following:

- observations of parents in the classroom and in parent meetings
- interviews and written questionnaires
- letters from parents and staff
- recorded and videotaped activities
- products from activities (e.g., booklets, scrap books)
- slides and photographs
- evaluation forms

The evaluation should summarize the degree and manner of parent participation in an objective way. It may be written in narrative form using various categories drawn from the goals and objectives. Future plans and/or recommendations should be placed in a separate category, to assist in replanning. Each year should prove to be more productive as a result of a thorough evaluation.

The summative evaluation of a successful parent involvement effort will show that the program can be a support to parents, and that parents can support the program and each other. When parents and teachers genuinely believe that children will be helped through their cooperation, the program reflects a dynamic quality and added strength.

Parents will change as the children grow and progress from one classroom or site to another, yet the principles and steps in planning remain the same. The program belongs to everyone involved. Each person--parent, child, teacher--has a vested interest and personal benefits to reap.

REFERENCES

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Gardner, B. Development in Early Childhood, (2nd ed.). New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

Gordon, Ira J. and Breivogel, William F. Building Effective Home-School Relationships. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1976.

New Jersey State Department of Education, Division of School Programs, Office of Early Childhood. Working With Community Resources. Trenton, New Jersey; Office of Early Childhood, 1979.

Warrence, B. and Kornegay, L., A Self-Study Process for Preschool Programs. Trenton, New Jersey; New Jersey State Department of Education, Division of School Programs, Office of Early Childhood, 1980.

APPENDICES

- A. Parent Involvement Evaluation Questionnaire
- B. Sources for Written Materials

A. Parent Involvement Evaluation Questionnaire _____

Name of parent activity _____

Classroom/teacher _____

Date _____

Directions Please answer the question by using the space provided.
These may be mailed or given to (teachers name, school address).

1. What was most effective about (the parent activity)?

2. What was least effective about (the parent activity)?

3. What would help improve (the parent activity)? Suggest some ways.

4. Please check one or more. As a result of the (parent activity), I

- am satisfied with my involvement
- need more information
- desire a conference
- need assistance from staff and/or parents
- need a workshop (or follow-up workshop)
- other (specify)

My overall rating for the (parent activity) is:

Excellent Good Fair Unsatisfactory

Additional comments: _____

Thank you!

B. Sources for Written Materials

You may request a list of selected publications and information pertaining to parent involvement from the following state and national sources.

State Sources

Community Coordinated Child Care
105 Presidential Boulevard
Paterson, New Jersey 07522

Educational Improvement Center
Office of County and Regional Services
Office of Deputy Commissioner
New Jersey State Department of Education
225 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Head Start Regional Training Office
Center for Infancy and Early Childhood
Graduate School of Education
Rutgers University
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903

New Jersey Congress of Parents and Teachers
900 Berkeley Avenue
Trenton, New Jersey 08618

New Jersey State Department of Education
Division of School Programs
Bureau of Adult Continuing and Community Education
Office of Parent Involvement
3535 Quakerbridge Road
Trenton, New Jersey 08619

New Jersey Department of Education
Division of School Programs
Bureau of Curriculum
Office of Early Childhood
225 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

New Jersey Department of Education
Division of School Programs
Branch of Basic Skills Improvement
(Migrant Education, Title I, State Compensatory Education)
225 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

National Sources

AMERICAN HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION, INC.
2010 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF PARENT EDUCATION
55 Chapel Street
Newton, Massachusetts 02160

CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
67 Irving Place
New York, New York 10003

CHILDREN'S BUREAU
Office of Child Development
P.O. Box 1182
Washington, D.C. 20013

ERIC-EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
University of Illinois
College of Education
805 West Pennsylvania
Urbana, Illinois 61801

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN
1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
1201 Sixteenth Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

NATIONAL BLACK CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
1463 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

NATIONAL PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION
700 North Rush Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

NATIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL RELATIONS ASSOCIATION
1801 North Moore Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

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