DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 483 UD 031 729

TITLE	Overcoming Barriers to Family Involvement in Title I Schools. Report to Congress.
INSTITUTION	Policy Studies Associates, Inc., Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. on the Education of At-Risk Students (OERI/ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Feb 97
NOTE	164p.
CONTRACT	EA94053001
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Aid; Federal Legislation; National Surveys; *Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; *Partnerships in Education; Profiles; Program Descriptions; *Program Implementation; School Involvement; State Departments of Education; State Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Elementary Secondary Education Act Title I; Fast Response Survey System; Improving Americas Schools Act 1994; National Household Education Survey

ABSTRACT

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) requires all schools and districts receiving Title I money to engage in an extensive array of activities to build the capacity of parents and school staff to work together in support of students' learning. Title I also requires schools to develop, with parents, a written parent involvement policy that describes how schools will keep parents adequately informed and how they will involve parents in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs. IASA requires that the Department of Education conduct a study of parent involvement to identify and describe common barriers to parent involvement and successful local policies that improve parental involvement and the performance of participating children. Data sources for the Department's study include: (1) a review of the research literature; (2) the Fast Response Survey of School and Family Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8 (nationally representative study of 810 schools); (3) the Parent/Family Involvement component of the National Household Education Survey (NHES) (a nationally representative survey of 20,792 children and their parents); (4) profiles of 20 local Title I programs; (5) parent focus group interviews at 5 of these sites; and (6) a survey of 36 state educational agencies regarding state activities to promote school and family partnerships. Many barriers to parent participation are identified, and the profiles of the 20 local sites are analyzed. Three appendixes discuss NHES results, local approaches to promoting parent involvement, and a survey conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers. (Contains 33 exhibits, 3 appendix exhibits, and 39 references.) (SLD)

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN TITLE I SCHOOLS

Report to Congress

February 1997

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

U.S. Department of Education

Richard W. Riley
Secretary

Marshall S. Smith
Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Edward J. Fuentes
Director, National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students

Oliver C. Moles
National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students

Prepared for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, by Policy Studies Associates, Inc., under contract EA94053001.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report represents the work of many hands. Thanks are due to the team at Policy Studies Associates, Inc. who were responsible for data collection, analysis, and reporting, particularly Katrina Laguarda, Janie Funkhouser, and Elizabeth Stief, the report's authors, and Leslie Anderson, Deborah Cohen, David Goldstein, Miriam Gonzales, Daniel Murphy, Sara Nathanson, and Elizabeth Reisner.

Thanks are due as well to the members of the study panel who helped shape the project in its early stages and commented on the draft report: Marilyn Aklin and Richard Nero of the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents, Diane D'Angelo of RMC Research Corporation, Joyce Epstein of the Johns Hopkins University, Warlene Gary of the National Education Association, Linda Rodriguez of the Pasco County (Florida) School Board, and Betty Warren-Smith of the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents and the Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts School in Kansas City, Missouri.

Within the U.S. Department of Education, Oliver Moles served as project monitor. Barbara Coates and her colleagues at the Planning and Evaluation Service provided advice and assistance throughout the project. Judi Carpenter, Kathryn Chandler, and Chris Chapman in the National Center for Education Statistics provided data tabulations, feedback, and helpful advice.

Nancy Carey of Westat, Inc. provided tabulations from the principals survey, and Lynson Moore Bobo of the Council of Chief State School Officers provided tabulations of state survey data.

The teachers, parents, principals, and other staff of the schools highlighted in this report gave generously of their time to help the authors compile detailed and accurate accounts of their programs. They are gratefully acknowledged. Thanks also are due to the parents who participated in focus group interviews. Their contributions to the study represent a perspective that is too easily lost--the voices of parents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thirty years of research supports the conclusion that family involvement in children's education is critical to student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Increasing families' involvement in the education of their children so that all children can achieve at levels articulated in challenging academic standards is an important goal of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994. For example, Title I requires all schools and districts receiving Title I funds to engage in an extensive array of activities to build the capacity of both parents and school staff to work together in support of students' learning. Title I also requires schools to develop, with parents, a written parent involvement policy that describes how schools will keep parents adequately informed and how they will involve parents in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs.

IASA requires that the U.S. Department of Education (ED) conduct a study of parent involvement that identifies and describes:

- "common barriers to effective parental involvement in the education of participating children;" and
- "successful local policies and programs that improve parental involvement and the performance of participating children."

Data sources for ED's study include: (1) a review of the research literature on parent involvement; (2) the Fast Response Survey of School and Family Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8 (SFSP), a nationally representative survey of 810 elementary and middle schools; (3) the Parent/Family Involvement component of the National Household Education Survey (NHES), a nationally representative survey of 20,792 children and their parents; (4) profiles of 20 local Title I programs that have been successful in overcoming barriers to parent involvement; (5) parent focus group interviews conducted at five of those programs; and (6) a survey of 36 state educational agencies regarding state activities to promote school-family partnerships.

Barriers to Family Involvement in Their Children's Education

A large body of research has documented that when schools make a concerted effort to enlist parents' help in fostering children's learning, student achievement rises (Armor, 1976; Epstein, 1991;

Leler, 1983; Toomey, 1986). When schools invest in developing partnerships with families that enable parents to support their children's learning at home and in school, the potential benefits for students are great. When school-related, family-related, or community-related barriers deter parents from becoming involved, students lose an important source of support for their academic learning.

Lack of Time and Other Resources

Both schools and families frequently lack the time and other resources they need to establish effective partnerships.

- ***Principals of K-8 Title I schools report that time is a barrier to parent involvement more often than any other factor.*** Eighty-seven percent of Title I principals report that lack of time on the part of parents is a significant barrier to parent involvement, and 56 percent report that lack of time on the part of school staff is a barrier.

- ***Teachers and parents lack the logistical support that would facilitate their work together.*** For example, many teachers lack access to private telephones, and parents often lack the transportation and child care that would allow them to make more frequent visits to schools.

- ***Time and resource constraints are especially problematic for poor parents.*** For these parents, basic survival, child care, and health needs often interfere with their participation in school events (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992; Liontos, 1991). Principals of high-poverty Title I schools report that fewer parents attend traditional school events than principals of low-poverty Title I schools.

Lack of Information and Training

Most parents and school staff receive little training on how to work with one another.

- ***Almost half of principals (48 percent) in K-8 Title I schools report that lack of staff training in working with parents is a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement.***

- ***Some parents report that they do not know how to assist their children's academic learning.*** These parents would like more guidance from school staff on how to help (Epstein, 1992; Leitch & Tangri, 1988).

Without the proper information and the skills to work together, school staff and families are more likely to view each other with suspicion and distrust:

- *Twenty percent of principals in K-8 Title I schools report that staff attitudes about parents are a barrier to parent involvement in school.* Uninformed teachers are more likely to view parents' absence in school as an indication that parents don't care about the education of their children.

- *Parents who experience schools as uninviting or alienating may decide that teachers do not really care for them or their children.* Twenty-seven percent of Title I principals report that parent attitudes about the school are a problem.

School Organization and Practices

Traditional school organization and practices, especially in secondary schools, often discourage family members from becoming involved.

- *Survey data show that parents of older children are less likely to attend a school event or volunteer at their child's school than parents of younger children.* For example, 61 percent of principals of Title I elementary schools report that most or all of their parents attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, compared with 22 percent of principals of Title I middle schools.

- *Because secondary schools are generally much larger than elementary schools, with each teacher responsible for many more students, they can seem impersonal to parents.* Parents often find it difficult to identify a staff member specially charged with the well-being of their child (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Rutherford, Billig, & Kettering, 1995), and find it more difficult to develop a relationship with school staff as a result.

Some schools continue to rely exclusively on traditional outreach methods that have proven effective for only a limited number of families.

- *Many school activities that involve parents, such as open houses and student performances, tend to be school-dominated and peripheral to the day-to-day operations of the school* (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992; Mannan & Blackwell, 1992; Swap, 1992). Survey data show that parent attendance at these kinds of events is lower among parents with lower income and education levels.

- *If schools do invest in developing a repertoire of parent involvement activities that emphasize personalized attention and interaction with parents, they will be more successful in engaging parents whom they had given up as "hard to reach."* Survey

data show that when schools engage in more personalized interactions with parents, such as parent-teacher conferences, low-income and less-educated parents attend about as often as other parents.

Family-School Differences

Differences in education level, language, and cultural styles between parents and school staff sometimes make it more difficult for them to form effective partnerships.

- ***Parents who have little education themselves participate less often in school-related parent involvement activities, such as volunteering in their child's classroom or attending parent-teacher conferences.*** Parents who have had negative experiences themselves as students may avoid contact with their children's schools as a result. In fact, survey data show that parents' educational level is even more strongly associated with their involvement in schools than is household income level.

- ***Survey data show that parents who do not speak English at home are less likely to participate in school-based activities, and more likely to participate in fewer activities over the course of the school year.*** Nevertheless, few principals of Title I schools serving children with parents whose English skills are limited identified language differences as a significant barrier. Parent survey data also suggest that parents do not see language differences as a significant problem.

- ***Culturally based differences in communication styles, expectations for teachers, parents, and children, and views on the best ways to raise and educate children can create discontinuities between families and schools*** (McCollum & Russo, 1993; Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993).

Lack of External Support for Family-School Partnerships

Family-school partnerships are difficult to nurture without the support of state and district policymakers, community organizations, and employers.

- ***The absence of clearly defined and articulated policy on family involvement from the state or district level and a lack of resources to support professional development related to family involvement sends a powerful message to schools.*** When state or district policies and resources do not reflect a clear priority placed on school-family partnerships, schools are likely to respond by neglecting efforts to work effectively with parents (Burns & McClure, 1993).

- *Many neighborhoods lack easy access to resources that can support parents' efforts to help their children learn.* Such resources include libraries, museums, recreation facilities, and health and social services.

- *Many employers compound the pressures on parents.* Flexible work schedules, part-time employment options, and child care for working parents can provide the time and logistical resources parents need to get more involved in school (Mannan & Blackwell, 1992).

Survey data suggest that many of the barriers described in this report have significant, measurable effects on parent involvement in schools, especially among low-income parents, parents with little education, and parents of older children. Nevertheless, a very large percentage of parents are involved in some way--for example, 76 percent of Title I principals report that half or more of their parents attend open house or back-to-school night. Research on schools and families that have developed effective partnerships in support of children's learning suggests that parents and schools must build on these first steps. Schools, under the leadership of principals, possess the primary responsibility for initiating family-school partnerships; the experience of hundreds of schools across the country demonstrates that it can be done.

Successful Local Approaches to Promoting Family Involvement in the Education of Their Children

Many successful strategies used by Title I schools and districts across the country demonstrate the capacity of families, schools, and communities, working together, to influence children's learning in positive ways. The experiences of 20 schools and districts that have been successful in engaging parents in their children's education illustrate many effective strategies for moving schools, families, and communities beyond the common barriers to family involvement.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

- *Schools can set aside time during the school day for teachers to meet with parents or free teachers from routine chores, such as lunchroom supervision, so that they can work with parents.* Teachers can use this time to meet with parents at school or visit them in their homes. Stipends and compensatory time off also encourage teachers to use time after school and on weekends.

- *Some schools can also use technology to support school-home communication.* This kind of logistical support includes easier access to telephones for teachers, voice mail, and "homework hotlines."

- *To help parents overcome time and resource constraints, schools can provide transportation and child care services, schedule events at convenient times, and conduct home visits.* Each of these strategies addresses a barrier faced by parents who want to participate more often in school-sponsored parent involvement activities.

- *In addition to finding ways to help parents become involved at school, schools can help parents support their children's learning at home.* In their daily interactions with their children at home, parents can be powerful resources for promoting their children's academic success.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

- *Training in basic parenting skills teaches parents about child development and how to establish a home environment that supports student learning.* This information can help parents create a context at home that fosters students' academic progress.

- *Courses that help parents build their own basic literacy skills, earn a GED, accumulate college credit, or develop job-related skills also support parents' involvement in their children's education.* By helping parents to reach their own academic and vocational goals, schools equip them to better support their children's learning.

- *Workshops help parents support their children's learning at home by offering practical ideas on ways that parents can work with their children directly on school work.* Common topics include helping students with curriculum-related activities, homework, other academic decisions and planning, and preparing for required tests.

- *Some training prepares parents to contribute effectively to school decision-making or to work as volunteers.* This training enables parents to participate in school governance and day-to-day operations.

- *Training for school staff is essential for supporting the development of effective school-family partnerships.* Such training addresses telephone calls, home visits, and other contact strategies; communication skills for parent-teacher conferences; and involving parents as leaders and decision-makers in the schools.

- *Engaging parent coordinators or volunteers to train school staff not only builds parents' leadership skills but also offers teachers the opportunity to learn first-hand about parents' perspectives.*

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

Some schools highlighted in this report have reorganized to promote closer interaction between teachers and students and, by extension, between teachers and families. They have also redefined traditional parent events to create more meaningful ways to welcome and involve parents in school life.

- ***An on-going needs assessment helps schools respond more effectively to parents' needs and interests.*** By asking parents about their interests, needs, and ideas for family involvement on an ongoing basis, schools help ensure that their efforts to reach out to parents complement parents' real needs and strengths.

- ***Schools can make changes to their physical environment.*** For example, they can create a space just for parents within the school, such as a parent resource center, and they can post a parent volunteer in the entrance hall to welcome parents.

- ***Schools can also create formal organizational structures for parent participation.*** Groups such as parent committees, volunteer committees, and site-based management councils allow parents to take an active role in decisions affecting the school and their children.

Whatever steps schools take to develop close partnerships with families on behalf of students' learning, schools that are most successful are prepared to reconsider all of their established ways of doing business and to restructure in ways that will make them less hierarchical, more personal, and more accessible to parents.

Bridging School-Family Differences

- ***Schools can help parents strengthen their own basic literacy skills.*** Some schools highlighted in this report offer GED, ESL, and other adult basic education classes to parents on site; other schools send home projects and activity kits intended to build parents' literacy skills as they work on them with their children. At two of the schools highlighted in this report, Even Start projects combine adult basic education, parenting classes, and early childhood education in on-site programs designed to foster literacy skills for both parents and children.

- ***"Family Math" nights or similar events help allay parents' fears about their own mastery of subject matter.*** These events give parents a chance to learn together with their children in an environment that is pleasant and non-threatening.

- *To address language barriers, schools highlighted in this report provide extensive translation services.* These schools provide translation for school-home communications, parenting training, and participation in decision-making and school governance.

- *A home-school liaison, often a parent who lives in the community, can play a crucial role in building trust between home and school.* Because a home-school liaison is usually closely identified with the community and shares the same cultural background with parents, he or she is well-equipped to reach out to parents whose cultural backgrounds differ from teachers'.

- *Other schools provide training and other activities to promote understanding of different cultures among school staff.*

Tapping External Support for Family-School Partnerships

Among the schools highlighted here, successful parent involvement strategies often grow out of family resource centers and partnerships with local businesses, agencies, colleges, and universities.

- *School-community partnerships can support an array of services that help parents get more involved in their children's education.* Such services may include homework hotlines, social services such as substance abuse or child abuse prevention, conferences and workshops, adult education, health services, refurbished school facilities, and refreshments for and transportation to school-sponsored events.

- *District and state supports for family involvement include policies, funding, training, and family services that support school-family partnerships.* With the backing of these district and state supports, schools can draw on a broad system of expertise and experience to cultivate partnerships with families. District and state-run parent resource centers are one example of how schools can benefit.

Effects on Student Achievement

Although it is impossible to attribute student achievement gains or other positive outcomes in any school or district solely to their parent involvement activities, it does appear that many schools that make parent involvement a priority also see student outcomes improve in some way. For example, of the 13 schools highlighted in this report, eight report gains in student achievement data over the last one to three years and four report gains in attendance rates or attendance rates hovering consistently over 95 percent. Parents themselves believe that their involvement influences their

child's performance in school. In focus group interviews, for example, many parents argued that their involvement had improved their children's attitude toward school and engagement in learning.

State Policies and Practices to Support Family Involvement in Education

State survey data suggest that states are taking an active role in supporting school and district efforts to involve parents in their children's education, although the intensity, extent, and quality of this support is unclear. States have also undertaken a number of activities that support school and district efforts to implement the Title I parent involvement requirements in IASA.

- Almost two-thirds of the 36 states responding to the survey report that they have developed documents to guide state-level support of school and district family involvement efforts.
- In more than half of responding states, statutes are in place to guide state-level support of family involvement efforts.
- All of the 36 responding states identified at least one source of funding that contributed to a state-level parent involvement budget.
- Of all the sources of funding available to states to support family involvement activities, states rely most often on Title I and other federal funds. Thirty states identified Title I as a source of funding for parent involvement activities, while only 19 of 36 states support family involvement with their own general education funds.
- Most of the 35 states responding to this section of the survey report providing technical assistance and support to schools and districts that includes disseminating information, providing staff development, and supporting parent education and training.
- Most of the 35 states responding to this section of the survey report assisting schools and districts in implementing the Title I parent involvement provisions, including assisting with crafting parent involvement policies and school-parent compacts, building capacity among staff and parents, and ensuring access and coordination with other parent involvement efforts.

Early Implementation of the Title I Parent Involvement Provisions

Survey data collected from Title I elementary and middle schools in spring 1996, less than a year after the new Title I provisions went into effect, provide some preliminary information on the

implementation of many activities required or endorsed by Title I. Because the data were collected early, the findings presented in this report should be considered baseline measures of schools' progress in implementing Title I.

- *Sixty-four percent of Title I principals report that their schools consult parents in the development of parent involvement activities.* This consultation is a key requirement of Title I.

- *More than three-quarters (78 percent) of Title I principals report that their schools have advisory groups or policy councils that include parents.*

- *A much smaller number of Title I schools report, however, that they consider parent input when making decisions on selected topics related to school programs and policies.* For example, only 40 percent involve parents in making decisions about the allocation of funds, and only 49 percent involve parents in making decisions about discipline policies and procedures.

To build parents' capacity to support their children's learning, most Title schools take steps to provide parents with information on how to help their children learn at home, although the quality, as well as the reach, of the information provided clearly varies across schools.

- *Ninety-six percent of Title I principals report that their schools provide information to parents on at least one topic related to parenting or helping their children learn at home.* Topics include: (1) child or adolescent development; (2) nutrition, health, or safety; (3) parenting skills; (4) information on community services; (5) helping with homework; (6) developing study skills; and (7) ideas for learning activities outside of school.

Other services to parents endorsed in the Title I legislation are fairly common among Title I schools, although they are not universal.

- *Of the Title I schools that serve students whose parents have limited English skills, 86 percent report that they provide interpreters for meetings.* Sixty-nine percent report that they provide translations of printed materials. These findings indicate a relatively widespread effort on the part of Title I schools to accommodate parents with limited English proficiency.

- *Thirty-seven percent of Title I school principals report that their schools have parent resource centers.* An additional 14 percent report that their schools are currently developing them.

- ***More than two-thirds (67 percent) of Title I principals report that at least some of their staff make home visits.*** Staff reach an average of 17 percent of families in one year.

Conclusion

Although evidence of the most common barriers to parent involvement can be found in almost any school, the experience of many schools and districts demonstrates that they can be overcome. Schools that succeed in involving large numbers of parents and other family members in the education of their children invest energy in finding solutions for problems, not excuses. Successful schools view children's success as a shared responsibility, and all stakeholders--including parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders--play important roles in supporting children's learning.

Title I, as reauthorized by IASA, can be an important catalyst for the wider adoption of policies and practices that have proven effective in fostering partnerships between schools and families. Title I requires or endorses many strategies that are recognized as effective in supporting parents' involvement in their children's education, and many of the practices highlighted in Title I--for example, parent resource centers, home visits, and the provision of information and training to parents--are already common among Title I schools.

It remains to be seen how well federal and state efforts to foster family-school partnerships will support the successful development of school-family partnerships in Title I schools. Continuing research will be needed to assess schools' implementation of the Title I parent involvement provisions as well as the quality of the assistance that schools receive from states and districts. A closer look at the strategies required or endorsed in federal and state policy--for example, school-parent compacts, information and training for parents and school staff, and special strategies such as home visits--as they are implemented in schools will provide policymakers, practitioners, and parents with a better understanding of how all schools can sustain effective partnerships with families.

CONTENTS

LIST OF EXHIBITS

CHAPTER IV: STATE POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

CHAPTER V: EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF TITLE I PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROVISIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

Thirty years of research supports the conclusion that family involvement in children's education is crucial to student achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). When families are involved in their children's education in positive ways, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behavior, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education. In fact, research suggests that family encouragement of learning at home and family participation in school activities are critical factors contributing to student achievement, even more so than the family's socioeconomic status and parents' education (Eagle, 1989; Ziegler, 1987).

Increasing families' involvement in the education of their children so that all children can achieve at levels articulated in challenging academic standards is an important goal of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994. Title I now requires that all schools receiving Title I funds develop a school-parent compact that outlines how schools and parents will share the responsibility for ensuring that students achieve at high levels. Title I requires that parents be informed of the state standards for what all children are expected to know and the state assessments for measuring performance and progress; Title I schools must also inform parents of the school's curriculum, assessments, and the proficiency levels used to evaluate student performance. In addition, Title I requires schools and districts to engage in an extensive array of activities to build the capacity of both parents and school staff to work together.

Study Goals and Data Collection Activities

IASA requires that the U.S. Department of Education (ED), through the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), conduct a study of parent involvement that identifies and describes:

- "common barriers to effective parental involvement in the education of participating children;" and
- "successful local policies and programs that improve parental involvement and the performance of participating children."

In order to support schools and districts in meeting the parent involvement requirements of the reauthorized Title I, IASA also requires ED to disseminate the study's findings on successful local policies and programs to local school districts. OERI, with ED's Planning and Evaluation Service, contracted with Policy Studies Associates, Inc. (PSA) to assist in the development of this report to Congress and in the preparation of a Title I Idea Book for dissemination to states and districts. The Idea Book will present successful local policies and programs to help practitioners design better approaches for involving parents and other family members in children's education.

Findings from many data sources informed this report. First, a review of the research literature on parent involvement identified the most commonly cited barriers to parent involvement and provided a framework for later data analysis and reporting.

Second, two nationally representative surveys furnished data on barriers to parent involvement in school activities and on school strategies to engage parents in their children's education. The Survey on Family and School Partnerships (SFSP) in Public Schools, K-8, a nationally representative survey of 810 public schools administered as part of the Fast Response Survey System, provides data on principals' perceptions of the barriers to parent involvement, specific strategies undertaken by schools to involve parents, and early implementation of Title I parent involvement provisions. Survey data allow comparison of Title I and non-Title I schools on responses to some survey items, as well as comparisons among schools with different concentrations of poverty and comparisons between elementary and middle schools. Appendix A presents more information on the SFSP.

Third, the Parent/Family Involvement Component of the 1996 National Household Educational Survey (NHES) provides data on the parents of a nationally representative sample of 20,792 children in K-12 public schools. Survey items address parents' participation in school activities, as well as information about specific strategies employed by schools to reach out to parents. Although it is not possible to link parent responses on the NHES Parent Interview with their children's enrollment in Title I or non-Title I schools, NHES data do allow responses to survey items to be disaggregated for low-income parents and parents with limited English skills, both populations whose children are especially likely to be served by Title I schools. Appendix A presents more information on the NHES.

To supplement these survey data, PSA selected 20 school- and district-level Title I programs that have successfully overcome barriers to parent involvement, based on nominations from a panel of study consultants and from the field. These comprehensive district- and school-level programs enhance parent-school communications and help parents support their children's academic work at school and at home. Some of the 20 projects also involve parents in school planning and governance

activities and as volunteers. Telephone interviews with staff and parents at these programs provided detailed illustrations of specific strategies for overcoming barriers to parent involvement, as described in this report. Appendix B presents basic information on each of these school and district programs.

PSA also conducted focus group interviews with parents at five of these successful local programs to elicit parents' perspectives on the most effective ways to engage parents in their children's education, barriers to parent involvement in Title I schools, and the steps schools can take to reach out to parents. Data from these parent interviews inform our findings on barriers to parent involvement and strategies for overcoming those barriers.

Finally, a survey of state activities to promote parent involvement conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) supplements data collected on school and district programs. State educational agency (SEA) staff in 35 states and the District of Columbia provided information on state efforts to support family involvement in children's learning at school, at home, and in the community. Survey topics included state policies and laws related to promoting family involvement in schools, state support for activities that build families' capacity for involvement, and state support to schools and districts to meet the parent involvement requirements of Title I. Appendix C presents more information on the CCSSO survey.

Both this report and the Idea Book focus on children in grades K-12, setting aside parent involvement activities in early childhood programs, about which much has already been written, and both make a special effort to present examples of efforts to involve parents in middle schools and high schools. In addition, this report examines barriers and successes to developing effective school-family partnerships in the context of improving basic school programs--as described in Part A of Title I--rather than in the context of specialized programs such as Even Start.[1]

[1] Part B of Title I, Even Start Family Literacy Programs, offers a valuable model for schools seeking to involve parents more deeply in the education of their children. We include an example of an Even Start program in chapter III of this report. However, because parents in Even Start are already enrolled in a program with a focused set of parent involvement activities, their circumstances are different from those faced by schools and parents more generally.

School-Family Partnerships

Parent involvement[2] can take many forms, both in the home and at school. At the most basic level, most families can and do support their children's learning in many ways: families love and care for their children, meeting their basic physical and emotional needs so that they can fully engage in learning; they teach children to value education, help them study at home, and provide them with other learning experiences outside of school; and many support schools by volunteering and working closely with teachers on specific academic goals for their children. Although many parents cannot come often to the school building, research shows that nearly all parents want to know how to help their children succeed academically (Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning, 1992). Schools that are most successful in engaging parents and other family members in support of their children's learning look beyond the more common definitions of school-based parent involvement--participating in a parent-teacher organization, volunteering at school, or signing quarterly report cards--to a broader conception of parents as partners in the education of their children. Rather than striving only to increase the participation of a few parents in school-based activities, successful schools seek to support the ways that all families encourage their children to learn both at home and in school. These efforts become the basis of a true partnership between schools and families. Throughout this report, we use the term "parent involvement" in its broadest sense--to describe one aspect of a fully-developed school-family partnership.

If families are to work with schools as full partners in the education of their children, schools must provide them with the opportunities and support they need to become involved (Epstein, 1992; Epstein, 1995). Too often schools expect families to do it all alone. Developing effective partnerships with families requires that all school staff (administrators, teachers, and support staff) create a school environment that welcomes parents, provide parents with the information and training they need to become involved, and reach out to parents with invitations to participate in their children's learning. Because this study examines local school and school system efforts to improve parent involvement and enhance student performance, school-initiated forms of parent involvement are its main focus, rather than the actions parents might take on their own with schools or with their children at home--as important as these parent-initiated efforts may be.

The four chapters that follow examine the most common barriers to effective parent involvement in schools and local, state, and federal efforts to overcome those barriers and support the development of effective school-family partnerships. Chapter II describes common barriers to

---

[2] Here and elsewhere in this report, the terms "parent involvement" and "family involvement" are used interchangeably. As other family members take on the responsibilities of parents, they become parents in the broadest sense of the word.

effective parent involvement in Title I schools and schools serving low-income children, drawing on our review of the relevant research literature and the SFSP and NHES surveys. Chapter III describes comprehensive district- and school-level programs that enhance parent-school communications and help parents support their children's academic work at school and at home. Chapter IV describes state efforts to support and encourage parent involvement in schools and districts. Chapter V examines early implementation of recently enacted Title I parent involvement provisions, including the adoption of parent involvement policies, school-parent compacts, and training activities for parents and school staff. We conclude by summarizing the report's findings, identifying areas of continuing challenge, and make recommendations for future study.

II. BARRIERS TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

A growing body of research evidence supports the idea that families and schools both exercise "spheres of influence" (Epstein, 1995) over student achievement. Schools enable students to achieve at high levels embodied in challenging academic standards by engaging them in high-level content and providing them with the assistance they need to master that content, but families also play a key role in supporting student achievement. In particular, families support students' academic success by: (1) creating a home environment that encourages learning; (2) expressing high, but realistic, expectations for their children's achievement; (3) monitoring out-of-school activities; (4) modeling the value of learning, self-discipline, and hard work; and (5) encouraging reading, writing, and discussions among family members at home (Henderson & Berla, 1994). These spheres of influence exercised by schools and families may be drawn together or pushed apart. Where strong partnerships between schools and families exist, teachers and parents see their influence as overlapping and mutually reinforcing (Epstein, 1995).

Many studies have documented that when schools make a concerted effort to enlist parents' help in fostering children's learning, student achievement rises (e.g., Armor, 1976; Epstein, 1991; Leler, 1983; Toomey, 1986). Similarly, students whose parents are involved at school or spend time with them on educational activities achieve at higher levels (Benson, Buckley & Medrich, 1980; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Tizard, Schofield, & Hewison, 1982; Walberg, 1984). When schools invest in developing partnerships with families that enable parents to support their children's learning at home and in school, the potential benefits for student learning are great. On the other hand, the barriers that deter family involvement in schools can have serious consequences for students. When parents are less involved in their children's education, both schools and students lose an important resource for fostering students' success in school.

Barriers to family involvement in their children's education spring from many sources, including the constraints facing teachers and other school staff, the challenges and pressures that families face, and the language, cultural, and socioeconomic differences separating families and school staff. Based on a review of recent research and data from surveys of schools and parents, this chapter identifies a common set of barriers to family involvement. It discusses the following school-related, family-related, and community-related barriers:

- Lack of time and other resources
- Lack of information and training

- School organization and practices
- Family-school differences
- Lack of external support for family-school partnerships

For many schools across the nation, the barriers to increasing parents' involvement in their children's education that are described in this chapter are formidable obstacles. Experience in some schools and communities, however, demonstrates that families and schools can work together to manage these barriers and to develop productive partnerships.

Lack of Time and Other Resources

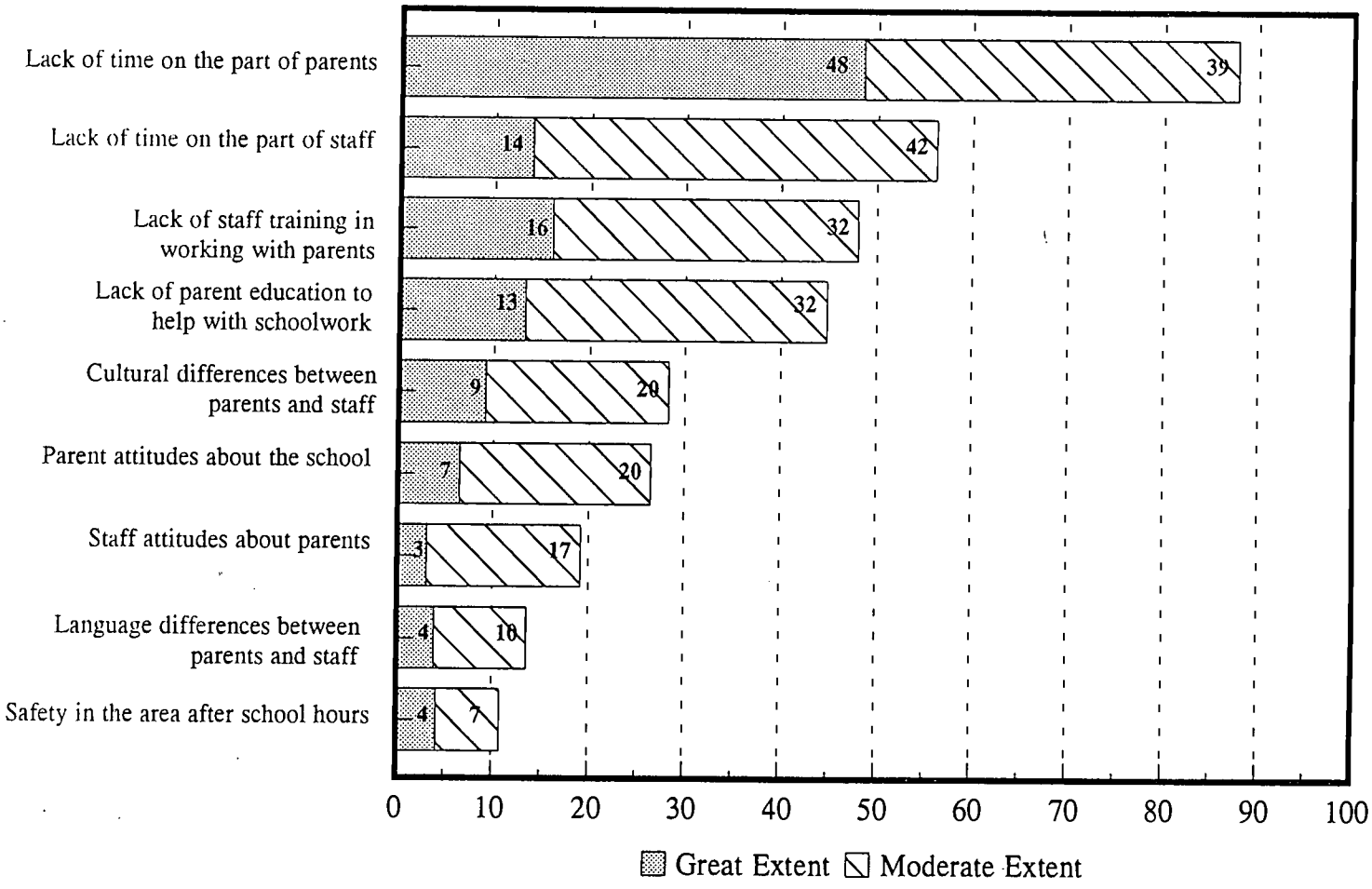
Time is crucial for establishing partnerships between families and schools, but both schools and families frequently lack it. Eighty-seven percent of principals in K-8 Title I schools report that lack of time on the part of parents is a barrier to parent involvement in their schools, and 56 percent report that lack of time on the part of school staff is a significant barrier. In fact, principals identified these two barriers--lack of time for both parents and staff--as significant more often than any other items included in the SFSP (see Exhibits II.1 and II.2).

In addition to time, both schools and families lack other resources needed to foster partnerships. Teachers lack logistical support, such as access to private telephones, for their interactions with parents, and parents often lack the child care and ability to take time off from work that would allow them to make more frequent visits to schools. At a time when many priorities lay claim to scarce education resources, logistical support for building school-family partnerships often gets short shrift.

Lack of Time for School Staff

Because the majority of teacher time during the school day is devoted to instruction, teachers have limited opportunities to reach out to parents during traditional school hours. In addition, union contracts often restrict teachers' availability after school hours. The rigid work rules contained in many union contracts limit both the amount and the flexibility of the time that teachers can devote to working with parents, and limit the schools' options for planning parent involvement activities. Principals who want to make parent involvement part of every teacher's responsibility often find their hands tied by union contracts that dictate the number of evenings or weekends teachers can make home visits or attend meetings with parents. In addition, the proportion of teachers who are parents

Exhibit II.1
Barriers to Parent Involvement
Identified by Title I Principals

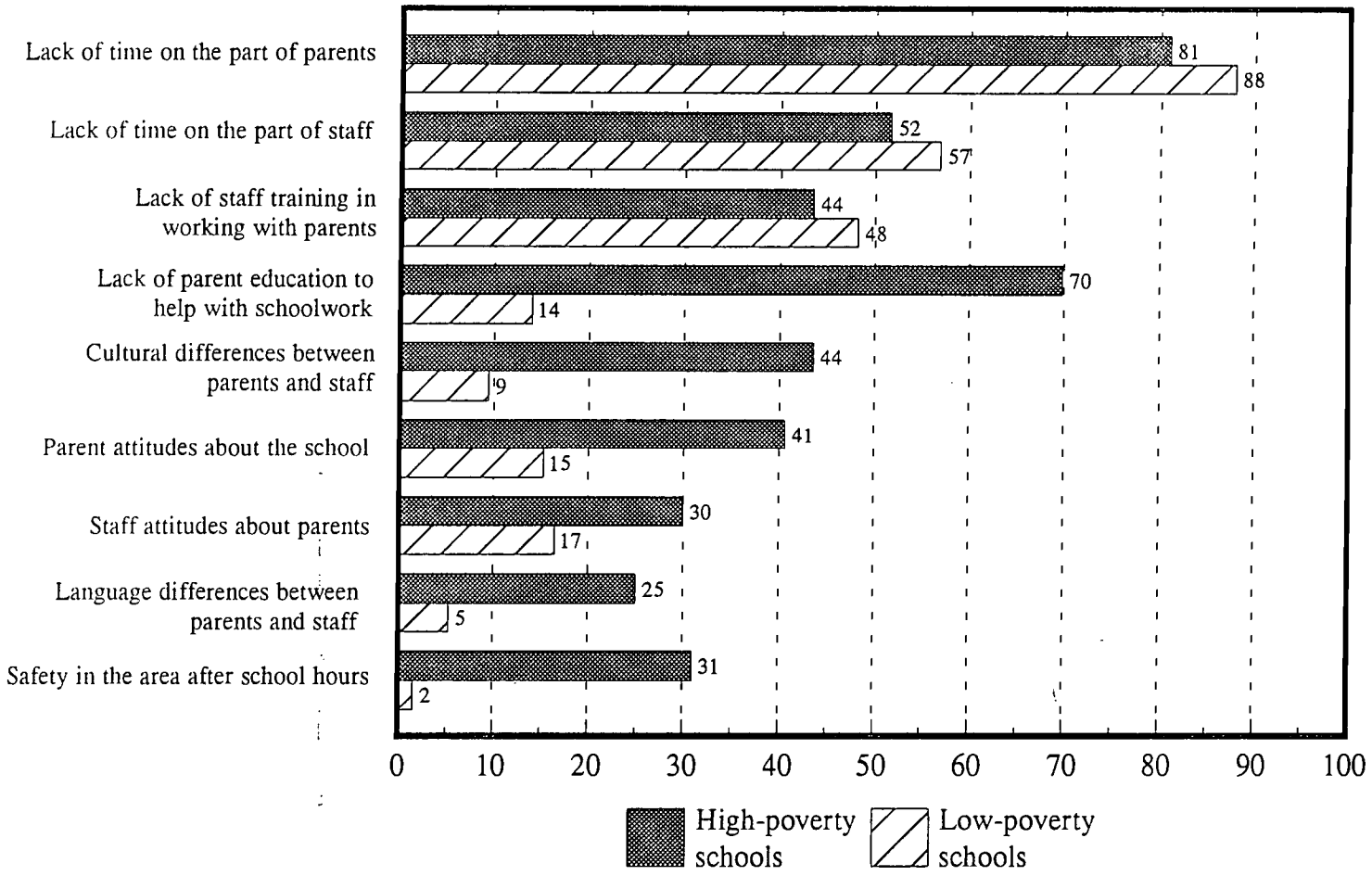


Note: Eighty-seven (87) percent of respondents completing the survey were principals; the remainder were other school staff.

Exhibit reads: **Forty-eight percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools report that lack of time on the part of parents is a barrier to parent involvement to a great extent; 39 percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools report that it is a barrier to a moderate extent.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

Exhibit II.2
Barriers to Parent Involvement in High- and Low-Poverty Title I Schools Identified by Principals



Note: High-poverty schools are those with free- and reduced-price lunch rates of 75 percent or more. Low-poverty schools are those with free- and reduced-price lunch rates of 0 - 34 percent.

Exhibit reads: **Eighty-one (81) percent of principals of high-poverty K-8 Title I schools report that lack of time on the part of parents is a barrier to parent involvement to a great or moderate extent.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

themselves has increased over the years, placing additional demands on teachers' time after school (Swap, 1993).

According to SFSP data, over half of all Title I schools experience the pressure of time constraints: 56 percent of Title I schools identify lack of time on the part of staff as a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement, with no significant variation among Title I schools of various poverty levels (see Exhibit II.3).[3]

Exhibit II.3
Barriers to Parent Involvement Identified by Title I Principals, by School Poverty Concentration

Barriers to Parent Involvement to a Great or Moderate Extent	All Schools	School Poverty Concentration			
		0-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75%+
Lack of time on the part of parents	87%	88%	92%	90%	81%
Lack of time on the part of staff	56%	57%	62%	56%	52%
Lack of staff training in working with parents	48%	48%	48%	50%	44%
Lack of parent education to help with homework	45%	14%	42%	62%	70%
Cultural differences between parents and staff	29%	9%	23%	42%	44%
Parent attitudes about the school	27%	15%	18%	34%	41%
Staff attitudes about parents	20%	17%	11%	22%	30%
Language differences between parents and staff	14%	5%	17%	13%	25%
Safety in the area after school hours	11%	2%	7%	7%	31%

Exhibit reads: **Eighty-eight percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools with free- and reduced-price lunch rates of 0-34 percent report that lack of time on the part of parents is a barrier to parent involvement to a great or moderate extent.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

[3] In this case and in others where we report that there is no significant difference in survey results across various groups of schools, we mean that the differences did not grow progressively higher or lower across categories, nor were they all statistically significant at the $p=.05$ level.

Lack of time constrains the way teachers are likely to interact with parents. According to NHES survey data, school staff are much more likely to rely on mass communication, such as newsletters or notices sent home with students, as the most efficient way to maintain contact with parents, rather than more personalized contact in person or over the telephone. Ninety percent of all parents[4] of public school children report that they received newsletters, memos, or notices addressed to all parents from their child's school one or more times during the school year; by contrast, 47 percent report that they received personal notes and 42 percent report that they were called on the telephone (see Exhibit II.4).[5]. Notes and phone calls home are less common for children in middle schools and high schools, where teachers are responsible for many more students and find the time they have available for contacting families stretched even more thinly. For example, 53 percent of parents of children in grades 3-5 report that they received one or more notes from their child's teacher, while 45 percent of parents of students in grades 6-8 and 36 percent of parents of students in grades 9-12 report the same (see Exhibit II.4).

Similarly, schools' own accounts of their communication with parents indicates that they tend to rely on the most efficient methods for communicating with parents. According to the SFSP, for example, 56 percent of Title I principals report that their schools always give parents written interim reports during grading periods, and 69 percent report that they always give parents written information about the school's performance on standardized tests. By contrast, only 16 percent of Title I principals report that their schools always give parents positive phone calls or notes when their child's performance improves at school (see Exhibit V.2 in Chapter V). Researchers note that this is a potentially significant problem among Title I schools and tends to exacerbate barriers to parent involvement. When school staff have so little personalized contact with parents, the contact they do have tends to occur only during crisis situations. In these situations, teachers' interactions with parents tend to be negative and sometimes even adversarial (Swap, 1993).

---

[4] The 1996 NHES sampled children, not parents, although a parent or guardian, not a child, responded to the parent questionnaire in each household where a sampled child lived. As a result, the findings based on NHES data presented here and elsewhere in the text represent the percentage of *children* whose parent or guardian responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have described these findings as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items. However, it would be more precise to say, for example, that 90 percent of public school *children* had a parent or guardian who reported that they received newsletters, notices, or memos. In fact, it is impossible to estimate how the entire population of parents might respond to these survey items (see note in Appendix A).

[5] In this case and in others where we report differences in survey results, the differences are statistically significant at the $p = .05$ level.

Exhibit II.4

Families' Frequency of Contact with Schools, as Reported by Parents, by Child's Grade Level

During this school year, how many times did your child's school contact you without your having contacted them first? How many times did they:	All Children's Parents[1]	Child's Grade Level			
		K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
Send your family personal notes?					
Never	53%	45%	47%	54%	64%
1-2 times	24%	24%	26%	25%	20%
3 or more times	23%	31%	27%	20%	16%
Call you on the phone?					
Never	58%	56%	57%	57%	62%
1-2 times	24%	26%	25%	24%	21%
3 or more times	18%	18%	18%	19%	17%
Provide newsletters, memos, or notices addressed to all parents?					
Never	10%	5%	5%	12%	18%
1-2 times	14%	8%	9%	16%	21%
3 or more times	76%	88%	86%	73%	61%

[1] The National Household Education Survey samples children, not parents, although a parent or guardian, not a child, responded to the parent questionnaire in each household where a sampled child lived. As a result, the tabulations presented here and in other exhibits based on NHES data represent the percentage of *children* whose parent or guardian responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items. In fact, it is impossible to estimate how the entire population of parents might respond to the survey (see note in Appendix A).

Exhibit reads: **Forty-five percent of public school students in grades K-2 have parents who report that their child's school never sent them a personal note in the last year.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

Lack of Time and Other Pressures on Families

Title I principals identified lack of time on the part of parents as a great or moderate barrier more often than any other concern--87 percent of Title I schools report that lack of time on the part of parents is a significant barrier to parent involvement (see Exhibit II.1). The time pressures facing parents result partly from changes in the workforce and family structures. For example, 70 percent of mothers of school-aged children are now in the workforce compared with 30 percent in 1960, and the number of single-parent families has doubled since 1970 (Swap, 1993).

Time constraints are especially problematic for economically disadvantaged parents, because many work at jobs that do not provide the flexibility that is characteristic of professional occupations (Burns & McClure, 1993; Dwyer & Hecht, 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). In focus group interviews, one working mother noted that schools "not being flexible with meeting times" was a barrier to involvement for some parents. Outside of work, parents face many stresses--such as meeting basic survival, child care, and health needs--which often take priority over school events (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992; Liontos, 1991).

School survey data also suggest that the relationship between school involvement and the barriers associated with poverty is significant. Principals of Title I schools with large concentrations of poor students report that fewer parents attend traditional school events, as compared with principals in schools with smaller concentrations of poor students. For example, 64 percent of Title I principals of schools with poverty rates less than 35 percent report that most or all of their parents attend open house or back-to-school nights, while only 27 percent of principals of Title I schools with poverty rates of 75 percent or more report the same level of parent attendance at those events (see Exhibit II.5). Title I schools report similar differences in attendance between high- and low-poverty schools for other types of school events as well, including parent-teacher conferences, arts events, sports events, and academic demonstrations. In all cases, higher-poverty schools are less likely to draw most or all of their parents to selected school events than are lower-poverty schools.

Parents' own reports of their attendance at school events confirm these findings. Parents from households with higher incomes are more likely to attend a school event than parents from low-income households; for example, 86 percent of parents in households earning more than $50,000 a year report that they have attended a general school meeting in the last year, such as a back-to-school night, while only 65 percent of parents in households earning less than $10,000 a year report that they have attended a general school meeting (see Exhibit II.6).

Exhibit II.5

Proportion of Parents Attending Selected Events at Title I Schools, as Reported by Principals, by School Poverty Concentration

School Events and Proportion of Parents Attending	All Title I Schools[1]	School Poverty Concentration			
		0-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75%+
Open house or back-to-school night					
Most or all	43%	64%	49%	28%	27%
More than half	33%	29%	37%	38%	31%
About half or fewer	24%	7%	14%	34%	43%
Regularly scheduled schoolwide parent-teacher conferences					
Most or all	54%	73%	61%	44%	33%
More than half	23%	17%	23%	24%	30%
About half or fewer	23%	10%	15%	33%	38%
Arts events such as plays or dance or musical performances					
Most or all	32%	45%	36%	29%	13%
More than half	31%	37%	33%	32%	22%
About half or fewer	37%	19%	31%	39%	64%
Sports events such as Field Days					
Most or all	10%	17%	11%	4%	8%
More than half	22%	28%	22%	22%	12%
About half or fewer	68%	55%	67%	74%	80%
Science fairs or other academic demonstrations					
Most or all	18%	34%	23%	9%	3%
More than half	21%	30%	26%	17%	11%
About half or fewer	61%	37%	52%	75%	86%

[1] More that 94 percent of all Title I schools hold back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences, or arts events, with no significant variation by poverty concentration. More than 82 percent of Title I schools hold sports events or science fairs, with no variation by poverty concentration.

Exhibit reads: **Among those schools that hold open houses or back-to-school nights, 64 percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools with free- and reduced-price lunch rates of 0-34 percent report that most or all of their parents attend.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

Exhibit II.6

Family Attendance at School Events, as Reported by Parents, by Household Income Level

School Event	All Children's Parents[1]	Household Income Level				
		$0-10,000	$10,001-20,000	$20,001-35,000	$35,001-50,000	$50,001+
Attended a general school meeting, such as a back-to-school night or meeting of the PTA	75%	65%	67%	72%	79%	86%
Went to a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference or meeting	71%	69%	68%	69%	74%	72%
Attended a school or class event, such as a play or sports event, because of child	65%	50%	58%	62%	70%	76%
Acted as a volunteer at the school or served on a committee	35%	22%	25%	31%	40%	49%

[1] The tabulations presented here represent the percentage of *children* whose parents or guardians responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items.

Exhibit reads: **Sixty-five percent of public school students in grades K-12 who live in households earning $0-10,000 a year have parents who report that they attended a general school meeting in the last year.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

Although the time pressures created by inflexible or heavy work schedules are only one reason why poor parents may find it difficult to attend school events (other reasons, such as parents' own negative school experiences and limited ability to speak English, are discussed later in this chapter), time, or lack of it, does appears to be important. For example, the difference in participation rates between high-income and low-income parents is higher for activities that require a

greater time commitment; 49 percent of parents in the highest-earning households report that they have volunteered at their child's school or served on a committee, while only 22 percent of parents in the lowest-earning households report that they have done the same (see Exhibit II.6).

In addition to the pressures many families face in providing for their children, some families, and especially those in schools with the highest concentrations of poverty, are reluctant to attend school events after hours in neighborhoods where they worry about their personal safety. Although most Title I schools report that safety after school hours is a relatively minor concern,[6] nearly a third of Title I schools with poverty rates of 75 percent or more reported that safety is a significant concern (see Exhibit II.3). Because crime tends to be concentrated in high-poverty neighborhoods, the highest-poverty schools are most affected by parents' fears about traveling to and from the school after school hours.

Schools' Lack of Funds and Other Resources

Most schools find that funding to support parent involvement activities is extremely limited. Schools that struggle with growing class sizes or lack of instructional materials, for example, face serious, and competing, demands for resources. As a result, schools must make difficult choices as they allocate resources to strengthen family involvement. Title I funds can support various kinds of family involvement activities, including home visits, parent resource centers, training for parents and teachers, and additional staff whose primary responsibility is parent involvement. Schools that are most successful in developing strong family-school partnerships, however, have usually included parent involvement as an essential component of their general school improvement plans; these schools often support the development of family-school partnerships with general school funds. Nevertheless, these choices are often not easy to make.

On a more basic level, many schools lack simple logistical resources to support interaction with families, such as telephones conveniently located for teachers to use and space for parent meetings. Teachers need access to telephones in a location (not the school office) that allows them to have private conversations with parents. Few schools have voice mail systems or the technology that would support homework helplines, both of which make it easier for teachers and parents on different work schedules to communicate. For example, SFSP data show that 72 percent of Title I schools

[6] Only 2 percent of low-poverty Title I schools and 7 percent of Title I schools with moderate concentrations of poverty said it was a significant barrier to parent involvement.

have no homework helplines, making this one of the least common methods of communication between schools and parents (see Exhibit V.2 in Chapter V).

Families' Lack of Resources

Families may also lack the resources that can enhance relationships with schools. Even if parents have free time, they may lack transportation or child care, making it difficult for them to attend school events. In focus groups, parents cited child care responsibilities as one of the factors that keeps them from getting involved, even when they do not work outside the home. As one mother of two at a rural Title I school noted, "Some people have younger children at home and no one to watch them, or maybe one vehicle and the husband takes it to work." Some parents do not have telephones, making it harder for schools to contact them and for them to stay connected to the school and other parents. One parent at an inner-city elementary school noted, "Lack of phones is a problem, so we stand in the courtyard, and as parents bring their children to school, we try to tell them what is going on." Most parents with telephones still lack the home technology (e.g., an answering machine, or e-mail) needed to take part in computerized communication systems used by some schools.

Lack of Information and Training

Most parents and school staff receive little training on how to work with one another. Without the proper information, time, and the skills to work together, school staff and families are more likely to view each other with suspicion and distrust. In such a climate, family-school partnerships are difficult to foster.

Schools' Lack of Knowledge about How to Work with Parents

According to SFSP data, almost half of Title I schools (48 percent) report that lack of staff training in working with parents is a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement. Teachers often have little understanding of parents' strengths, needs, and interests and how parents can best support their children's learning; many teachers also do not know how to help parents become more involved (Burns & McClure, 1993; Epstein, 1992; Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992; Mannan & Blackwell, 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Teachers and administrators currently receive little or no preservice or inservice training on how to develop family-school partnerships (Epstein, 1992;

Liontos, 1991; Mannan & Blackwell, 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Only about half the states require any training in parent involvement for teacher certification, and of those that do, most focus on the early childhood and elementary levels (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). The training that does exist for teachers of older children tends to portray parents as problems or hindrances, not as assets, and often fails to note their strengths (Epstein, 1992, 1995).

Parents' Lack of Knowledge about How to Contribute to Their Children's Academic Learning

On the other side of the equation, parents frequently report that they do not know how to assist their children's academic learning. Without adequate support, parents are often uncomfortable and lack self-confidence in such endeavors. In one study of parents' and teachers' perceived barriers to collaboration in junior high schools, many parents expressed a sense of "not knowing what to do next" and believing that there was nothing more they could do to help their child in school (Leitch & Tangri, 1988). Parents with little education or low literacy skills themselves may be even less sure about how to help their children. We address the special challenges facing these parents in the section on "Family-School Differences" later in this chapter.

Research shows that most parents would be willing to spend more time with their children on school-related activities if schools simply gave them more guidance on ways they could contribute (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Parents can make a positive contribution to their children's educational achievement if they receive guidance and encouragement in the types of parent involvement that can make a difference, such as reading with their children at home, or engaging in out-of-school learning experiences appropriate to their child's developmental level (Burns & McClure, 1993). As one elementary school parent observed, "Until someone grabs you and says, 'Let me show you how to do this,' you just don't know how."

Misperceptions and Distrust between Parents and Teachers

When structural barriers to the involvement of parents and other family members are high and parents and teachers lack the information and skills needed to work together, misconceptions and mistrust between school and home can flourish. Within schools, uninformed teachers are more likely to view parents' absence in school as an indication that parents don't care about the education of their children. This is a false impression, since research shows that the majority of parents care deeply about the their children's education but want guidance from schools on ways they can contribute (Epstein, 1992). Uninformed teachers are more likely than knowledgeable teachers to believe that

parents who do come to school are trying to subvert their professional judgment and classroom authority (Burns & McClure, 1993; Epstein, 1992; Epstein, 1995; Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Liontos, 1991).

Parents' observations in focus group interviews suggest that the attitudes of school staff are crucial to their success in working with parents. Asked what advice they would offer for schools trying to bolster parent involvement, many parents answered with one word: "Respect." "Get to know the parents; make them feel as if they belong," one elementary school parent noted. "Keep the parents informed; let them know you are interested in them and you want them to know what is going on in the school." Schools that make it an important part of their mission to cultivate those attitudes are likely not only to have a better rapport with parents but to win their trust and participation.

Although staff attitudes were a central concern for parents in focus group interviews, a relatively small number of Title I principals (20 percent) report that staff attitudes about parents are a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement (see Exhibit II.1). Principals of high-poverty Title I schools are more likely to see staff attitudes as a problem than principals of low-poverty schools, and Title I middle school principals are more likely to report that staff attitudes are a problem than Title I elementary school principals. Thirty percent of Title I principals in high-poverty schools report that staff attitudes about parents are a barrier, compared with 17 percent of principals of low-poverty Title I schools (see Exhibit II.3), and 30 percent of Title I middle school principals report that staff attitudes are a barrier, compared with 19 percent of elementary school principals.

As we have seen, parent involvement in traditional school activities tends to be lower in higher poverty schools and in middle schools. These data, and the fact that high-poverty schools and middle schools are more likely to report that staff attitudes are a significant barrier to parent involvement, may suggest that when teachers interact with parents less often, they have fewer chances to develop personal relationships based on understanding and trust, and misperceptions are more likely to sour staff attitudes. However, survey data on teachers' attitudes about parents are limited by the fact that the survey instrument did not define the phrase "staff attitudes"; as a result, schools could have been referring to a whole range of beliefs and perspectives when they identified staff attitudes as a barrier to parent involvement.

Within families, misperceptions of schools and schooling can also be impediments to effective parent involvement. Some parents are reluctant to engage in partnerships with schools because they do not see the schooling of their children as their responsibility, or because they distrust teachers and schools (Dwyer & Hecht, 1992; Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992). Parents who experience schools as uninviting or alienating may decide that teachers do not really care for them or their children.

More Title I principals (27 percent) report that parent attitudes about the school are a significant barrier to parent involvement than staff attitudes about parents (20 percent) (see Exhibit II.1). Principals of high-poverty Title I schools are more likely than principals of low-poverty Title I schools to see parent attitudes as a problem; 41 percent of high-poverty Title I schools reported that parent attitudes are a barrier to parent involvement, as opposed to 15 percent of low-poverty schools (see Exhibit II.3). In high-poverty schools, school staff are less likely to belong to the community served by the school and the social and class differences between teachers and parents tend to be greater, leading to greater perceptions of uneasiness and distrust. Like the survey data on staff attitudes, however, these findings on parent attitudes are limited by the fact that they may refer to a whole range of beliefs held by parents or perceived by schools.

School Organization and Practices

The way schools are organized often discourages family members from becoming involved. The dominant model of school organization emphasizes hierarchy as opposed to collaboration, and family-school relationships tend to reflect this model. The problems associated with school organization are generally greater in middle and high schools, where large school sizes and departmentalized staff reinforce parents' perceptions that schools are impersonal and anonymous places. In addition to the barriers associated with school structure and organization, the traditional repertoire of strategies for reaching out to parents, such as newsletters or calls home when a student is in trouble, is extremely limited. Although traditional methods of communicating with parents are still useful, schools need to expand their arsenal of strategies in order to reach all families more effectively.

School Environments That Discourage Collaboration

The traditional approach to managing schools emphasizes hierarchy and individualism. In many schools, teaching continues to be an isolating experience, where partnerships and collaboration among teachers still tend to be the exception rather than the rule. Swap (1993) argues that this hierarchical, bureaucratic approach to school organization and management governs schools' relationships with families as well. Under a bureaucratic "delegation model" of family involvement, parents accept the proposition that the job of education has been delegated to the schools (making their involvement unnecessary), and educators learn to see parent involvement as interference with their own job responsibilities. In this scenario, conversation is necessary only during crisis situations,

and, as a result, these exchanges tend to exacerbate perceptions of alienation and distrust (Swap, 1993).

Parents participating in focus group interviews suggested that warm and welcoming attitudes are the most important resource a school can offer to encourage parent involvement. These parents often highlighted the personal qualities of teachers and principals who went out of their way to help parents, make them comfortable, and communicate with them about their children. "The teachers are warm and friendly, and you can talk to the principal anytime," noted one elementary school parent. Another observed, "We're all like a big family here." These parents described a feeling of community and family that is at odds with the culture of bureaucratic efficiency common in traditional "factory model" schools. As one parent observed:

> "When we first moved here, my children were in a traditional school and the teachers looked at my husband and me as if to say 'What are you doing here?' But here, teachers' attitudes are positive and encouraging."

Structural Barriers in Middle and High Schools

The organization of many middle schools and high schools deters collaboration between school staff and families. Middle and high schools are usually much larger than elementary schools, and are organized into departments. Students have five to eight different teachers each year, and each teacher may see as many as 120 students a day. These conditions make schools much more impersonal for parents, who usually find it difficult to identify a staff member specifically charged with the well-being of their child (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Rutherford, Billig, & Kettering, 1995). In addition, middle schools and high schools are usually located farther from students' homes than are neighborhood elementary schools, making it more difficult for parents to attend events at the school.

Survey data show that family involvement tends to decrease sharply as students grow older. Middle schools draw many fewer parents to traditional school events than do elementary schools; for example, 49 percent of Title I elementary principals report that most or all of their parents attend open house or back-to-school nights, while only 8 percent of Title I middle schools report that most or all of their parents attend (see Exhibit II.7). Sixty-one percent of elementary principals report that most or all of their parents attend parent-teacher conferences, while only 22 percent of principals of middle schools that hold parent-teacher conferences report that most or all of their parents attend.

Exhibit II.7

Proportion of Parents Attending Selected Events at Title I Schools, as Reported by Principals, by Grade Levels Served

School Events and Proportion of Parents Attending	All Title I Schools[1]	Grade Levels Served[2]		
		Elementary	Middle	Elementary/Middle
Open house or back-to-school night				
Most or all	43%	49%	8%	36%
More than half	33%	31%	56%	30%
About half or fewer	24%	20%	37%	37%
Regularly scheduled schoolwide parent-teacher conferences				
Most or all	54%	61%	22%	46%
More than half	23%	22%	21%	30%
About half or fewer	23%	17%	60%	24%
Arts events such as plays or dance or musical performances				
Most or all	32%	37%	21%	20%
More than half	31%	31%	34%	32%
About half or fewer	37%	33%	45%	48%
Sports events such as Field Days				
Most or all	10%	13%	0%	7%
More than half	22%	18%	26%	39%
About half or fewer	68%	68%	75%	54%
Science fairs or other academic demonstrations				
Most or all	18%	20%	6%	17%
More than half	21%	23%	16%	11%
About half or fewer	61%	57%	78%	73%

[1] More that 94 percent of all Title I schools hold back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences, or arts events, with no significant variation by poverty concentration. More than 82 percent of Title I schools hold sports events or science fairs, with no variation by poverty concentration.

[2] Schools where the highest grade level is six or lower are defined as **Elementary** schools; schools where the highest grade level is 7 or 8, and the school serves four grade levels or fewer are defined as **Middle** schools (i.e., 5-8, 6-8, 7-8, 4-7, 5-7, 6-7); all other schools are defined as **Elementary/Middle** combinations.

Exhibit reads: **Among those schools that hold open houses or back-to-school nights, 49 percent of principals of Title I elementary schools report that most or all of their parents attend.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

Differences in parent attendance rates between middle schools and elementary schools are smaller but significant for arts events, sports events, and academic demonstrations.

Similarly, the number of parents reporting that they attended a school event or volunteered at their child's school in the last year falls off between the elementary and middle school grades, and between the middle and high school grades. For example, the number of parents reporting that they have attended a general school event in the last year declines from 83 percent of parents of students in grades 3-5 to 76 percent of parents of students in grades 6-8 to 63 percent of parents of students in grades 9-12 (see Exhibit II.8). The number of parents who volunteered at their child's school drops from 45 percent of parents of third through fifth graders to 27 percent of parents of sixth through eighth graders and 26 percent of parents of ninth through twelfth graders.

Although barriers to parent involvement increase at the middle and high school levels, school supports for parents tend to decrease. Epstein notes that "Parents [of older children] need even more self-confidence, negotiation skills, information-gathering skills, and intervention skills than parents of young children but typically get less assistance from schools" (1992, p. 1144). Survey data show that as children move up through the grade levels, however, schools tend to provide parents with less information, not more. For example, a larger proportion of elementary school parents than secondary school parents report that their child's school does a good job of letting them know (between report cards) how their child is doing, providing information about why their child is placed in a particular group or class, or providing parents with information on community services (see Exhibit II.9). A smaller proportion of secondary school parents report that their child's school provides parents with information and materials to help them support their child's learning at home. For example, 56 percent of parents of students in grades K-2 report that their child's school does a good job of providing them with workshops, materials, or advice about how to help their children learn at home, while only 45 percent of parents of students in grades 3-5, 31 percent of parents of students in grades 6-8, and 22 percent of parents of students in grades 9-12 report the same about their children's schools (see Exhibit II.9).

Exhibit II.8

Family Attendance at School Events, as Reported by Parents, by Child's Grade Level

School Event	All Children's Parents[1]	Child's Grade Level			
		K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
Attended a general school meeting, such as a back-to-school night or meeting of the PTA	75%	81%	83%	76%	63%
Went to a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference or meeting	71%	87%	85%	68%	48%
Attended a school or class event, such as a play or sports event, because of child	65%	67%	73%	64%	58%
Acted as a volunteer at the school or served on a committee	35%	47%	45%	27%	26%

[1] The tabulations presented here represent the percentage of *children* whose parents or guardians responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items.

Exhibit reads: **Eighty-one percent of public school students in grades K-2 have parents who report that they attended a general school meeting in the last year.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

Although we might expect secondary schools to adapt the information they provide to parents to suit the age level of the children they serve (for example, we might expect secondary schools to provide parents less information about child development than elementary schools), parents of students in grades 6-12 report that their child's school does a good job providing them with information less often than parents of elementary school students, even on topics particularly relevant to students in grades 6-12 (see Exhibit II.9). For example, only 41 percent of high school parents say their child's school does a good job of providing them with information on how to help their child plan for college, and only 27 percent say that their child's school does a good job of providing information about helping their child plan for work.

Exhibit II.9

Effectiveness of Communication between Families and the School, as Reported by Parents, by Child's Grade Level

Parents' Assessment of How Well Their Child's School Communicates with Them on Selected Topics	All Children's Parents[1]	Child's Grade Level			
		K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
Lets family know (between report cards) how child is doing					
Very well	57%	64%	61%	57%	49%
Just OK	30%	25%	27%	32%	34%
Not at all	13%	11%	13%	12%	16%
Helps family understand what children at child's age are like					
Very well	35%	50%	39%	31%	23%
Just OK	32%	31%	34%	32%	29%
Not at all	34%	20%	27%	37%	48%
Makes family aware of chances to volunteer at school					
Very well	56%	73%	69%	48%	37%
Just OK	28%	20%	23%	33%	33%
Not at all	17%	7%	7%	20%	30%
Provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help child learn at home					
Very well	38%	56%	45%	31%	22%
Just OK	29%	27%	32%	29%	27%
Not at all	33%	17%	23%	40%	51%
Provides information about how to help child with his/her homework					
Very well	37%	55%	45%	33%	23%
Just OK	31%	28%	33%	31%	30%
Not at all	33%	17%	22%	36%	47%

Parents' Assessment of How Well Their Child's School Communicates with Them on Selected Topics	All Children's Parents[1]	Child's Grade Level			
		K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
Provides information about why child is placed in particular groups or classes					
Very well	40%	49%	46%	37%	31%
Just OK	26%	23%	27%	27%	26%
Not at all	34%	28%	27%	36%	43%
Provides information on community services to help child or family					
Very well	33%	43%	39%	29%	24%
Just OK	33%	35%	35%	33%	31%
Not at all	33%	22%	26%	38%	44%
Provides information on how to help child plan for college					
Very well	--	--	--	--	41%
Just OK	--	--	--	--	31%
Not at all	--	--	--	--	28%
Provides information about how to help child plan for work after he/she completes his/her education					
Very well	--	--	--	--	27%
Just OK	--	--	--	--	33%
Not at all	--	--	--	--	40%

[1] The tabulations presented here represent the percentage of *children* whose parents or guardians responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items.

Exhibit reads: **Sixty-four percent of public school students in grades K-2 have parents who report that their child's school lets them know how the child is doing between report cards "very well."**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

Without a primary point of contact (a classroom teacher) to help them get involved, secondary school parents are also less likely to know about ways they can contribute in their child's school. For example, only 7 percent of parents of children in grades K-2 and 3-5 say that their child's school failed to make them aware of chances to volunteer at the school, while 20 percent of parents of students in grades 6-8 and 30 percent of parents of students in grades 9-12 said their children's schools never gave them information about chances to volunteer (see Exhibit II.9).

Some of the variation in parent participation rates can be explained by the fact that as children grow more independent, parents may believe that it is less appropriate for them to be directly involved in their children's schooling. Also, as children mature and grow more articulate, parents may believe that they can track their children's academic progress by talking with their children and monitoring grades at home, rather than relying on close contact with teachers. Some parents who participated in focus groups for this study suggested, however, that the pressures young people experience today--from drugs to gangs to teenage pregnancy--make it even more critical to stay involved as their children grow older. "When your child is younger, you feel you have to be there to protect your 'baby,' and as they get older parents tend to think 'They don't need me,'" said one high school parent. "But it's just the opposite--they need you more."

Limited Repertoire of Strategies for Increasing Family Involvement

Epstein and Dauber argue that what schools do to involve parents is crucial: "The strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage and guide parent involvement" (Epstein & Dauber, 1991, p. 61). Despite the importance of schools' efforts to support family involvement in children's learning, many schools continue to rely exclusively on traditional outreach methods that have proven effective for only a limited number of families.

As we have seen, parent attendance at traditional school events, such as open-house or back-to-school nights varies with parents' education and income levels. An exception to this general pattern is parent attendance at regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, where there is no significant difference in attendance rates among parents from households of various income levels (see Exhibit II.6). It appears that most parents, no matter what the demands on their time or their inclination to attend other kinds of events, find a way to meet with their child's teacher to discuss his or her progress and needs one-on-one. However, parents who are struggling with competing priorities at home will be less likely to find that other school activities, which promise less personalized attention from teachers, are a worthwhile investment of their time and energy. These

findings suggest that, if schools do invest in developing a repertoire of parent involvement activities that emphasize personalized attention and interaction with parents, they will be more successful in engaging parents whom they had given up as "hard to reach."

Nevertheless, many school activities that involve parents, such as bake sales, open houses, and student performances, tend to be school-dominated and peripheral to the day-to-day operations of the school (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992; Mannan & Blackwell, 1992; Swap, 1992). In a typical day of parent-teacher conferences, for example, parents arrive at fifteen minute intervals to discuss their children's progress. Although these conferences can be useful, the allotted fifteen minutes rarely permits either extended discussion of students' accomplishments and needs or effective problem-solving by parents and teachers (Swap, 1993). As Swap writes, both parents and teachers feel pressure to "smooth over problems, limit honest dialogue, inhibit future connections, [and] see themselves as separate" (Swap, 1993, p. 21). As a result, both are likely to find the encounter disappointing.

One problem underlying traditional family involvement efforts undertaken by schools is the fact that schools organize many activities and events based not on what parents say they need but on what schools believe parents need. This decision may lead parents to view some of these programs as "something done for the parents, rather than with the parents" (Mannan & Blackwell, 1992, p. 220). Parents may further perceive that they are simply part of a school's public relations program and that their input is not genuinely valued. As a result, these parents may eventually stop attending school events altogether (Mannan & Blackwell, 1992). A second problem is the fact that many school-based activities are designed with traditional two-parent, one-earner family structures in mind. The increase of single-parent families and families where both parents work requires that schools develop opportunities for parents to participate in their children's education that accommodate parents' work schedules and other responsibilities. If schools are to succeed in developing strong school-family partnerships, they must expand their repertoire of activities to reach all families and to engage family members in activities that are central to the education of their children and the life of the school.

Family-School Differences

Although all families face barriers to involvement, including those described in the sections above, it is often the case that families from different linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds have an especially hard time connecting with schools. Schools must make a concerted effort to reach these families and engage them in meaningful partnerships.

Parents' Lack of Formal Education

Parents who have had negative experiences themselves as students may avoid contact with their children's schools and teachers to avoid reviving bad memories or experiencing again similar unpleasant encounters (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Liontos, 1991). Parents who did not graduate from high school or finish college, or parents who have weak literacy skills, may also doubt their own ability to help their children with homework or see themselves as intellectually inferior to teachers and administrators, avoiding contact as a result. Some parents with little education may not be able to read or understand the print materials sent home to families. To be sure, not all such parents respond this way; some comments by parents in focus group interviews suggested that parents who did not finish high school themselves may be willing to work harder to turn the tide for their own children. Even so, many parents perceive themselves as less knowledgeable than teachers and avoid what they think will be embarrassing exchanges (Liontos, 1991). As one parent serving as president of a Title I parent advisory council noted, "Some parents are academically insecure; they do not want to be embarrassed."

Forty-five percent of Title I principals report that parents' lack of education is a barrier to parent involvement. Lack of parent education was cited as a barrier much more frequently by principals of high-poverty schools than by principals of schools with lower concentrations of poverty; 70 percent of schools with poverty levels of 75 percent or more report that lack of parent education is a significant barrier, as opposed to 42 percent of schools with 35-49 percent poverty and 14 percent of schools with 0-34 percent poverty (see Exhibit II.3).

Parent survey data show that differences in participation at school events are even more pronounced among parents of different educational levels than they are among parents of different income levels or parents of children at different grade levels (see Exhibits II.10, II.6, and II.8). Parents' participation rates fall off especially sharply for children whose mothers did not complete high school, suggesting that parents who did not finish school themselves are reluctant to spend time in a setting that reminds them of this. For example, 56 percent of parents in households where the mother did not complete high school report that they have attended a general school meeting in the last school year, as opposed to 74 percent of parents where the mother is a high school graduate with no further training. Parents in households where the mother is a college graduate are more likely than parents in households where the mother is a high school graduate to attend some types of school events, with 88 percent of parents in households where the mother is a college graduate reporting that they attended a general school meeting. The differences in levels of involvement are even more pronounced for activities that require parents to spend significant amounts of time at the school;

Exhibit II.10

Family Attendance at School Events, as Reported by Parents, by Mother's Educational Level

School Event	All Children's Parents[1]	Mother's Educational Level[2]			
		Less Than High School	High School Graduate	Some Vocational/ Technical Training	College Graduate
Attended a general school meeting, such as a back-to-school night or meeting of the PTA	75%	56%	74%	79%	88%
Went to a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference or meeting	71%	63%	69%	74%	77%
Attended a school or class event, such as a play or sports event, because of child	65%	43%	62%	70%	77%
Acted as a volunteer at the school or served on a committee	36%	16%	32%	40%	53%

[1] The tabulations presented here represent the percentage of *children* whose parents or guardians responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items.

[2] The analysis here and in Exhibits II.11 and II.12 was done using the *mother's* highest level of education (the term "mother" includes birth mother, adoptive mother, stepmother, foster mother, and other female guardians). The NHES parent survey, however, asked respondents to describe the participation of *all adults* in the sampled child's school activities. The 6 percent of households that had no mother were not included in the cross-tabulations that generated these findings. In the remaining 94 percent of cases, the mother's educational level represents the education of one of the adults whose activities are described in the survey.

Exhibit reads: **Fifty-six percent of K-12 public school students whose mothers have less than a high school education have parents who report that they attended a general school meeting in the last year.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

for example, 53 percent of parents in households where the mother is a college graduate report that they acted as volunteers or served on the school committee, as opposed to 32 percent of parents in households where the mother is only a high school graduate and only 16 percent of parents in households where the mother did not complete high school. Similarly, in households where the mother is less educated, parents were less likely to participate in a large number of activities over the course of a school year than their better-educated counterparts (see Exhibit II.11).

Exhibit II.11

Frequency of Family Participation in School Events, as Reported by Parents, by Mother's Educational Level

Number of Events Attended by Family Members in the Last Year	All Children's Parents[1]	Mother's Educational Level[2]			
		Less Than High School	High School Graduate	Some Vocational /Technical Training	College Graduate
0	8%	20%	9%	6%	2%
1-4	52%	61%	55%	50%	42%
5-9	20%	13%	19%	21%	25%
10+	20%	6%	17%	23%	30%

[1] The tabulations presented here represent the percentage of *children* whose parents or guardians responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items.

[2] See note to Exhibit II.10.

Exhibit reads: **Twenty percent of K-12 public school students whose mothers have less than a high school education have parents who reported that they attended no meetings or other school events in the last year.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

Parents with more education also tend to be more confident about their ability to help their children at home. Although large numbers of parents across all education levels reported that they were confident about their ability to help their children in grades 6-12 with their homework, their

responses varied according to their level of education. For example, the percentage of parents in households where the mother is a college graduate who say they are confident about helping their children with their English homework is 20 percentage points higher than the percentage of parents in households where the mother did not finish high school (see Exhibit II.12).

Exhibit II.12

Parents' Confidence about Their Ability to Help Their Children in Grades 6-12 with Their Homework, as Reported by Parents, by Mother's Educational Level

Subject	All Children's Parents[2]	Mother's Educational Level[2]			
		Less Than High School	High School Graduate	Some Vocational/ Technical Training	College Graduate
Math	80%	74%	78%	81%	85%
English composition, literature, reading	93%	78%	93%	96%	98%
Science	87%	78%	86%	88%	94%

[1] This question was only asked of parents of students in grades 6-12; therefore, the table only reflects the reports of parents of secondary school students. The tabulations presented here represent the percentage of *children* whose parents or guardians responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items.

[2] See note to Exhibit II.10.

Exhibit reads: **Seventy-four percent of students in grades 6-12 whose mothers have less than a high school education have parents who report that they feel confident about their ability to help their children with their homework in math.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

Language Differences

The problems that arise when schools and families do not speak the same language are obvious. Language gaps impede the exchange of information between schools and families, make teachers and parents less comfortable in dealing with each other, and make parents less confident

about their ability to help their children with their school work. As one Latino parent at an inner-city elementary school summed it up: "Some parents are shy because they don't know English."

NHES data show that parents who do not speak English at home participate less often in certain kinds of school-based activities. For example, while 67 percent of parents who speak English at home report that they have attended a school or class event in the last year, only 43 percent of non-English-speaking parents have.[7] Thirty-seven percent of parents who speak English at home report that they have volunteered at their child's school, while only 15 percent of non-English-speaking parents report that they have (see Exhibit II.13). Similarly, parents who do not speak English at home are less likely to participate frequently in school events; for example, only 3 percent of parents who do not speak English at home report that they have attended meetings or participated in school activities ten times or more in the last year, as opposed to 21 percent of English-speaking parents (see Exhibit II.14). Conversely, non-English-speaking parents were more likely not to attend any events at all (see Exhibit II.14). Although parents who do not speak English at home participate less often in school events than parents who do speak English at home, it is impossible to know whether this difference is due to a language barrier or to barriers raised by differences in culture, as described below.

Despite the challenges faced by schools serving large numbers of children with parents whose English skills are limited, few Title I schools or parents seem to see language differences as a significant barrier to parent involvement. Relatively few Title I principals (14 percent) identify language differences between parents and school staff as a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement (see Exhibit II.1), although 55 percent of Title I principals report that their schools have parents with limited English skills. A larger percentage of high-poverty schools, which tend to enroll larger numbers of students with limited English skills, identify language differences as a significant barrier (25 percent) than low-poverty schools (5 percent); nevertheless, the percentage of high-poverty schools that identify language differences as a barrier is low compared to other concerns (see Exhibit II.2).

---

[7] Readers should interpret this finding and those that follow with caution. NHES parent surveys were conducted over the telephone in English or Spanish only; respondents who did not speak either of those two languages were not included in the sample. In addition, respondents who reported that they speak Spanish or some language other than English most at home may still be proficient in English, but prefer to speak another language at home.

Exhibit II.13

Family Attendance at School Events, as Reported by Parents, by Language Respondent Speaks Most at Home

School Event	All Children's Parents[1]	Language Respondent Speaks Most At Home[2]	
		English or English and Spanish Equally	Spanish or Another Language
Attended a general school meeting, such as a back-to-school night or meeting of the PTA	75%	76%	67%
Went to a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference or meeting	71%	71%	68%
Attended a school or class event, such as a play or sports event, because of child	65%	67%	43%
Acted as a volunteer at the school or served on a committee	36%	37%	15%

[1] The tabulations presented here represent the percentage of *children* whose parents or guardians responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items.

[2] Readers should interpret this table and those that follow with caution. NHES parent surveys were conducted over the telephone in English or Spanish only; respondents who did not speak either of those two languages were not included in the sample. In addition, respondents who reported that they speak Spanish or some language other than English most at home may still be proficient in English, but prefer to speak another language at home.

Exhibit reads: **Seventy-six percent of K-12 public school students whose parents speak English or English and Spanish equally at home have parents who report that they attended a general school meeting in the last year.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

Parents themselves do not appear to see language differences as a major barrier to their participation; for example, according to NHES data, 94 percent of parents who speak some language other than English at home say that their child's school is "understanding of parents who don't speak English," and 96 percent of parents who speak another language at home report that their child's school "makes it easy to be involved." Parents who speak some language other than English at home

were also *more* likely to say that their child's school communicates with them "very well" on selected topics (see Exhibit II.15).

Exhibit II.14

Frequency of Family Participation in School Events, as Reported by Parents, by Language Respondent Speaks Most at Home

Number of Events Attended by Family Members in the Last Year	All Children's Parents[1]	Language Respondent Speaks Most at Home[2]	
		English or English and Spanish Equally	Spanish or Another Language
0	8%	8%	15%
1-4	52%	50%	70%
5-9	20%	21%	12%
10+	20%	21%	3%

[1] The tabulations presented here represent the percentage of *children* whose parents or guardians responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items.

[2] See note to Exhibit II.13.

Exhibit reads: **Eight percent of K-12 public school students whose parents speak English or English and Spanish equally at home have a parent who reports that family members attended no meetings or other school events in the last year.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

It is unclear why Title I school principals and non-English-speaking parents tend not to see language differences as a significant barrier to parent involvement in schools. Perhaps parents are satisfied with the steps that schools have taken to address their needs, such as providing interpreters for school meetings and translations of materials sent home to parents (these strategies for assisting parents who do not speak English are described more fully in the chapters following this one). Similarly, Title I principals may believe that they have taken adequate steps to accommodate the needs of parents with limited English proficiency and see other barriers to parent involvement as far more intractable.

Exhibit II.15

Effectiveness of Communication between Families and the School, as Reported by Parents, by Language Respondent Speaks at Home

Communication on Selected Topics	All Children's Parents[1]	Language Respondent Speaks Most at Home[2]	
		English or English and Spanish Equally	Spanish or Another Language
Lets family know (between report cards) how child is doing "very well"	57%	57%	63%
Helps family understand what children at child's age are like "very well"	35%	33%	54%
Makes family aware of chances to volunteer at school "very well"	56%	56%	53%
Provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help child learn at home "very well"	38%	36%	55%
Provides information about how to help child with his/her homework "very well"	37%	36%	55%
Provides information about why child is placed in particular groups or classes "very well"	40%	39%	51%
Provides information on community services to help child or family "very well"	33%	32%	47%

[1] The tabulations presented here represent the percentage of *children* whose parents or guardians responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have presented these tabulations as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items.

[2] See note to Exhibit II.13.

Exhibit reads: **Fifty-seven percent of K-12 public school students whose parents speak English or English and Spanish equally at home have parents who report that their child's school lets the family know how their child is doing in school "very well."**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey, Spring 1996.

Cultural and Class Differences

Twenty-nine percent of all Title I schools report that cultural differences between parents and staff were a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement. Principals of high-poverty schools are far more likely to identify these differences as a barrier to parent involvement than principals of low-poverty schools; 44 percent of Title I schools with poverty rates of 75 percent or more report that cultural differences are a barrier to parent involvement, while only 9 percent of principals of Title I schools with poverty rates of 0-34 percent report the same (see Exhibit II.3).

The problems associated with cultural differences are subtle. Although home and school should play complementary, mutually reinforcing roles in educating children, major cultural and class differences often exist between these two institutions, creating discontinuities that limit children's academic achievement and social growth (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993). These culturally based differences include: communication styles; expectations for teachers, parents, and children; and views on the best ways to raise and educate children (McCollum & Russo, 1993).

One trend that poses a formidable barrier to school-family relationships is that, in some inner-city areas, a significant number of teachers do not live in the communities where they teach. Parents at one urban high school said it became apparent how removed teachers were from the neighborhoods where their students live when they started recruiting teachers to join them in Community Walks--an event designed to garner support from parents throughout the community by going door to door to welcome their participation. "Ninety percent of the teachers don't live in the neighborhood, don't feel connected to the neighborhood, and were afraid of the neighborhood," said one parent. "We had to educate them to the community [so they would know] what children here may be going through," echoed another parent.

Although schools possess the primary responsibility for ensuring that children can reconcile the experiences of home and school, most family involvement efforts have embodied a "deficit" or "transmission of school practice" model (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992; Liontos, 1992; Swap, 1992). This model, which assumes that the values and beliefs of schools should be transmitted passively to parents, has shown some success for families whose culture is reflected in the school, but has proven inadequate in reaching families of diverse ethnic and racial groups whose cultural practices differ from those of the school. An "empowerment" model of parent involvement turns diversity into a community asset by recognizing and incorporating the values and practices of families' home cultures into the life of the school. An empowerment model views parents as equal contributors to the education of their children and capitalizes on the strengths that families bring to schools (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992; Liontos, 1992). For example,

empowered parents often serve as members of school restructuring committees and governance teams, with considerable decision-making power over the school curriculum, budget, personnel, and instructional organization (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992).

Highly Mobile Families

For schools serving migrant, homeless, or other highly mobile students, developing effective partnerships with parents can be challenging. Typically, parents who are migrant farm workers, who are homeless, or who move frequently tend not to stay long enough in school districts to become involved in school planning activities or join school committees. Moreover, their mobility makes developing relationships with teachers or other school staff difficult. Similarly, schools where large proportions of the student body turn over every year do not benefit from established relationships with parents that develop as children (and their siblings) move up through the grades; instead, staff must spend considerable energy trying to connect with large numbers of new parents each school year, throughout the year. Although some schools and districts have special programs in place to address the needs of migrant, homeless, and other mobile families, the barriers to family involvement as they relate to mobile families have not been studied formally. Anecdotal information obtained from parent focus groups suggests, however, that family mobility is a special circumstance that few family involvement strategies address.

Age- and Gender-Related Barriers

Parents participating in focus groups convened for this study noted that both young and old parents may face distinct barriers that make them uncomfortable about approaching schools. Young parents--some of whom are still in school themselves--may lack the confidence in their abilities and knowledge to approach teachers and administrators about issues involving their children. On the other hand, some participants pointed out that older parents--particularly grandparents who are raising their grandchildren--may have a harder time physically making it to school events. They may also feel more intimidated and alienated from teachers and schools geared toward working with younger parents. Schools need to recognize that some children are being raised by grandparents who may be ill or reluctant to go out after dark and need to take these factors into consideration, stressed one parent of a high school student.

To address these concerns, some schools have begun offering grandparent support groups, parenting classes aimed at grandparents, and other special activities. For younger parents, some

schools offer school-based child care centers and child-development classes to teach parenting skills (Cohen, 1993).

Although fathers may take an active role in supporting their children's learning at home, in most schools few fathers attend school-related events, leaving it to mothers or other female family members to oversee their child's activities in school. Parents participating in focus groups offered several explanations for why fathers are less involved. Several mothers suggested that men still tend to view child-rearing as the mother's domain; one father who is active in his child's education echoed that observation, "I think men don't come out because they are old-fashioned and believe the women should do it, but the women didn't make that child by themselves. I wanted to do for my son what wasn't done for me. I tell my son and anybody else's child, 'I'm here to help you get all you can out of this and to have some self-worth about yourself.'"

Other parents suggested that many men feel intimidated at events dominated by women. "They perceive it to be for women," said one mother at a rural elementary school. "My husband went to one meeting. When he came home, he said there were only women there, and I said 'Well, you're the only dad Nikki has.'" Still others suggested that men's work schedules are a more formidable barrier to greater involvement. One particularly active father noted, for example, that his flexible work hours are the primary reason he is able to spend so much time at the school.

Several parents argued that schools need to direct special attention to helping fathers overcome these barriers in formal and informal ways. One father noted that his child's school offers workshops and classes exclusively for men; another father noted, "We try to get the males at our school to talk to other men."

Lack of External Support for Family-School Partnerships

Schools and families do not operate in a vacuum. Although schools can enable families to become involved in their children's education regardless of external circumstances, family-school partnerships have a greater chance of succeeding when they receive support from state and district policymakers, community organizations, and employers. Unfortunately, these groups may sometimes do more to hinder partnerships than to help them.

Lack of Sufficient Support From District and State Policymakers

Although Title I and other state and local programs require that schools involve parents in meaningful ways in the education of their children, many parents, teachers, and other school staff do not know about these program requirements or about the resources that Title I and other programs provide to support parent involvement. Representatives of the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents report that parents and school staff at Title I meetings and conferences across the country consistently say that they are not familiar with the parent involvement provisions of Title I, and that they do not know about the resources that Title I or other programs provide to support parent involvement. In addition, Coalition representatives report that most parents they meet do not know that schools are required to consult parents in developing parent involvement policies, or that schools are required to provide parents with the training and information they need to be involved effectively in their children's education.

At the state and district policy levels, Title I coordinators must follow through on their responsibility to ensure that parents are involved in developing parent involvement policies at all levels. They should monitor district implementation of Title I policies and services and ensure that schools have current information about family involvement priorities. In doing so, state and district leaders send signals to district and school leaders that family involvement is important. Although mandating family involvement is no guarantee that parents will become involved in their child's education, a clearly defined and articulated policy on family involvement can encourage the development of school programs and send a powerful message to schools and families regarding the expectations and values of the community (Burns & McClure, 1993).

In addition to setting strong, clear policies, states and districts need to invest money in professional development, technical assistance, and other resources that schools need to initiate and sustain partnerships with parents. As noted in Chapter V of this report, roughly half of Title I schools serving students in grades K-8 report that they receive specific kinds of technical assistance or other resources to support their parent involvement activities (see Exhibit V.8 in Chapter V). For example, 60 percent of Title I principals report that they receive technical assistance for parent programs from their districts, 51 percent report that they receive support in the form of staff for parent programs, and 44 percent receive special funding. Fewer schools report that they receive assistance from their states, in part because roughly a third of all schools report that they do not know if their state provides them with help (see Exhibit IV.1 in Chapter IV). When states and districts do provide these kinds of resources, schools are more likely to succeed in engaging parents and other family members in support of their children's education.

Weak Partnerships with Community Institutions

Sixty percent of single parents and low-income adults report that parents need support from their local communities, beyond their immediate families, to raise their children (Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, in U.S. Department of Education, 1994). The experience of individual schools and communities shows that community groups, religious organizations, and concerned citizens can help to make communities safe, link social services with educational programs, and train parents to become effective advocates for their children (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Community agencies can support parent involvement by helping parents meet day-to-day survival needs--for example, adequate housing for their families, child care, and health care--and by encouraging parents to get involved in their children's learning and providing them with information and training about how to make this contribution. Parents in some neighborhoods, however, lack easy access to social services and health care. Some agencies are overly bureaucratic, intimidating, or unresponsive to family needs, and other service providers are underfunded, understaffed, or hindered from serving all who come through their doors by strict program eligibility requirements. In these neighborhoods, an important source of support for family involvement in the education of their children is missing.

Community institutions such as libraries and recreation centers can also provide important out-of-school learning opportunities for children and their parents. Throughout the school year and especially during the summer months, many libraries offer reading programs and other educational activities, and recreation centers offer programs for both children and their parents. Some community organizations recruit and train citizens to volunteer in schools or serve as mentors. However, some neighborhoods, especially low-income neighborhoods, lack easy access to libraries, museums, and recreation facilities such as these.

Community organizations can also work with schools and families to establish a network of services for children and families. Comprehensive service centers--some at school sites--can meet the multiple needs of families and children more efficiently and strengthen referral and coordination with services elsewhere in the community.

Lack of Family-Friendly Employer Policies

Employers represent the final piece of the puzzle. As families struggle to meet their responsibility as providers and to stay involved in their children's learning, many employers compound the obstacles parents face by insisting that they remain on the job during the traditional

school day (Mannan & Blackwell, 1992). In focus groups, parents cited work schedules as a major barrier to parents' involvement in their children's schools. Parents noted, "Employers are not flexible enough," and, "Normally, the hinderance is work." Realizing that strong schools are crucial to a strong work force, many model employers do create work environments that are responsive to the needs of families with children (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Employers can support their employees' participation in their children's learning by supporting flexible work schedules, part-time employment, or job-sharing options that allow parents to become more involved in their children's learning. In addition to creating flexible leave policies, employers can also provide education and training for working parents, help improve child care options, and work in partnership with schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). When employers do not provide these opportunities, however, the barriers facing working families are that much greater.

Conclusion

Survey data from both the NHES and SFSP suggest that many of the barriers described in this chapter have significant, measurable effects on parent involvement in schools. Data from both surveys show that lower-income parents and parents with less education participate less often in school-based parent involvement activities than do higher-income, better-educated parents. In addition, parents of older children participate less often than parents of younger children. These differences in participation rates can be attributed to many of the barriers described in this chapter. For example, low-income parents are more likely to lack transportation and other resources that would allow them to attend school events and are more likely to find that meeting basic survival needs leaves little time or energy left over for participating at school. Parents with less education are more likely to have had previous negative experiences at school or to feel hesitant about their ability to contribute to their children's education. Parents of older children are more likely to encounter the structural barriers and bureaucratic culture in schools that discourage parent participation.

Despite the very real influence of these barriers on parent involvement, however, survey data indicate that a very large percentage of parents are involved in some way. Seventy-six percent of Title I principals report that half or more of their parents attend open house or back-to-school night, and 77 percent report that half or more attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences (see Exhibit II.5). What's more, NHES survey data suggest that parents feel generally positive about schools' efforts to work with them--almost all parents (91 percent) report that they agree with the statement that their child's school "makes it easy to be involved," with no significant differences among parents of different incomes or educational levels. In addition, large numbers of parents say that they are somewhat or very confident about their ability to help their children with their

homework (80 to 93 percent, depending on the subject) (see Exhibit II.12), indicating that parents are also generally positive about their ability to support their children's learning at home.

NHES and SFSP data suggest that most parents do make an effort to support their children's education and approach the task with a fair amount of good will. In addition, most parents have taken the obvious first steps--such as attending parent-teacher conferences--toward getting involved. However, research on schools and families that have developed effective partnerships in support of children's learning suggests that parents and schools must go far beyond these initial steps. Effective partnerships require regular, open communication between parents and teachers, information and training for parents to help their children learn at home, and opportunities and support for parents to become involved in the life of the school. Both school and parent survey data suggest that many schools and parents do not enjoy this level of partnership.

Parents appear to want more guidance and support from schools as they take the next steps toward helping their children learn at home; for example, only about a third of parents report that their child's school does a good job of providing information about child development, how to help their child learn at home, or how to help with homework (see Exhibit II.9). In addition, many schools appear to do a poor job of providing parents with the information they need to participate effectively in making educational decisions for their children. For example, 45 percent of Title I schools that group students by ability report that they do not always inform parents about their child's ability group placement (see Exhibit V.2 in Chapter V). Similarly, only 40 percent of parents report that their child's school does a good job of providing information about why their child is placed in certain groups or classes (see Exhibit II.9). These findings suggest that many schools do not yet have the communication processes and other supports in place to engage parents fully in the education of their children.

Researchers argue that schools, under the leadership of principals, possess the primary responsibility for initiating family-school partnerships; when they do take steps to initiate these partnerships, parents respond (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 1991). Some survey data suggest that, like parents, schools appear to be relatively upbeat about the task before them. Fewer than 20 percent of Title I schools report that the barriers to parent involvement they face are serious, with the single exception of lack of time on the part of parents, which is a barrier to a great extent for 48 percent of Title I schools (see Exhibit II.1). In addition, the most common barriers to parent involvement reported by Title I schools are lack of time and lack of information and training for parents and teachers, rather than cultural differences, language differences, or parent and staff attitudes. These findings should be heartening. With adequate time, the resources to help parents get to school, and information and training for both parents and teachers, strong bridges between school

and home can be built. Although time and other resources are in extremely short supply at most schools, these shortages are in some ways easier to address than entrenched attitudes or large cultural gaps between parents and teachers. If schools have the support they need, it can be done.

Schools that have developed successful partnerships with parents view student achievement as a shared responsibility, and all stakeholders--including parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders--play important roles in supporting children's learning. Not surprisingly, SFSP data reflect a natural tendency among schools to point the finger elsewhere. Many more Title I principals, for example, see lack of time on the part of parents as a significant barrier than lack of time on the part of staff, despite the fact that the time pressures on most teachers are high. Similarly, Title I principals are more likely to report that parent attitudes about the school are a problem than that staff attitudes about parents are a problem. If schools are to engage parents in working for their children's achievement in school, however, they must be willing to assume responsibility for seeing that the partnerships work. Hundreds of schools across the country have demonstrated that it can be done. We turn to a closer look at some of these schools in the next chapter of this report.

III. SUCCESSFUL LOCAL APPROACHES TO PROMOTING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Many Title I schools and districts across the country demonstrate the capacity of families, schools, and communities, working together, to influence children's learning in positive ways. This chapter presents strategies that schools have used to move beyond the common barriers to family involvement in their children's learning. In it we draw extensively on the experiences of 20 schools and districts that have been successful in developing meaningful school-family partnerships.

Parents' Views of Successful School-Family Partnerships

For some time researchers and practitioners have understood how parents contribute to their children's success in school--by, for example, providing children with out-of-school learning opportunities, monitoring homework and television watching, and promoting the principle that education is important. Schools see partnerships with families as successful when school-family partnerships support these forms of parent contributions. But what do successful school-family partnerships look like through the eyes of parents? Parents who participated in focus group interviews for this study emphasized, again and again, the affective qualities of schools that work well with parents. Good schools, they said, are those where parents feel welcomed, respected, and valued. In these schools, teachers are accessible, care about their children, and go the extra mile to assist parents and students. Again and again, parents commented that teachers' warmth, openness, and availability were key factors that made them want to be involved. One parent echoed the sentiments of many others when she observed:

> "When you are somewhere you like to be, you come back. I like to be here any day. I feel more welcome here than when [my child went to another school]. It is warm here. At [the other school] it was always so distant--it was different interacting with them."

Several parents in schools with successful family involvement approaches noted appreciatively that teachers and other school staff were often willing to go beyond the strict limits of their job descriptions to reach out to parents. Parents had high praise for teachers who were willing to allow visits to their classrooms at any time, principals who were always available to talk with parents, teachers who called parents over the summer and in the evenings, and teachers who gave out their home phone numbers. In their advice to other schools, parents argued that this emphasis on nurturing relationships is crucial. One parent noted, "Personal contact is most important. Get to know the

parents, make them feel as if they belong." Another observed, "There has to be communication with parents. Make them feel welcome, be friendly, establish a relationship." For parents, it appears that this investment in building relationships is crucial.

What We Know about Developing School-Family Partnerships

Creating a personalized environment where parents feel welcome and valued requires that schools work to break down many of the barriers to effective partnerships described in the previous chapter--barriers related to time, school structure, and lack of training. All of these barriers work in various ways to prevent teachers and parents from developing the relationships that need to underlie their work collaborations in support of students' learning.

A growing body of research and writing on parent involvement programs has begun to document practices that have proven successful in fostering effective school-family partnerships and to build analytic frameworks to catalogue these practices in a way that is useful to others. For example, research conducted by Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning has contributed to the development of a framework that divides various parent involvement activities into six types: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision-making, and (6) collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995). The framework is designed to aid researchers and practitioners in identifying specific strategies for fostering each of these kinds of parent involvement. Similarly, Susan Swap (1993) sets out a partnership model for parent involvement efforts and describes key strategies for supporting the partnership: two-way communication between school and home, strategies for enhancing children's learning at school and at home, providing mutual support for parents and teachers, and joint decision-making processes.

Other researchers and writers have documented the features of effective programs, contributing to a growing body of knowledge about what works. For example, Fruchter, Galleta, & White (1992) review a range of programs that can support parent involvement in their children's learning: programs for preschool children, programs directly targeted at involving parents at home and at school, school improvement programs, and governance reforms. The book *Innovations in Parent and Family Involvement* (Rioux & Berla, 1995) profiles 34 school and district level programs. In its own publications, the U.S. Department of Education has also contributed to the knowledge base on parent involvement. *Strong Families, Strong Schools* (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) outlines practices at home that influence children's learning, ways that schools can reach out more effectively to parents, ways that communities can connect families and schools, and family-friendly

business practices. *Reaching All Families*, a document sent to all public schools nationwide in fall 1996 and winter 1997, presents specific steps that schools can take to involve parents regarding: introducing school policies and programs, personal contacts, ongoing communications, special practices and programs, such as parent resource centers or parent workshops, and reaching special groups of parents, such as fathers.

Building on this body of research and writing about effective parent involvement programs, this chapter presents strategies that individual schools and districts have employed to overcome barriers to parent involvement and to help build productive school-family partnerships. The schools and district programs described in this chapter were selected based on a review of the literature on parent involvement and on the recommendations of the researchers, practitioners, and parent representatives who served as consultants to this study. We sought out schools that had not, for the most part, been featured in other studies. Most of the sites selected for inclusion in this report demonstrate a wide variety of parent involvement strategies and present strong evidence of success in increasing the numbers of parents participating in activities and some evidence of improving student performance.

The programs described here illustrate some of the strategies that others may want to consider when designing comprehensive parent involvement programs. Because families, schools, and communities vary, however, a strategy that works in one setting may not work in another. There is no one best model that can be easily transplanted from one setting to another; instead, stakeholders must be sensitive to the conditions of their communities in order to select approaches that meet local needs.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

In order to build strong partnerships, families and school staff members need time to get to know one another, learn from one another, and plan how they will work together to increase student learning. Almost all schools and districts that have been successful in developing strong school-family partnerships have found ways to make time for parents and teachers to work together and to support their partnerships with other resources.

Finding Time for Teachers

Strategies for helping teachers make time to develop school-family partnerships include: (1) assigning parent coordinators or home-school liaisons to help teachers maintain contact with parents through home visits or by covering classes for teachers so they can meet with parents; (2) providing time during the school day for teachers to meet with parents or visit them at their homes; (3) providing stipends or compensatory time off for teachers to meet with parents after school hours; and (4) freeing up teachers from routine chores, such as lunchroom supervision, in order to meet with students' family members. Home-school liaisons can also handle many of the logistical tasks associated with fostering school-family partnerships, such as contacting all families by telephone at the beginning of the school year and encouraging parent activities at home and at school. In this way liaisons free teachers to concentrate on building relationships. In fact, focus group interviews suggest that having a parent fill the role of liaison can help parents form a strong network of support to stay involved in school activities and decisions.

In addition to helping teachers make the most efficient use of their limited time, some schools have also found ways to buy more time for teachers or to allow teachers to use the time they have more flexibly. Some schools use Title I resources strategically to help buy time for teachers; other schools have developed "flexible scheduling" teacher contracts that allow teachers more time to interact with parents outside of the traditional school day. The schools reviewed for this study have adopted the following strategies for freeing up teachers to work with parents:

- Atenville Elementary in Harts, West Virginia, gives teachers release time to conduct home visits; classes are usually covered by the principal or another teacher. The school uses Title I funds to support a part-time parent coordinator to organize the "phone tree" program, which helps maintain home-school communications. The coordinator also organizes parent volunteers to help make home visits. Parent volunteers staff lunch and recreational periods to give teachers a daily in-school planning period that can be used to meet with parents.

- Ferguson Elementary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, uses Title I funds to provide stipends for teachers who conduct parent workshops in the evening and on weekends. Title I funds also support the parent involvement coordinator and school-community coordinator. These coordinators operate a parent network that helps teachers communicate information to students and parents.

- The Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School in Kansas City, Missouri, uses Title I resources to hire a full-time parent-community liaison. The liaison keeps teachers informed about family needs and helps teachers spread information on school-related issues to all parents. The parent-community liaison leads an orientation for parents on state, district, and school policies, and helps

organize all school-family events, allowing teachers and principals to spend more time meeting with parents to discuss student learning and less time making logistical and administrative arrangements.

Other Resources to Support Schools' Outreach to Families

In addition to using resources to free up time for teachers, schools can also deploy their resources strategically to help teachers and other staff overcome the logistical constraints that often hinder their work with families. Some schools are using technology to support school-home communication; in addition to providing easier access to telephones for teachers, they are using voice mail, "information hotlines," and other technology to make communication more efficient.

- At the Carter Lawrence Middle School in Nashville, Tennessee, the telephone provides daily two-way automated communication between teachers and parents. Parents can dial a school number that provides a recorded message informing them of classroom and school activities. In addition, parents can receive targeted electronic messages about their own children's progress and can leave messages detailing their reactions and concerns.

- In Maine's School Administration District #3, several communication strategies address barriers posed by the long distances between schools and homes in this rural area. Several grants from the local phone company, NYNEX, and the state's Public Utilities Commission have supported the wiring of schools for computers and telephone hub sites to allow parents to communicate with schools via computer. Parents can use terminals at nearby schools or local town halls to communicate with the schools their children attend, which are often many miles away.

- Each Atenville Elementary School teacher has a telephone in his or her classroom to enable home-school communication throughout the school day.

- At Ferguson Elementary School, Title I funds pay for the telephone phone line used by the parent network.

Helping Parents Overcome Time and Resource Constraints

Schools can be sensitive to time pressures facing parents by scheduling meetings at night (in neighborhoods where parents feel safe traveling to the school at night), before shifts, or on weekend mornings to accommodate the schedules of working parents. Schools can also help parents by: (1) providing early notices of meetings and activities so parents have time to adjust their schedules; (2) establishing homework hotlines or voice mail systems so parents can stay in touch with their

children's schoolwork without leaving their homes (Moles, 1996); (3) offering the same event more than once; and (4) providing information to parents who could not attend the meeting to help keep them informed.

Schools can address parents' resource constraints by: (1) providing parents with transportation and child care services so that they can attend school events; (2) holding school-initiated events outside of the school building (e.g., at community or public housing centers); and (3) conducting home visits to parents who live far from school. In focus group interviews, parents noted that these supports send a strong message that the school is serious about getting them involved.

SFSP data indicate that home visits are relatively common among Title I schools, with 67 percent of schools reporting that they make such visits, although they only reach small numbers of parents (an average of 17 percent of families at each school) (see Exhibit V.7 in Chapter V). The following schools have adopted home visits and other strategies to help parents overcome the time and commuting barriers (e.g., distance from school, lack of transportation) that deter many parents from interacting directly with schools:

- Buhrer Elementary in Cleveland, Ohio, holds parent-teacher conferences at the local library and YMCA, which are closer to some parents' homes, and the principal contacts parents' employers if necessary to request time off so parents can meet with teachers. The school also holds Block Parent Meetings for those families who cannot attend school events because they live on the outskirts of the community and lack transportation. Block meetings address parent concerns and offer an opportunity to share school-related information. Meetings take place every two or three months in a parent's home or a nearby library.

- Several schools offer transportation and child care services and hold events in the evenings and on weekends to enable parents to attend parent workshops and other school-related events. For example, at Rodney B. Cox Elementary in Dade City, Florida, the parent involvement coordinator organizes car pools for parents to attend school events. The districtwide Parent Resource Center in Stockton, California, hired a school bus driver to take parents to the center and provides babysitters to care for young children. To accommodate parents' needs, Ferguson Elementary offers workshops and classes on the weekends and evening and also provides child care services.

- School staff at Cane Run Elementary in Louisville, Kentucky, report that many parents find it difficult to come into the school building to volunteer, so Cane Run's Family Resource Center staff coordinates volunteer activities that parents can carry out from home, such as preparing mailings, making telephone calls, and writing newsletters.

Addressing Safety Concerns

To address the fact that many parents, especially those in high-poverty schools, are concerned about traveling to and from their child's school at night, schools and communities can take steps to assure that family members feel safe. For example, communities can set up neighborhood watches to combat crime, and schools can hold events in churches or community centers located near parents' homes.

Parents themselves play an important role in ensuring that the school is perceived as a safe place for other parents to gather. For example, when asked if safety issues deter parents from coming to the school, parents at one urban high school responded that the best example they can set for other parents is not to stay away. "There is no safe place anymore; we make it safe with our presence," said one parent. "We keep an eye out on the children, and we have security patrols that drive around," noted a parent at another inner-city school. "But safety is another reason why parents should be involved."

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

While almost all parents want to help their children learn, most want guidance from their child's school on what to do (Epstein, 1992). Without the information and skills to communicate with each other, misperceptions and distrust can flourish between parents and school personnel. Closing the information gap is a priority at each of the 20 schools highlighted in this report. Through workshops and a variety of outreach activities such as informative newsletters, handbooks, and home visits, parents and school staff across these 20 programs are learning how to trust each other and work together to help children succeed in school. Their approaches include helping parents support learning at home, preparing parents to participate in school decision-making, and providing teachers, principals, and school staff with strategies for reaching out to parents. These approaches share an emphasis on information and training, delivered in a variety of forms, that is grounded in the needs and goals of families and school staff, and that focuses on changing the negative attitudes parents and school staff may harbor.

Information and Training for Parents

Information and training for parents typically focuses on four areas of parent involvement: parenting, encouraging learning at home, participating in decision-making at school, and volunteering.

According to SFSP data, workshops and other training activities are among the most common strategies used by Title I schools to involve parents. For example, 75 percent of Title I schools report that they provide workshops to parents on some topic related to general parenting or helping children to learn at home. All of the schools and districts highlighted here offer workshops to parents weekly, monthly, or several times throughout the year. Each school makes an effort to accommodate work schedules and child care needs.

Parenting training. Training in general parenting skills helps families learn about child development and how to establish home environments that support student learning. According to the SFSP, 94 percent of Title I schools report that they provide some form of information to parents on one or more topics related to general parenting each year. Training for parents can cover a number of different issues, such as child language development and learning styles, parent nurturing and discipline strategies, child abuse prevention, and nutrition and health practices.

- The Parent Resource Center in the Stockton Unified School District offers four to six parenting workshops each month on topics such as the relationship between child achievement and parent expectations, protective parenting skills to prevent children from engaging in unhealthy behaviors, and anger management. The center also trains mentor parents at intensive three-day institutes; as mentors, they help other parents learn about strategies for helping children learn and outreach strategies that build partnerships between schools and families.

Schools can also help build parenting skills by assisting parents in reaching their own academic and vocational goals. In collaboration with local community colleges, many programs connect parents to adult education courses to receive a GED, college credit, or develop job-related skills.

- The district-sponsored Parent Center in Buffalo, New York, offers parent-child computer classes for students in grades 6 through 12. Classes bring parents and their children together to develop skills in desktop publishing and computer programming. For parents who cannot attend the center, the Take Home Computer Program orients parents on how to install and operate computers that they can keep for five to six weeks.

- Ferguson Elementary School offers an adult evening school in conjunction with a nearby university. Last year, the school offered classes in computer literacy, self-esteem, ESL, and Spanish literacy. Courses are held at the school site and taught by teachers, parents, and community members. To support parent involvement, the university provides stipends for babysitters who care for the children of participants.

Helping parents support learning at home. Almost all Title I schools (88 percent) report that they provide parents with information on one or more topics related to helping children learn at home. Several parents participating in focus group interviews for this study emphasized the importance of this role for parents. Noting that parents are a child's first teacher, one parent commented:

> I look at it in terms of commitment.... Parents are the first teachers, and there has to be some connection between the school and the home. Your expectations of your kids are transferred when they enter school.... If you don't have any expectations of them at home, why do you expect they should do well at school?

Another parent noted the importance of collaborating with teachers in support of her child's learning: "I feel it is a teacher's job to teach my child at school, but if I show [my child] one way [to do something] and the teacher does it another way, my child is the loser. She is the one that is confused."

Many parent involvement programs offer workshops that help parents support their children's learning at home. These sessions offer ideas to families about how to help students with curriculum-related activities, homework, and other academic decisions and planning.

- Schools in the Stockton Unified School District offer parents workshops on hands-on teaching techniques to use with their children in math and language arts. At these workshops, parents can "make and take" educational materials, such as flash cards and board games, to use with their children at home.

- Buhrer Elementary School conducts family math and science workshops, where children and their families spend an evening at the school working on math and science activities together. Buhrer also provides families with curriculum packets that parents can use at home; for example, last year's packets for primary school children included short stories and counting exercises using household materials.

- Parents at Wendell Phillips Magnet School receive weekly student progress reports to help them keep track of those areas in which their children needed more work. A curriculum report will be issued to parents beginning in the second semester of the 1996-97 school year. As one focus group parent commented, "If I know what my child is studying I can help him at home and I can see what progress he is making."

Several other parent programs inform parents about how to develop study skills to prepare for required tests; parents also learn how to interpret test results to identify the areas in which their children may need further assistance. In focus groups some parents voiced their frustration at receiving the results of student testing and the school's ranking but no information about what the

numbers mean. In addition, these workshops offer parents important information about planning for their children's educational future.

- Roosevelt High School in Dallas, Texas, invites parents to an evening class to review the state assessment instrument and the skills their children are expected to demonstrate on the test. Next year, the staff will provide parent training on helping students develop study skills to prepare for the required tests. Parents will also receive training and information on how to prepare their children to attend college (e.g., completing financial aid forms, obtaining references, preparing for required standardized tests).

Preparing parents to participate in school decision-making. Many schools encourage parents to join committees that make decisions on curriculum policies, parent involvement activities, the school budget, and reform initiatives. Many schools offer training to help parents become effective decision-makers. In Title I schoolwide program schools, administrators and teachers can play a crucial role in keeping parents informed about the Title I program and the schoolwide plan. One parent noted, "[The principal and Title I home-school liaison] make sure we keep up with what is going on with the Title I plan and procedures.... We know who we receive the funding from and how we spend it." In addition, several parents participating in focus groups indicated that they had been involved in writing the school-parent compacts required by Title I and commented that their participation both provided some clear guidance on what parents need to do to help their children succeed academically and gave them the sense that they were doing their part.

- The Parent Resource Center in the Stockton Unified School District prepares parents for decision-making roles through special training on topics such as creating, implementing, and evaluating a Title I school plan, understanding school budgets, and conducting successful meetings.

- Parents who serve on the Atenville Elementary School Action Research Team receive training on action research two or three times a year from the Institute for Responsive Education in Boston, Massachusetts. Last year, training sessions focused on education reform strategies such as working collaboratively, developing action plans, and goal-setting.

Volunteer preparation. Rather than simply asking and expecting parents to volunteer in schools, several local programs offer parents training on how to assist school staff and students effectively.

- Parents at Atenville Elementary School volunteer as teacher aides in the classroom, provide teachers and administrators with logistical support, and help supervise children in the library and during lunch and recess periods. To prepare parents for

Parent Outreach and Training: Ferguson Elementary School
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Located in the inner city of North Philadelphia, Ferguson Elementary School serves 750 low-income students in pre-kindergarten through grade five. All students are eligible for free lunch, and 98 percent come from families with incomes below the federal poverty line. When the Philadelphia public schools moved to site-based management in 1990, a group of Ferguson teachers formed a Parent Involvement Committee to assess community needs and explore strategies for involving parents in their children's education. With input from parents, the committee developed a parent involvement program, which is coordinated by a Title I program support teacher and a full-time school-community coordinator. As a Ferguson teacher said, "Every parent has something to offer, they just need to hear someone say, 'We need you.'"

Parent Network. A core group of ten parents operates the "Parent Network," an outreach strategy to help ensure ongoing home-school communication. Parents contact other parents in the school to share information on upcoming school activities and events. The network distributes informational fliers, monthly newsletters, and makes two telephone calls to every parent in the school prior to any school activity they are asked to attend. The Parent Network, teachers, the school-community coordinator, and students also conduct door-to-door family outreach on at least three weekends per year to invite parents to the school.

Parent Learning Opportunities. Ferguson offers a variety of workshops and training opportunities for parents to learn more about how to help their children with schoolwork at home. Last year, the school offered Saturday morning workshops to help parents become active partners in teaching their children the school curriculum. Workshop topics include: strategies to motivate the beginning reader, techniques to increase reading comprehension, and hands-on math activities. Between 100 and 150 parents attended the two Saturday morning workshops held at the end of the 1995-96 school year.

Ferguson also hosts an annual "Parents Make a Difference" conference. This two-day event invites parents into their children's classrooms to observe and learn new techniques for helping their children succeed in school. While eating a box lunch provided by the school, parents hear from guest speakers from the community, such as authors of children's books. During the conference parents also participate in workshops conducted by the guest speakers on topics such as how to read to your child in ways to increase their enjoyment and interest in reading. More than 300 parents participated in last year's conference.

A parent support group meets on a weekly basis in the parent room during the school day. The group sponsors workshops on parenting skills about six times a year. Workshop topics have included controlling anger, practicing assertive discipline, and preventing child abuse. The school psychologist, the school nurse, the parent involvement coordinator, and community resource people conduct the workshops. A grandparents support group was also formed that meets three times a year; workshops focus on themes similar to those offered to the parent support group.

Training sessions for volunteer parents and community members are also provided. The "Community Assistants" program trains volunteers to work as classroom aides. The Parent Network receives training from the Title I teacher every month on school policies and activities, information they then share with other parents.

these duties, the school provides two volunteer training sessions each fall to inform parents about school policies on discipline and confidentiality, and offer guidance on assisting teachers in the classroom as aides and tutors. Parents also learn about basic school office procedures, such as operating the copier machine and answering telephones.

- The district volunteer coordinator for Maine's School Administration District #3 presents an annual orientation to parents at each school. Volunteer coordinators from each school survey parents and teachers to determine which activities they want to participate in, and distribute volunteer manuals that describe the policies that guide volunteer programs, which differ from school to school. The district volunteer coordinator organizes a professional development day in March to share information on volunteer programming with volunteers, parents, teachers, and support personnel.

Information and Training for School Staff

Joyce Epstein writes that "The future of school and family partnerships rests on improving teacher and administrator education and training" (Epstein, 1992, p. 1147). To provide teachers with the information and skills they need to work with parents, schools must invest in professional development that focuses on helping teachers to develop family-school partnerships. Some schools offer teachers, principals, and school staff information and strategies on how to reach out to parents and work with them as partners. Professional development activities may include sessions on making telephone calls, home visits, and other contact strategies; students' home culture and appreciating diversity; communication skills for parent-teacher conferences; and involving parents as leaders and decision-makers in the schools.

Special training for teachers and other school staff can play a key role in dispelling some of the misconceptions and stereotypes that become barriers to effective partnerships between parents and teachers. Parents in some schools, for example, take teachers on Community Walks that introduce teachers to the local neighborhood and help them understand the lives of their students outside of school. One parent in an inner-city high school described the purpose of these walks at her school:

> "We had to educate them [the teachers] about the community [and] what children here may be going through... [On] Community Walks some teachers were actually amazed that some of the parents live in nice homes that are well taken care of. On these walks it became apparent that the teachers had a lot of stereotypes about the kids they were teaching and their families..."

Other schools have found that engaging parent coordinators or parent volunteers to train school staff not only builds parents' leadership skills but also offers teachers the opportunity to learn about families from parents' perspectives.

Additional training activities for school staff include the following:

- Staff at Hueco Elementary in El Paso, Texas, receive training on making home visits and family outreach from a successful parent coordinator employed in a neighboring district. Staff on the family support team also receive training on supporting and working with parents of students with academic or behavioral problems.

- Last year in Stockton, California, "mentor parents" who are trained at the district's Parent Resource Center spent 5,000 hours in the schools providing professional development to school staff on parent involvement and home-school communication. Among other activities, mentor parents conducted four workshops on obstacles to parent involvement in schools, including parents' negative prior experiences with school, and teacher bias that may result from a parent's different socio-economic status, race, gender, physical appearance, or language ability.

- The Alamo Navajo Community School in Magaleno, New Mexico, hosts a cultural orientation program to inform new teachers (almost all of whom are non-Navajo) about the Navajo culture and how to form positive, culturally respectful relationships with Navajo parents. Teachers visit students' homes and learn about reservation life and the rural conditions in which students live.

Outreach Strategies to Keep Parents Informed

Schools that are successful in building school-family partnerships develop and use outreach mechanisms to channel information to parents on an ongoing basis. These mechanisms include distributing weekly or monthly parent newsletters, posting fliers in places where parents congregate, developing parent handbooks, making telephone calls, and conducting home visits. One focus group participant underscored the importance of school-home contacts that share positive information about children as well as problems the child may be having.

Several of the programs profiled for this report have developed special strategies for ensuring that each family receives personal, customized communication from their child's school throughout the school year:

- Turnbull Learning Academy in San Mateo, California, and South Delta Elementary School in Rolling Fork, Mississippi, developed weekly take-home folders that include

a parent participation sheet, information on upcoming events, and recent curriculum activities and graded tests. Parents sign and return folders each week. Teachers and parents report that the folders provide important academic information for parents, teachers, and students, and help increase parent-school communication.

- At Atenville Elementary, parent volunteers call all parents monthly to inform them about school activities and to solicit feedback on past and future parent involvement activities. Several programs also reach out through school-home liaisons and parent coordinators, whose prime responsibility is to keep parents informed and maintain an open line of communication between families, schools, and community agencies.

- Parent volunteer coordinators in South Bay Union Elementary School District in Imperial Beach, California, also make home visits and inform families about social services offered in the community.

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

Developing a successful school-family partnership must be a whole school endeavor, not the work of a single program. To create a welcoming environment for parents, one that enlists their support in helping their children achieve, schools sometimes adopt changes that make them more personal and inviting places. For example, schools can divide into schools-within-schools or adopt block scheduling (which creates longer class periods) to promote closer interaction between teachers and students and, by extension, between teachers and families. Schools can solicit parental input to help make decisions on curriculum, course scheduling, assessment, and budget matters. Traditional parent involvement events can be redefined to create more meaningful ways to welcome and involve parents in school life. Whatever steps schools take to develop close partnerships with families on behalf of students' learning, schools that are most successful in working with parents are prepared to reconsider all of their established ways of doing business and to restructure in ways that will make them less hierarchical, more personal, and more accessible to parents. Restructuring schools to create a more personalized environment for students and their families is an especially important issue for secondary schools, where parents face special barriers to becoming involved and where parent involvement does in fact drop off significantly, as described in Chapter II.

Designing Parent Involvement around Family Needs

For many schools, the first step in the restructuring process is to assess families' needs. By asking parents to share their interests, needs, ideas, and goals for family involvement on an ongoing basis, families and staff members can work together to make family involvement a centerpiece of

school reform. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of Title I schools report that they consider parent input to a great or moderate extent when developing parent involvement policies, according to the SFSP; nevertheless, families that hesitate to become involved in schools often complain that administrators and teachers develop parent involvement programs based on what they think parents want and need, and not on what parents say they want and need.

Several programs highlighted in this report address this concern by conducting needs assessments through parent surveys, focus groups, or door-to-door neighborhood walks to gather ideas from parents about how best to promote family involvement.

- Staff members at the Buffalo Parent Center develop and plan their services based on surveys and information gathered from monthly "town meetings" where parents voice concerns and suggestions.

- As already noted, Roosevelt High School conducts Community Walks where teams of faculty, parents, and other community members walk door-to-door to talk with parents about their needs and gather ideas about how to improve the school.

Responding to Parents' Needs: Atenville Elementary School
Harts, West Virginia

To help improve student achievement, Atenville applied to become a partnership school with the Parent-Teacher Action Research project at the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) in Boston, Massachusetts. As part of this process, Atenville parents and teachers developed parent involvement program based on data collected through action research. A parent coordinator and volunteer parents conducted home visits to gather information on how families viewed the school and to obtain their suggestions on the design of the parent involvement program. The major components of the program that resulted included a telephone tree, a home visiting program, and a school family center. The parent and school program are reviewed on an ongoing basis by the action research team, which is composed of the principal, two teachers, two parents, a parent coordinator, and the IRE facilitator.

Telephone-tree parents communicate with other parents monthly to inform them of school issues and events, assess family needs, and gather feedback on past and future activities. For example, when the school implemented a new math curriculum, parents told telephone tree callers that they were unable to help their children with this new curriculum, which focused more on complex word problems and less on traditional computation skills. As a result, the school held two evening workshops to help parents master the skills emphasized by the new curriculum. Information on parent concerns is also collected through parent surveys, family portfolios that reflect home-school communications, and focus groups.

Parents as Partners in Schoolwide Restructuring

Successful schools include parents as active partners in the school restructuring process. Rather than the traditional hierarchical relationship between families and schools, where school staff make unilateral decisions, successful parent involvement approaches work to develop parents as leaders and equal partners in the schooling process. One way to do this is to create organizational structures for parent participation, such as parent and volunteer committees. Parents can also serve on other school decision-making committees, such as site-based management councils and curriculum committees. As members of these committees, parents can, for example, share ideas and help make decisions on school policies related to the budget, teacher and principal hiring, schoolwide Title I plans, and parent involvement activities. Together, parents and staff members develop school reform initiatives to facilitate closer student, teacher, and parent relations and to increase student achievement.

SFSP data show that only 40 to 50 percent of Title I schools report that they consider parent input when making decisions on many topics related to the general operation of the school (see Exhibit V.1 in Chapter V), so there appears to be considerable opportunity at many Title I schools for involving parents more often in decision-making. Several schools profiled for this report have developed creative ways to involve parents in school decision-making:

- Parents at Roosevelt High School serve on core teams charged with addressing school reform issues. Recently, parents played an active role in curriculum reform by helping secure a waiver from the Texas Education Agency to implement block scheduling, a plan they anticipated would improve both student attendance and achievement. Core team parents also work closely with the community to assess family needs and strengths and to develop an action agenda for the school. As one school organizer said, "The most challenging aspect of getting parents involved is to help them understand that they don't always need to be at school for a particular problem, but they can also be part of a constituency that develops a broad-based plan to improve the school."

- Turnbull Learning Academy involves parents on various decision-making committees such as the parent leadership committee and the school-site council. Parents on the school-site council help develop the school improvement plan, which includes planning new programs and reviewing existing programs as well as the school budget. After scheduling a vote to determine whether parents were interested, parent leadership at Turnbull developed a proposal for a voluntary school uniform policy. An overwhelming majority of parents voted in favor of the policy, which the school board approved in spring 1995.

- At Atenville Elementary, parents told parent leaders and school staff on a community-wide steering committee that they were concerned about the difficult transition students made as they moved from elementary schools to seventh grade at the local high school. As a result, a subcommittee on transitions was added to the community-wide school improvement steering committee. The subcommittee recommended block scheduling, similar to the scheduling that students encounter in high school, for fourth through sixth graders. The proposal was accepted and students now receive instruction in three time blocks: (1) language arts, (2) math, and (3) social studies and science. All state-required subjects are integrated into these three areas.

Changing the Physical Space

Schools can take simple steps to make parents feel welcome. For example, hanging a welcome sign or posting a parent volunteer in the entrance hall to welcome visitors, sign them in, and direct them to classrooms or the office makes a much more comforting first impression than the ubiquitous sign instructing visitors to "report to office." Similarly, many parents express uneasiness over the elaborate security measures schools use to combat violence and drugs. Schools could consider creating alternative entrances for parents where security measures are less obtrusive.

Several schools whose staff and parents were interviewed for this report have taken additional steps to make their schools physically welcoming for parents. They have turned unused classrooms into on-site family or parent centers, giving parents a space in which to convene for parent-teacher meetings, borrow books and other learning materials, hold workshops, conduct volunteering activities, or simply have coffee and lunch with other parents and school staff. In fact, according to SFSP data, parent resource centers appear to be growing increasingly common among Title I schools, with 37 percent of Title I schools reporting that they have a center, and an additional 14 percent reporting that they are currently developing one.

- South Delta Elementary's parent resource center, open every school day, contains curriculum supplies, copier and laminating machines, and work tables so that parents have the tools they need to help teachers prepare lessons and activities.

- Ferguson Elementary also operates a parent center, open every school day, where parents have access to resources such as literature on parenting skills, job listings, and information about programs in nearby community centers. Staffed by a paid parent worker, the center also offers parents a lending library of educational materials (audio and videotapes, books) to use at home with their children.

Moving beyond Traditional Family-School Activities

Listening to parents and working with them to build family involvement often leads to the development of innovative activities that extend beyond the traditional back-to-school nights or bake sales. For example, Buhrer Elementary's Block Parent Meetings take school events to families who live far away from school, enabling them to stay informed about school issues and stay in touch with teachers, principals, and other parents. Ferguson Elementary's Parents Make a Difference conference offers parents an opportunity to form ties with teachers and other parents, take a close look at classroom life, and attend workshops on student learning. Roosevelt High School's Community Walks take teachers and other school staff out into the surrounding neighborhoods to talk with parents and begin to develop meaningful parent-school partnerships. Other examples of non-traditional events that bring parents, students, and teachers closer together include:

- At Cane Run Elementary, parents accompany school staff on out-of-town retreats to discuss curriculum planning, assessment, and other educational issues. Teachers say that the retreat provides an opportunity to "educate parents on views from inside the school looking out, rather than outside looking in." Teachers and parents also have a chance to gain a better understanding of each other's perspectives.

- Several schools host family curriculum nights that allow parents to experience first hand what their children are learning in class. For example, Hueco Elementary hosts family math and science nights planned jointly by teachers and students. Students oversee 10-12 stations with hands-on math and science activities that students and their parents work on together. Cane Run Elementary school hosts five technology nights a year, where parents and students learn to use the school's television studio, Internet links, and various computer programs together.

Bridging Family-School Differences

Language and cultural differences as well as differences in educational attainment and socio-economic status among families and school staff often make communication and family participation in school activities difficult. Still, many schools with innovative leadership and creative, hard-working staff have found ways to bridge these differences and cultivate strong school-family partnerships.

Literacy Is a Family Affair:
Clinton Kelly Elementary School
Portland, Oregon

According to the principal at Clinton Kelly Elementary School, for as long as anyone can remember, Clinton Kelly students have been among the poorest in the city. The Portland neighborhood surrounding the school suffers from frequent evictions, high unemployment and crime rates, and the principal estimates that two out of three Kelly students have an immediate family member or close relative in jail or who has been incarcerated. She realized that if she were ever going to connect with students she would need to reach out to their parents. She began to reevaluate the ways teachers and other school staff communicated with families.

Clinton Kelly's principal also soon realized the futility of activities such as sending home newsletters encouraging parents to read to their children when many parents in the community couldn't read or couldn't read well. To reach those parents with little confidence in themselves or their language skills, the Family Stories Project was born.

The Family Stories Project makes literacy a family affair. Family Stories helps parents improve their reading and writing skills by developing their own oral and written family histories and sharing them with their children. About 30 parents meet for two hours weekly to share written stories or poems, write in their journal, check out library books to read with their children at home, or join their school-age children in language development activities. For example, parents often make up a story with their child, which the parent writes and the child illustrates. To date, Kelly has published two volumes of Family Stories, which have been distributed to parents, teachers (who integrate the stories into their curriculum), the State Department of Education, university faculty members, and other Title I schools upon request.

Both students and parents benefit from participating in Family Stories. According to one mother, "My daughter loves to come to hear and tell stories.... She has learned to become a story teller herself. [She] will spend at least an hour telling stories to her brother and teaching him how to tell stories too."

Reaching Out to Parents with Little Formal Education

Some schools find that parents who do not read well or do not read at all present a particular challenge. These parents may not easily understand the written communications sent to them, and often see themselves as unprepared to help their children with homework or schoolwork. Some basic logistical changes can help overcome this barrier; for example, at Turnbull, the bilingual parent involvement coordinator makes weekly telephone calls to relay written information about student progress to parents whose reading skills are not strong. In addition, however, parents who were not successful themselves in school may have trouble helping their children with schoolwork, especially in subject areas that they themselves did not master. Other schools featured in this report have worked

to strengthen parents' literacy skills by providing parents with activities they can do with their children to promote their own literacy. At South Delta Elementary, for example, school staff develop home learning activities for non-reading parents using newspapers. For example, parents and children look at ads and make price comparisons or discuss the weather, which often includes pictorial representations of the weekly forecast.

Two of the programs highlighted in this report include Even Start projects in the array of activities they undertake to work with parents. Even Start projects link adult basic education and literacy education, parenting education, and early childhood education in a coherent program aimed at breaking the cycle of illiteracy and poverty for both parents and their children. At Cane Run Elementary school, for example, parents in the Even Start program can earn a high school equivalency degree in classes offered in the school building, work with their preschool-aged children in the on-site early childhood center, and volunteer with older children in their classrooms. By attending school alongside their young children, Even Start parents show their children that they value education. Through this on-site work and home visits conducted every Friday by Even Start teachers, the program also helps parents learn techniques for taking a more active role in their child's education at home as well as in the classroom.

Even for parents who can read well, the prospect of helping with their children's schoolwork is often daunting. Many parents are haunted by their own bad memories of school, and are uncomfortable in a setting that brings those memories back. Parents may also doubt their ability to help their children master new content, especially in math and science. Schools can help allay these fears by giving parents a chance to experience first hand what their children are learning in an environment that is pleasant and non-threatening.

- The Family Math and Family Science nights held in Maine's School Administration District #3 are modeled after the Family Math program developed by the Lawrence Hall of Science of the University of California. Children and parents spending an evening working together on interesting math or science activities. The program is designed to change participants' negative attitudes about math and science.

- At Hueco Elementary's family math and science nights, math activities include estimating distances using manipulatives. Preschool students and their parents attending a Cranberry Fair were asked to explore questions such as "Do cranberries float? How high do they bounce?"

- Cane Run Elementary School hosts five family technology nights a year that allow parents and children use the school's television studio, Internet hook-ups, laptop computers, desktop publishing programs, and other equipment. Cane Run's principal notes that the program is extremely popular. "We realized that getting families

together to learn about technology really works" as a way to help parents become involved in children's education and enjoy learning something themselves.

Breaking the Language Barrier

According to the SSFP, 55 percent of Title I schools report that they serve parents with limited English skills. Although differences in language between parents and school staff often exist in large urban areas with growing immigrant populations such as Imperial Beach, California, or Cleveland, Ohio, they also challenge schools in rural areas such as Alamo Navajo Community School, where the entire reservation community is Navajo and 60 to 65 percent of the professional staff are not.

Most strategies for addressing language barriers include some form of bilingual services for communicating with families about school programs and children's progress. Many schools successfully use bilingual parent liaisons, instructional aides, counselors, and parent volunteers to reach out to families through a variety of school-home communications as well as parent workshops or classes.

Translation services. According to SFSP data, most (86 percent) of the Title I schools serving children whose parents have limited English skills provide interpreters for meetings or parent-teacher conferences (see Exhibit V.6 in Chapter V). Several schools highlighted here provide translation services for parent involvement activities including school-home communications, parenting training, and participation in decision-making and school governance. In addition to using bilingual teachers and parent liaisons as interpreters, schools can encourage more informal networks to provide help with translation. For example, bilingual parents can assist other parents whom they know, or students can provide translations for their parents.

- The principal and assistant principal of Hueco Elementary School conduct all school-home communications and parent workshops and meetings in both Spanish and English. To ensure that parents can actively participate in these events, the district used Title I funds to purchase translation equipment that includes a wireless microphone broadcaster for the translator and headsets with FM receivers for those needing translation.

- Buhrer Elementary School publishes both its parent handbook and newsletter in Spanish, English, and Arabic. In addition, bilingual instructional aides or parent volunteers make calls and translate messages from teachers to parents, often uncovering previously unknown reasons for student absences or discipline problems. The bilingual parent involvement coordinator at Turnbull Learning Academy and

bilingual staff at Hueco Elementary ensure that all school-home communications, including newsletters, announcements, and information about student progress are published in both Spanish and English.

- Alamo Navajo Community School uses a local AM radio station to address the communication barriers between Navajo families and the many non-Navajo school staff. School staff use the station to announce upcoming meetings and events, broadcast educational programming for both adults and children, make health-related public service announcements, and interview school and community members about current issues or events. About 70 percent of the programming is in Navajo. In addition, home liaisons fluent in both Navajo and English conduct home visits to address discipline, academic, and attendance problems, as well as help families with paperwork for programs such as special education or translate during parent-teacher conferences.

- Cleveland Public Schools requires each school to develop a school-community council to provide families with information about school programs and discuss school governance issues. At Buhrer Elementary, bilingual teachers or volunteers attend the meetings to serve as translators.

- At Cox Elementary, bilingual teachers attend the monthly parent events to translate for Spanish speakers as part of events ranging from make-and-take workshops and other academically oriented activities to multi-cultural presentations.

Workshops and classes in parents' first language. Several districts and schools also conduct bilingual workshops or classes designed to provide parents with information and ideas about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities. At Turnbull Learning Academy, parent training on topics such as helping children with homework are offered in Spanish and English. The South Bay Union Elementary School District offers a wide variety of year-round parenting classes in multiple languages. Parent training that ultimately helps students learn at home during the non-school hours often includes adult ESL classes. The Family Resource Center at Charter Oak School, the Buffalo Parent Center, and Turnbull Learning Academy regularly offer ESL classes for parents and other adults.

Promoting Cultural Understanding

Although breaking the language barrier between English speakers and those whose primary language is other than English constitutes a giant step towards increasing parent involvement in their children's education, promoting understanding among persons of different cultures also deserves special attention if *all* families are to feel comfortable participating in school activities. In many schools, a home-school liaison or parent coordinator can play a crucial role in reaching out to parents

of different backgrounds and building trust between home and school. Usually the home-school liaison is a parent who lives in the neighborhood or someone else with close ties to both the school and the community. Because the home-school liaison shares the same cultural background with parents, he or she is well-equipped to initiate a partnership with them on behalf of the school. Through the home-school liaison, schools can build relationships with parents founded on understanding and trust.

In addition, many schools offer training to parents and school staff specifically aimed at bridging cultural differences between home and school. Some of these efforts include:

- At both Hueco Elementary and Turnbull Learning Academy, school staff have taken special steps to address cultural differences that stand in the way of parent involvement. For example, staff at these schools pointed out that Hispanic culture regards teachers with admiration and respect, which can result in parents entrusting their child's education solely to their teachers and not participating themselves. To encourage parents to take a more active role, the staff at Hueco emphasize the importance of parents as their children's first teacher and stress how much the school needs and values their involvement; they emphasize these points during the school orientation and at each workshop, parent-teacher conference, and through the newsletter. Staff at Turnbull hold a workshop each fall that emphasizes these same points.

- At Buhrer Elementary, a school-community council meeting involving parents and staff recently focused on Arab culture and how it differs from other cultures, in order to help reduce tensions between Arab parents and other parents and staff at the school.

Tapping External Supports for Family-School Partnerships

Many schools have nourished and strengthened family-school partnerships by tapping the supports available in their districts, local communities, and beyond. Collaborative efforts to provide families and schools with the tools they need to support learning can ultimately benefit all those interested in and affected by the quality of children's education. Among the programs we studied, successful parent involvement strategies often grew out of school-community partnerships with local businesses, agencies, and colleges and universities, as well as supports provided by school districts and states.

District-Sponsored Family Resource Centers

District-sponsored parent involvement programs, including family resource centers, are an important source of external support for schools. Family resource centers offer a wide array of supports to families, in an informal setting. These supports include parenting classes, organization of volunteer activities for schools, and information and ideas on how to help children with homework and other curriculum-related activities. Some also provide families with services such as the transportation and child care needed for families to participate in center activities, as well as referrals for health, employment, or housing needs. All operate under the guiding philosophy that schools and families need broad-based support to educate children.

- The Family Resource Center at Charter Oak School in West Hartford, Connecticut, was one of the first state-established family resource centers directly linked to a local public school system. The center works closely with school staff and the parent-teacher organization to sponsor family activities and facilitate home-school communication. About 30-35 parents of school-age children visit the center each week. It offers a comfortable place where parents can read the latest books on parenting or meet teachers for lunch, and families can obtain child care referrals, obtain scholarship information, receive counseling when problems seem overwhelming, use the homework center, and participate in adult education classes. School-age children can register for mini-courses or borrow a toy for the weekend.

- The Greensville County Public Schools' Mobile Parent Resource Center in Emporia, Virginia, offers a model for making parent resource centers more accessible to rural parents. The mobile parent resource center is a 34 foot customized bus that travels to four sites a day remaining at least two hours at each site. It houses two classrooms equipped with adjustable tables, chairs, bulletin boards, chalkboards, televisions, a video-cassette recorder, cassette players, and laptop computers. Instructional materials include parenting videos and kits, books, newspapers, magazines, computer software, models, and samples of instructional materials parents can check out to use with their children. Both reading and non-reading parents are trained there as tutors to work with their children. Parents receive help in selecting appropriate books to read with their children, and see videos of families reading and learning together. The parent resource center serves 12-18 parents at a time. Six area businesses allow the parent resource center to visit their work sites so that employees who are parents can visit before or after work or during breaks.

District-sponsored family resource centers can also be an effective means of serving parents of Title I students in private schools. In Paterson, New Jersey, the school district hired a third party contractor to operate a "Mom and Pop Mobile" to expand its outreach to include parents of Title I students in private schools, especially those who are uncomfortable in school settings. Through the

traveling resource center, these parents learn effective parent involvement strategies, such as how to help students engage in learning activities at home.

School-Community Partnerships That Marshall Additional Resources

Schools rarely have the funds, staff, or space for all the family involvement activities they want or need to offer. Many have forged partnerships with local businesses, agencies, and colleges or universities to provide services to families. Among the schools in our study, these services included educational programming, a homework hotline, social services such as prevention of substance abuse and child abuse prevention, conferences and workshops, adult education, health services, refurbished school facilities, and refreshments for and transportation to school-sponsored events.

- The Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School works with community partners to meet both the academic and basic survival needs of its students. A dental program gives uninsured students free check-ups and dental work, and a business partner provides employee volunteers for mentoring and tutoring.

- Last year representatives from two community organizations offered parenting education classes at Hueco Elementary at no cost to parents. A child care worker from the local YMCA also volunteered to provide free child care during parenting classes. Local businesses also contribute to the Super Readers Program, in which children receive awards for the number of books they read at home or have read to them; businesses also provide pizza parties for classes with the most parent volunteer hours.

- A local bank and newspaper sponsor the Education Connection at Buhrer Elementary, a homework voice mail system that enables teachers, instructional aides, and the school psychologist to leave outgoing messages such as a daily homework assignment and to receive messages from parents who want to ask questions or set up appointments. Through a partnership with a local college, Buhrer also offers parents GED courses.

- Ferguson Elementary offers an adult evening school in conjunction with nearby Temple University. Last year classes included computer literacy and self-esteem building and were free of charge to parents. This year, classes will include computer literacy, ESL, and Spanish. Teachers, parents, and other community members receive stipends from Temple to teach the courses, and Temple also provides stipends for child care as an incentive for parents to attend.

District and State Level Support for School-Family Partnerships

District and state supports for family involvement include policies, funding, training, and family services that contribute to successful school-family partnerships. With the backing of these district and state resources, family-school partnerships have a stronger chance of succeeding, and schools can draw on a broad system of expertise and experience. District and state-run parent resource centers, described earlier, are one example of how schools can benefit.

One example of an external source of technical assistance is the Alliance Schools Initiative, a statewide partnership among the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Interfaith Education Fund (TIEF), and the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (TIAF). Its mission is to develop a strong, community-based constituency of parents, teachers, and community leaders in each member school who work to improve student achievement in low-income communities throughout Texas. The TEA provides maximum flexibility to participating campuses willing to redesign their educational programs. Teachers and principals agree to collaborate with parents, with each other, and with TIAF network organizations to design and implement reform strategies. The TIEF coordinators train parents, teachers, and principals in strategies to work together to improve their schools. Many Alliance schools receive competitive Investment Capital Fund grants from the TEA, which they use for staff development, parent and community training, curriculum improvement, and enrichment programs.

In addition, the schools we reviewed provided many examples of district-level programs or strategies to support school-family partnerships:

- Jefferson County Public Schools, which serve Louisville, Kentucky, recently contracted with the Right Question Project to work with half of its middle schools in improving parent involvement. As part of this effort, parents of students at Western Middle School will receive training in helping their children develop critical thinking skills, evaluating their children's educational progress, and helping with homework and project assignments.

- The DeForest School District in Wisconsin has teamed with the local public library (which is also the local Even Start site) to sponsor a family involvement and literacy program using Epstein's framework of six types of family involvement (Epstein, 1995). It includes adult basic education and ESL as well as parenting activities.

- South Delta Elementary School offers parents district-sponsored training through the Title I office. Last year, district training sessions explained the scoring and reporting of standardized tests and helped parents increase their children's vocabulary. In

addition, a district liaison instructs parents and children in the use of computer equipment.

- Comprehensive family services, such as those offered through the South Bay Union School District's Interagency Committee, can provide the base of well-being that families need to contribute time and energy to their children's education. The South Bay committee, convened in 1990, responded to the growing need for schools and community service agencies to collaborate to meet the increasing health, literacy, and social service needs of its many disadvantaged families. Representatives from 25 different health, social service, public, and governmental agencies piloted several school-based programs, including adult literacy, family violence prevention, and support groups for students and parents.

Effects on Students and Families

Effective school-family partnerships benefit all involved--school staff, parents, and students. In addition to bolstering student achievement, school-family partnerships can have important benefits for parents as well, helping them to feel more positive about their children's school, enhancing their sense of efficacy as parents, and changing their perceptions of their children as learners (Ames, 1993; Epstein, 1991).

Student Achievement

The experience of the schools and district programs reviewed for this report supports the principle that family involvement can have significant effects on student achievement. Appendix B of this report presents evidence of improvement in student outcomes, wherever it was available, for each of the school or district programs highlighted in this chapter. Although it is impossible to attribute student achievement gains or other positive outcomes in any of these schools or districts solely to their parent involvement activities, it does appear that many schools that make parent involvement a priority also see student outcomes improve. For example, of the 13 schools highlighted in this chapter and reviewed in Appendix B, eight report gains in student achievement over the last one to three years, four report gains in attendance rates or attendance rates remaining consistently over 95 percent, and two report substantial decreases in disciplinary referrals over the last several years. These positive outcomes may be due to increased parent involvement itself, or, what is more likely, to a whole constellation of factors, including a strong instructional program and a commitment to high standards for all students. Nevertheless, it appears that strong parent involvement is an important feature of many schools that succeed in raising student achievement.

Parents themselves believe that their involvement influences their children's performance in school. In focus group interviews, some parents recounted specific examples of academic gains their children had made; many more argued that their involvement had improved their children's attitude toward school and engagement in learning. These parents argued that their own interest in learning and in visiting and contributing to the school had became an important example for their children. One parent observed, "The parents are the first teachers and if your child sees that you are sincere, that alone will make them want to work harder." Another argued, "When [the children] see that the parents are involved [in learning] themselves, they want to get involved, too." Another parent reported the immediate effect of her presence in school on her son:

> "[Being involved] improves their attitude. When I don't go to the school my son doesn't elaborate on what he did that day, but when I do go to the school, he wants to tell me every little thing he did."

Other parents argued that their involvement has an effect on teachers that ultimately benefits students. One high school parent observed:

> "Teachers will take extra time with your child if they know the parents are involved, and it makes me feel good to know that I have found somewhere where somebody is going to take the time with my child to help him."

Finally, several parents maintained that their involvement in school activities benefits other students as well, not just their own children. Parents who are actively involved at school develop relationships with other children who also benefit from their concern. As one mother noted:

> "There are other children that you pick up on the way, and after a while if they see [a parent] walking down the hall and they are misbehaving, they know that even though their parents are not there, there are parents there that care about them and will correct them."

Other Indicators of Success

Most of the schools and programs highlighted in this report also offer evidence that their parent involvement efforts have changed parents in some way. For example, most schools report that more parents are volunteering at school, attending parent-teacher conferences, or signing up for parenting workshops. Several parents participating in focus group interviews noted that their involvement at school has benefitted them. Several observed that volunteering has helped build their own self-esteem as parents; one parent observed with satisfaction, "When I come to the school, my

kids make me feel like I'm the greatest person in the world." Others value the feeling that they are contributing to something important: "I volunteer because I feel if I contribute to my child's education it will enhance his academic learning, and it is very rewarding for me because I am contributing to education."

Evidence of effects on parents among the schools featured here, however, is limited to these measures of participation in school-based activities. In fact, there is little indication that most practitioners in general have done much to evaluate their parent involvement efforts beyond these general "body counts." There is a need for evaluation designs that will help practitioners understand, for example, how various parent involvement strategies affect parents' interactions with their children at home, what strategies work best with varied populations of parents, or what kinds of staff development prompt better practice among school staff.

Conclusion

Experience in many schools and districts points to some common characteristics of successful family-school partnerships. Schools that succeed in involving large numbers of parents and other family members in the education of their children invest energy in finding solutions for problems, not excuses. Successful schools view children's success as a shared responsibility, and all stakeholders--including parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders--play important roles in supporting children's learning. Indeed, successful schools adopt a team approach, where each partner assumes responsibility for the success of the family-school partnership.

At the same time that partners share accountability, specific stakeholders must assume individual responsibility in order for partnerships to work. Above all, schools, under the leadership of principals, possess the primary responsibility for initiating family-school partnerships. Schools can invest heavily in professional development, create time for staff to work with parents, supply necessary resources, design innovative strategies to meet the needs of diverse family structures, and provide useful information to families on how they can contribute to their children's learning.

Once schools initiate the dialogue and bring parents in as full partners, families are typically ready and willing to assume an equal responsibility for the success of their children. Ideally, this partnership takes place in a context where policymakers, community groups, and employers share the goals of the school and actively contribute to the attainment of those goals. In sum, a broad-based coalition of like-minded stakeholders is the foundation of any successful partnership. When community members work together, all stakeholders--and especially children--stand to win.

Although the most appropriate strategies for a particular community will depend on local interests, needs, and resources, successful approaches to promoting family involvement in the education of their children share an emphasis on innovation and flexibility. The experiences of the local schools and districts included here suggest the following guidelines for meaningful home-school partnerships:

- Begin the family-school partnership by identifying, with families, the strengths, interests, and needs of families and school staff, and design strategies that respond to those needs and interests.

- Recognize that effective parent involvement takes many forms that may not necessarily require parents' presence at a workshop, meeting, or school. The emphasis should be on parents helping children learn, and this can happen in schools, homes, or elsewhere in a community.

- Strengthen the home-school partnership with professional development and training for all school staff as well as parents and other family members. Both school staff and families need the knowledge and skills that enable them to work with one another and the larger community to support children's learning.

- Take advantage of the training, assistance, and funding offered by sources external to schools. These can include school districts, community organizations and public agencies, local colleges and universities, and state education agencies. While Title I program funds support the parent involvement activities of many schools featured here, several have increased the resources available for parent involvement activities by looking beyond the school walls.

- Plan strategies that accommodate the varied language and cultural needs, as well as lifestyles and work schedules, of school staff and families. Even the best planned home-school partnerships can fail if the participants cannot communicate effectively.

- Recognize that developing a successful school-family partnership requires continued effort over time, as well as the involvement of many stakeholders, not just a few.

- Expand the current, rather limited, repertoire of evaluation practices by regularly assessing the effects of the school-family partnership using multiple measures of success. These may include: indicators of family, school staff, and community participation in school-related activities; the quality of school-family interactions; and varied indicators of student educational progress.

Although success in school-family partnerships rarely comes easily, the benefits for children and their educational success can be well worth the hard work required to forge and nurture the partnerships.

IV. STATE POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

States have undertaken a number of activities that support school and district efforts to involve families in the education of their children and to implement Title I parent involvement requirements. This chapter describes these state efforts based on a survey of SEAs conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) during the summer of 1996. The results reported here reflect the responses of 35 states and the District of Columbia. Appendix C presents background information on the survey and a list of respondents.

Survey data indicate that most of the 36 jurisdictions (hereafter called states) responding to the survey provide support for school and district parent involvement activities. This support takes many forms, including state laws that encourage or require family involvement programs and activities, state-level policies and goals for family involvement, state funding for family involvement efforts, technical assistance to schools and districts on topics related to family involvement, and assistance to schools and districts on implementing the Title I parent involvement provisions. This chapter summarizes state activity in each of these areas based on survey data and provides examples of state efforts based on supplemental materials submitted by the states and follow-up telephone calls to some survey respondents. The findings reported in this chapter should be interpreted with caution, however. The tabulations presented here represent states' responses to broad questions about policies and activities, based on their own assessments of what activities--large or small--might qualify as state support of school-family partnerships. Illustrations based on information gathered in follow-up telephone calls is not representative, nor is it meant to illustrate best practice. Furthermore, the data do not allow an assessment of the quality or the intensity of state activities (for example, how many schools or districts receive assistance, or how effective that assistance is). As noted below, findings from the Survey on Family and School Partnerships (SFSP) suggest that state-level support for parent involvement reaches only a portion of schools in each state. Finally, except when Title I is mentioned explicitly in the survey, responses refer to all schools in the state, not just Title I schools.

Legislating Support for School-Family Partnerships

More than half of the states responding to the survey (22 of 36) report that they have state laws in place to guide state-level family involvement activities. A review of the statutes submitted by states indicates that the provisions contained in these laws vary widely from state to state and reflect

the broad range of issues and activities that fall under the rubric of family involvement. Most state legislation, however, focuses on three key issues: (1) strengthening parent involvement in school decision-making; (2) providing parents and educators with information and skills to strengthen parent involvement; and (3) supporting the establishment of parent involvement programs in schools and districts.

Strengthening Parent Involvement in School, District, and State-level Decision-making

A number of state laws require parent representation on school site, district, and state-level advisory councils for planning and governance activities. For example, the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) of 1993 charges the Department of Education with establishing numerous advisory councils to the state board that include parent and community members who are demographically representative of the Commonwealth. MERA also requires every school to establish a school council that includes parent representatives who have input equal to that of professional staff. These councils are charged with assisting the school principal in developing the school improvement plan and reviewing the school budget. The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 similarly calls for the adoption of school councils for school-based decision-making. These councils are required to include two parents, three teachers, and the principal or administrator, and are charged with setting school policy and determining school curriculum, textbooks, and student support services.

Providing Parents and Educators with Information and Skills

In many states, legislation supports the strengthening of parent and staff capacity for parent involvement. In Washington, the state-sponsored Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) provides technical assistance and support to parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and communities regarding strategies for assisting students in meeting the state's academic learning requirements. CISL serves as a clearinghouse for information on successful parental involvement programs, and is developing and distributing parent guides to inform parents about the state learning requirements and actions they can take to assist their children in meeting them. Through publications, workshops, conferences, and on-line resources, the center seeks to raise public awareness of the importance of parent involvement and reach parents who have not previously been involved in their children's learning.

Legislation in a number of states establishes parent education programs for parents of young children. The Missouri Early Childhood Development Act authorizes state reimbursement for district-level parent education programs that enable parents to improve learning at home. Legislation in a number of other states supports programs with strong parent involvement components, such as state preschool programs, family literacy programs, and early intervention and child development programs for infants and toddlers. Laws in states such as Kentucky and Tennessee have created family resource centers to support families and strengthen their ability to serve as their children's first teachers.

Some legislation focuses specifically on building teachers' skills for working with parents. For example, legislation enacted in California in 1993 authorizes the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to "adopt standards and requirements for the preparation of teachers and other certificated educators to serve as active partners with parents and guardians in the education of pupils."

Establishing Parent Involvement Programs

Some statutes focus on the development of local family involvement programs. In California, a law enacted in 1990 requires all schools receiving Title I funding to establish parent involvement programs that include an annual statement of objectives and an evaluation process. In Louisiana, legislation enacted in 1991 authorizes the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to award demonstration grants and provide other forms of assistance to city and parish school boards and to other appropriate public and private agencies, for the development of innovative family-school partnerships.

Crafting State Policies and Goals

More than two-thirds of states responding to the survey (25 of 36) report that they have developed state documents to guide their support of school district and school site efforts to develop and enhance family involvement activities. These state documents represent a wide range of policy tools, including policies, guidelines, strategic plans, frameworks, and guiding principles.

Regardless of the type of document in use, a review of the documents submitted suggests that most state guidance documents share certain common elements. These include:

- Statewide visions, mission statements, goals, and objectives for guiding multi-level family involvement efforts
- A focus on all children, from early childhood through secondary education
- Integration of family involvement into overall education improvement efforts
- Establishment of mutual responsibility across families, schools, and communities for high student achievement
- Encouragement of volunteerism and family involvement in activities at the state, district, and school-site levels, including family involvement in school decision-making
- Acknowledgment of the need for and/or provision of funds to support family involvement efforts
- Strategies for evaluating and reviewing family involvement efforts at the state, district, and school-site levels
- Recognition of the diversity of families, including the need for translating guidance documents into other languages

Most documents also call for: reducing barriers to involvement and creating welcoming school environments; improving communication between schools and families; supporting children's learning at school and at home; providing professional development and training opportunities for family members, teachers, principals, and other school personnel; improving access for families to comprehensive health and social services; and helping schools and families to obtain the latest research and best practice information on family involvement. Examples of three documents that illustrate the range of state guidance are described below.

Idaho's 1995-99 Strategic Plan

The second of eight goals that comprise the 1995-99 strategic plan of the Idaho State Department of Education calls for the department to promote parental partnerships in education. This goal has three objectives: (1) to include broad parent representation on state department committees and advisory groups; (2) to develop suggested guidelines to engage parents and families actively in partnerships that support the academic work of children at home and shared educational decision-making at school; and (3) to identify and develop program models that support every parent in Idaho as their child's first teacher and provide parents with access to the training and information to interact with the schools as educational partners.

Kentucky's Parent Involvement Policy Statement

The Kentucky Board of Education's parent involvement policy statement recognizes that parent and family involvement is essential to attain high academic standards. Although the statement acknowledges the need for schools, families, and communities to work together, it emphasizes that educators must take the initiative in developing these partnerships. The statement notes that Kentucky's educational system includes numerous opportunities for active and meaningful parent involvement (e.g., through school-based decision-making, primary and preschool programs, family and youth service centers), and affirms the role of the state board and the state department of education in supporting and assisting schools and school districts in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies and programs that involve all parents and families. According to the statement, such programs will:

- Create welcoming atmospheres for parents and families
- Support parents and families as advocates for life-long learning and as decision-makers in school issues and programs
- Promote clear, two-way communication between schools and families about school programs and students' progress
- Assist parents, families, and guardians in acquiring techniques to support their children's learning
- Involve parents and family members, wherever appropriate, in a variety of instructional and support roles both within and outside of school
- Provide access to and coordination of community and support services for children and families
- Identify and reduce barriers to parent/family involvement
- Provide professional development for teachers, administrators, and staff on ways to work effectively with parents and families
- Provide a written copy of the policy for each parent and/or family and post the policy in the school

The policy statement acknowledges that these forms of parent and family involvement require coordinated, schoolwide efforts and the support of parents, teachers, students, and administrators, and concludes that: "Effective parent and family involvement is fundamental to a healthy system of public education that expects all students to achieve at high levels."

Rhode Island's Guiding Principles for Elementary and Secondary Education

In Rhode Island, guiding principles for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reflect a belief that the relationships between families and schools play an essential role in the success of education reform. For this reason the principles call on the department to lead and support an educational system in which: (1) every school is structured so that families and school-based educators can respect one another and work together as equal partners; (2) every school has the capacity to provide for the consistent and comprehensive involvement of families in their children's educational experiences at home and at school; (3) every school provides all families with meaningful opportunities to participate in all levels of the educational system; and (4) every school values and respects the variety of ways families choose to contribute to the success of children and families. These guidelines define families as "natural parents or the many different individuals or groups who have or take primary responsibility for the nurturing, care, and supervision of children," and delineate a family involvement agenda that is articulated through four functions:

- Advocacy--helping families define and represent their needs at all levels of the educational system
- Education--providing support for home-based learning and assistance in understanding how the educational system works
- Shared decision-making--making families equal partners in educational reform
- Support--enabling families to receive the resources they need to be involved in the education of their children, including comprehensive health and social services

Although more than two-thirds of states responding to the survey report that they have developed state documents to guide school and district family involvement efforts, it is unclear how widely these documents are used by schools. School-level survey data suggest that at least some states have been fairly successful in disseminating guidance regarding parent involvement programs. According to the SFSP, 39 percent of all elementary schools nationally report that their state helps them in setting policies for involving parents in school activities (see Exhibit IV.1 in Chapter IV).[8] We would expect that the percentage of schools reporting that they receive assistance in setting policies for involving parents would be even higher in those states that have policy documents.

[8] Findings here and elsewhere in the chapter based on SFSP data refer to all schools in a state, not just Title I schools, because findings based on the CCSSO survey refer to all schools as well. In fact, there is little, if any, significant difference between the percentage of Title I schools and the percentage of all schools reporting that they received assistance on parent involvement activities from the state.

Exhibit IV.1

State Assistance on Parent Involvement Activities for All Schools, as Reported by Principals

State Assistance to Schools	All Schools
Help in setting policies for involving parents in school activities	
Yes	39%
No	31%
Don't know	30%
Technical assistance for parent programs to school staff (e.g., workshops, training)	
Yes	30%
No	37%
Don't know	33%
Staff to assist school in parent programs	
Yes	18%
No	52%
Don't know	29%
Funds for parent programs	
Yes	23%
No	47%
Don't know	30%

Exhibit reads: **Thirty-nine percent of principals of K-8 schools report that their schools receive state assistance in setting policies for involving parents in school activities.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

Committing State-Level Resources

All states responding to the CCSSO survey identified at least one stream of funding that contributed to a state level parent involvement budget, and most (34 of 36) identified multiple streams

of funding (see Exhibit IV.2). In general, however, states found it difficult to identify and separate the exact *amount* of funding that was directed toward family involvement efforts. As a result, budget numbers are not reported here.[9]

Exhibit IV.2
Sources of Funding for State Parent Involvement Budgets

Funding Source	Number of States (n=36)
Title I, Part A Improving Basic Programs	30
Title I, Part B Even Start	29
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	26
Goals 2000	20
State general education fund	19
State-funded preschool programs	18
Private foundations	7
Corporate donations	3

Exhibit reads: **Thirty of 36 states responding to the survey report that is a source of funding for parent involvement activities.**

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, Survey of State Policies and Practices Regarding Family Involvement, 1996.

[9] Because of confusion over the definition of "earmarked funding" and difficulty separating out funding directed to family involvement efforts within discrete funding streams, budget numbers are not comparable across states. For example, while Tennessee considered state general fund spending on family resource centers as earmarked funding for family involvement ($3,541,300 in 1995-96), Kentucky, which spent $36,580,000 from its state general education fund on family resource and youth service centers in the same year, reported a family involvement budget of only $480,000 from Goals 2000 funds. Because of difficulty calculating funding directed specifically to family involvement efforts within given funding streams, some states reported funds as earmarked if they used any proportion of those funds for parent involvement activities. In many states it is unclear if the state is reporting entire budgets for programs with family involvement components or is only reporting funds that are earmarked specifically for parent involvement within the programs.

Of all sources of funding available to states for support of family involvement budgets, it appears that states rely most commonly on Title I and other federal funds. For example, most of the states responding to the survey (30 of 36) identified Title I as a source of funding for state family involvement budgets. The next three most frequently cited funding sources are also federal programs--Even Start, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and Goals 2000. Only 19 of 36 states (little more than half) reported that their state's general education fund was a source of funding for their family involvement budget (see Exhibit IV.2).

Approximately one-third of the states responding to the survey (13 of 36), coordinate all family involvement efforts within a single office in the SEA. Staff support for these offices ranges from 0.75 to 5.0 full-time equivalents.

Data from the SFSP shed some light on how state budgets translate into support for parent involvement efforts in schools. Almost one-quarter of all schools (23 percent) report that the state helps the school by providing funds for parent involvement programs. These findings may underestimate state aid, however, because 30 percent of all schools did not know if they received state funding to support parent involvement programs. In addition to funding, 18 percent of all schools report that the state provides staff to assist with parent involvement programs, with an additional 29 percent that did not know whether the state provided them with staff (see Exhibit IV.1).

Providing Technical Assistance and Support

To achieve state policies and goals for family involvement, SEAs are providing technical assistance and support to schools and districts. This support includes sharing information, providing staff development opportunities, supporting the provision of parent education and training, and providing other forms of support such as direct consultation and local demonstration grants.

Disseminating Information

To help schools and districts in their efforts to involve families, most states report that they disseminate materials to school staff, families, community organizations, and businesses or corporations (see Exhibit IV.3). Such materials are most commonly shared with school staff and parents. In Virginia, the state has developed a teacher's manual for parent and community involvement that provides research-based information on: the importance of parent involvement; strategies for building bridges between home and school; tips for recruiting, training, and using

volunteers in the classroom; and characteristics of successful parent involvement programs. The manual has been distributed to all schools, district offices, and local Parent-Teacher Associations, as well as to state-level education associations and business, civic, and religious groups. In California, the SEA has developed a parent's handbook on the state education system that includes information on curriculum, testing, grades, parents' rights, and parent involvement opportunities. The state has also developed a pamphlet entitled, *Parents Are Teachers, Too*, that outlines the importance of parent involvement and offers concrete suggestions for ways parents can help their children learn.

Exhibit IV.3
State-Level Information Dissemination

Recipients of Disseminated Information	Number of States in 1995-96	Number of States in 1996-97[1]	Number of States with No Plans
School teachers, administrators, or staff (n=36)	28	29	5
School district staff (n=36)	29	30	4
Family members (n=35)	28	28	4
Business/corporate community (n=32)	15	19	11
Public and private community organizations (n=34)	24	25	7

[1] Projections made by states in summer 1996 for the 1996-97 school year.

Exhibit reads: **Twenty-eight of 36 states responding to this survey item report that they disseminated information on parent involvement to school teachers, administrators, or staff in 1995-96. Twenty-nine states had plans to disseminate information to these recipients in 1996-97.**

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, Survey of State Policies and Practices Regarding Family Involvement, 1996.

Providing Staff Development

Most states provide professional/staff development opportunities on family involvement for district and school staff, including teachers and administrators; for example, 30 of 35 states responding to this section of the CCSSO survey report that they provided professional development to teachers during the 1995-96 school year (see Exhibit IV.4). States were most likely to provide this

training to teachers and principals, and least likely to provide it to non-professional school staff. A majority of states (23 of 33 in 1995-96) also provide training to SEA staff. In Kentucky, training is available for school, district, and SEA staff through the Family and Community Engagement Branch of the SEA. On annual staff development days, the branch provides training for all SEA staff on the importance of family involvement and on services and supports for family involvement that are available through the department. The branch conducts family involvement training for districts and schools on request, including topics such as promoting meaningful parent involvement, managing a parent involvement program, and developing family-friendly schools. In addition, the state has provided regional workshops for school-based teams that include administrators, teachers, parents, support staff, students, and other community representatives on developing action plans for family and community involvement.

Exhibit IV.4
Staff Development Opportunities

Participants in Staff Development on Family Involvement	Number of States in 1995-96	Number of States in 1996-97[1]	Number of States with No Plans
Teachers (n=35)	30	32	2
Principals and other school administrators (n=35)	30	32	2
Other professional staff (n=35)	29	31	3
Non-professional school staff (n=35)	23	25	7
Local education agency staff (n=35)	29	32	2
SEA staff (n=33)	23	26	6

[1] Projections made by states in summer 1996 for the 1996-97 school year.

Exhibit reads: **Thirty states responding to this survey item report that they provided staff development on family involvement to teachers in 1995-96. Thirty-two states had plans to provide staff development in 1996-97.**

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, Survey of State Policies and Practices Regarding Family Involvement, 1996.

Some states combine parent involvement training for staff and parents. The California Department of Education sponsors Family-School-Community Partnership Institutes that provide

training for school-based teams of parents and educators on the roles they can play in enhancing the educational achievement of students. The institutes are five-day, intensive training sessions that use a "train-the-trainer" model to equip participants to train other parents and staff at their schools. Examples of institute topics include improving home-school communication, establishing effective family-school-community partnerships, and helping parents assume leadership, advisory, and advocacy roles.

Almost half of the respondents to this section (15 of 35) had developed standards for family involvement training by 1995-96, with 18 more states planning to develop standards in 1996-97. In Tennessee, these standards are presented in a *Parent/Community Involvement Guide*, developed in 1988 to help educators improve the level and quality of parent involvement for every child. The guide consists of eleven modules that address topics such as improving communication with parents, involving parents in learning activities with their children at home, designing a parent volunteer program, and conducting effective parent-teacher conferences. The modules can be presented alone or as part of a full-day training session, through professional development in districts and schools and in regional training and conferences.

School survey data from the SFSP suggest that the number of schools states are reaching is not insignificant. Only 30 percent of schools report that the state provides technical assistance for parent involvement activities, such as workshops and training, to school staff. A third of schools (33 percent) did not know if they had received professional development services from the state (see Exhibit IV.1).

Supporting Parent Education and Training

All states responding to this section of the survey report providing some financial, material, or technical support to local districts and schools to strengthen parents' capacity to be full partners in the education of their children. One-third of the states responding to this section of the survey (12 of 35) report providing "much support" for these efforts.

The most common types of training include activities that (1) strengthen parents' capacity to make decisions about their children's education or (2) build parents' academic and literacy skills to help parents help their children to learn (see Exhibit IV.5). In New York, for example, the SEA awarded eleven grants to nonprofit organizations to provide parent training in New York City Schools during the 1995-96 school year. Topics of the training included parenting skills, parent-teacher

Family Involvement in Wisconsin

Family involvement has been a priority at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) since 1987-88. Support for family involvement is guided by a state framework for family-school-community partnerships that calls for: building on parenting strengths and helping families improve parenting skills; designing and implementing effective communication practices; offering opportunities for learning at home; recruiting volunteer participation from families and other community members; designing governance structures to involve parents as partners in policy decisions; and establishing partnerships with community organizations. A three-person team coordinates DPI family involvement efforts across programs and funding streams to support schools and districts implementing the state's framework for school-family-community partnerships.

Public Awareness. Wisconsin promotes public awareness of family involvement through materials such as posters and bookmarks; events such as the annual Wisconsin Family Read-In co-sponsored by Wisconsin Public Radio; and campaigns such as Open Doors, Open Minds, designed to welcome families and community members to schools. In addition, a pilot program developed in response to a recommendation by the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council promotes family reading among mothers of newborns in Madison. The DPI, public libraries, and childbirth preparation classes collaborate on the pilot.

Information. Wisconsin disseminates resource packets to schools at least three times each year that include ideas, suggestions, and reproducible activities to involve families in their children's education. Numerous additional resources are available from the program, including *Families and Education: An Educator's Resource for Family Involvement*; *Light the Way: A School Volunteer Resource Guide*; and *Making Your Family-Community Partnership Work: A Checklist for Schools*.

Training. An annual workshop brings together school-based teams of parents, teachers, administrators, and school board or community members to explore practical strategies for building family-school-community linkages and receive individual team coaching from experts such as Joyce Epstein. 150 partnership teams have completed this training since it began during the 1993-94 school year, and half-day follow-up workshops are offered at several sites throughout the state each year. Regional workshops coordinated by the cooperative educational service agencies and conferences sponsored by state-level educational associations provide additional training.

Funding. The state provides funding to schools and districts to implement family-school partnerships. Seed grants of $200 to $500 allow school teams to participate in the state's annual workshop. This year, Wisconsin will award 20 grants of $2,500 to districts belonging to the Partnership 2000 Schools Network at Johns Hopkins University, to allow them to provide a stipend for a parent volunteer to staff partnership efforts.

Next steps. To support local family-school-community partnerships, the state plans to develop, with parents, sample family involvement standards that school districts can use to develop and adopt local standards for family involvement for districts, schools, and parents.

Exhibit IV.5
State Support for Parent Education and Training

Parent Education or Training Activity	Number of States (n=35)
Activities that strengthen parent capacity for making decisions about their children's education	34
Literacy education programs	33
Academic skill building for parents (including GED preparation)	33
Parenting education and child development	32
Activities that help families build capacity to participate in home-school collaborations and partnerships	31
Activities that enhance family involvement in parent-teacher conferences	31

Exhibit reads: **Thirty-four of 35 states responding to this item report that they provide activities that strengthen parent capacity for making decisions about their children's education.**

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, Survey of State Policies and Practices Regarding Family Involvement, 1996.

partnerships, parents' rights, and school-based planning and shared decision-making. A number of states, including Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma, support parenting skills programs for parents of preschool-aged children.

Almost two-thirds of the states responding to this section of the survey (22 of 35) report using state education funding to support parent resource centers where parents can receive information on education-related issues and/or participate in education and training activities. In West Virginia, 41 Parent/Educator Resource Centers across the state are providing support for parents and educators to enhance collaborative efforts in the education of children. The centers provide information and support services to parents to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their children's education. In Hawaii, the state department of education provides funding and support for Parent-Community Networking Centers at 205 of the state's 245 public schools. The centers are staffed by part-time "school-parent facilitators" and offer activities for parents such as educational seminars and workshops and leadership training.

The vast majority of states (30 of 35) report including grandparents, extended family members, and other significant adults in their education and training efforts.

Other Technical Assistance and Support

In addition to disseminating information, providing staff development, and supporting parent education and training, a number of states provide individual consultation with schools and districts, host state conferences, provide support for linking families with schools through the use of technology, and provide local demonstration grants for innovative parent involvement efforts (see Exhibit IV.6).

Most states (31 of 36) report that they provided individual consultation on family involvement to districts during the 1995-96 school year. Most states also provided consultation to individual school sites (30 of 36) and report that they convened meetings or conferences on family involvement (29 of 36) during the last school year (see Exhibit IV.6). For example, in Virginia the SEA and the state PTA hosted a series of regional Parent/Community Involvement Summits during the 1994-95 and 1995-96 school years.

Exhibit IV.6
Other Technical Assistance and Support

Activity	Number of States in 1995-96	Number of States in 1996-97[1]	Number of States with No Plans
Seminars/workshops (n=36)	32	35	0
Individual consultation with districts (n=36)	31	34	1
Individual consultation to school sites (n=36)	30	34	1
Meetings/conferences (n=36)	29	32	2
Local demonstration grants (n=35)	18	20	14

[1] Projection made by states in summer 1996 for the 1996-97 school year.

Exhibit reads: **Thirty-two of 36 states responding to this survey item report that they provided seminars and workshops on family involvement in 1995-96. Thirty-five of 36 had plans to do so in 1996-97.**

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, Survey of State Policies and Practices Regarding Family Involvement, 1996.

About half of the states responding to this item (18 of 35) report providing local demonstration grants to support family involvement activities during the 1995-96 school year (see Exhibit IV.6). For example, Maryland awarded demonstration grants totaling $100,000 for innovative models designed to strengthen parent involvement through the School Community Center Program and Wisconsin awarded $500 seed grants and provided training and technical assistance to 50 schools to implement family-community-school partnerships.

Finally, three-quarters of the states (24 of 36) report that they provide support for efforts to link families with schools through the use of technology. For example, using Goals 2000 funds, Kentucky awarded 13 grants of $5,250 each to local school districts to increase parent involvement and engagement through the Kentucky Education Technology System. A number of state departments of education report that they share information with parents and other community members through the Internet and web sites. Colorado facilitates the sharing of information among the SEA, schools, and parents through the Colorado Meeting Place, an Internet access site with electronic mail capability. The state is encouraging businesses and other organizations to donate useable computer equipment that can be distributed to schools and, through schools, to families to bring more parents into this on-line dialogue.

Assisting Schools and Districts in Implementing the Title I Parent Involvement Provisions

All states responding to the survey report that they actively promote and/or support the implementation of family involvement provisions in Title I. This state-level support includes helping schools and districts to craft parent involvement policies, build capacity among parents and staff, ensure opportunities for all parents to participate, and coordinate Title I parent involvement activities with family involvement activities under other federal and state programs.

Crafting Parent Involvement Policies

Most states responding to this section of the survey report that they assisted districts and schools in developing written family involvement polices and school-parent compacts during the 1995-96 school year (see Exhibit IV.7). In some states, this assistance took the form of workshops and guidebooks on implementing the new Title I requirements. The Kansas state department of education conducted regional workshops during the 1994-95 and 1995-96 school years on implementing the

Title I requirements in the reauthorized legislation that included sessions on developing family involvement polices and school-parent compacts. Workshop participants included district and school-level Title I administrators as well as Title I teachers and paraprofessionals. Kansas also developed a guidebook for implementing the Title I parent involvement requirements that provides sample parent involvement policies and school-parent compacts. Some states provide individual assistance to schools and districts on designing parent involvement policies. In Idaho, a consultant from the state department of education is available to work with parents and staff at the district level and at individual school sites to facilitate the process of designing family involvement policies and school-parent compacts.

Exhibit IV.7
Crafting Parent Involvement Policies

Type of Assistance	Number of States in 1995-96 (n=35)
Assisting districts to develop written family involvement policies, in consultation with families	31
Assisting schools and families to develop written policies on family involvement	32
Assisting schools to develop school-parent compacts jointly with parents/families	30

Exhibit reads: **Thirty-one of 35 states responding to this survey item report that they assisted districts to develop written family involvement policies in 1995-96.**

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, Survey of State Policies and Practices Regarding Family Involvement, 1996.

Building Capacity among Parents and Staff

Most states report assisting districts and schools to build the capacity of families to participate in their children's education, including providing parent education and training opportunities and assisting with developing family resource centers (see Exhibit IV.8). For example, the Illinois State Board of Education is funding a pilot program that involves collaboration among Title I school districts, regional offices of education, community colleges, universities, and community businesses to advance the education of parents of at-risk children and involve these parents more intensively in the education of their children. In Texas, the Parent Involvement and Community Empowerment Unit of

the SEA is providing assistance to schools, districts, and regional education service centers to encourage the implementation of voluntary parenting education, adult education, and family literacy programs. In Washington state, annual Title I parent conferences address topics such as getting involved in school decision making, tips for learning at home, positive discipline techniques, and self-esteem for parents and children.

Exhibit IV.8
Building Parent Capacity

Type of Assistance	Number of States in 1995-96 (n=35)
Assisting districts and schools to develop and deliver training to help families work with their children to improve achievement	32
Assisting districts and schools to coordinate family literacy training	29
Assisting districts and schools to develop family resource centers	28
Assisting districts and schools to provide opportunities for parent and other significant adults to learn about child development and child rearing issues	27

Exhibit reads: **Thirty-two of 35 states responding to this survey item report that they provide assistance to schools and districts to deliver training to help families work with their children to improve achievement.**

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, Survey of State Policies and Practices Regarding Family Involvement, 1996.

In addition, states report helping to build the capacity of school staff to involve parents meaningfully (see Exhibit IV.9). All states (35 of 35) report assisting districts and schools to improve the skills of school staff to work with families as equal partners. This assistance takes many forms. In response to requests from educators and administrators, the Iowa state department of education has prepared a sourcebook of strategies and activities for supporting learning in the home. In Washington, a parent with extensive experience in family-school partnerships has been hired by the SEA to provide workshops for teachers and administrators on understanding parents' perspectives on education and working with parents as equal partners. These workshops are provided at individual schools on request. In Oregon, a team of five "distinguished educators" provides individual consultations to schools on parent involvement. Typical topics include planning a parent involvement program, designing a school-parent compact, and involving hard-to-reach and minority parents.

Oregon also provides regional training for coordinators of school volunteer programs. In response to a need expressed by Title I educators in Illinois, the State Board of Education has designed and is now implementing a series of regional workshops on parent involvement.

Exhibit IV.9
Building Staff Capacity

Type of Assistance	Number of States in 1995-96 (n=35)
Assisting districts and schools to improve the skills of staff for working with families as equal partners and improving the ties between home and school	35
Assisting schools with involving families to plan, review, and improve family involvement activities	32
Assisting districts and schools to develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in family involvement activities	29
Assisting districts to involve families in making decisions about how district-level family involvement funding will be used	27

Exhibit reads: **Thirty-five of the 35 states responding to this survey item report that they assisted districts and schools to improve the skills of staff for working with families and improving the ties between home and school.**

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, Survey of State Policies and Practices Regarding Family Involvement, 1996.

A majority of states responding to this section of the survey (29 of 35) report assisting districts and schools with developing appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in family involvement activities. For example, a Kentucky state department of education guidebook on implementing the Title I parent involvement requirements includes suggestions for coordinating with other community organizations, including public libraries, local businesses, and senior citizens' groups.

Ensuring Access

States are assisting districts in their efforts to ensure that all families can be involved in their children's education through flexible scheduling of family involvement activities and special accommodations for parents who are limited English proficient or disabled (see Exhibit IV.10). About two-thirds of states report that they assist in providing full opportunities for the involvement of families with disabled members. Almost three-quarters report that they assist in providing full opportunities for the involvement of limited-English proficient families. For example, in California the Title I parent involvement guidebook has been translated into Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Spanish, and Vietnamese, and the Family-School-Community Partnership Institutes are conducted in both English and Spanish.

Exhibit IV.10
Ensuring Access

Type of Assistance	Number of States in 1995-96
Assisting schools with developing family involvement meeting times that meet the needs of families' schedules (n=35)	28
Assisting districts and schools with providing full opportunities for family involvement for families that are limited English proficient (n=35)	26
Assisting districts and schools with providing full opportunities for family involvement for families that have family members with disabilities (n=35)	24
Assisting districts and schools with preparing written materials in the primary languages of families who are non-native English speakers (n=34)	21

Exhibit reads: **Twenty-eight of 35 states responding to this survey item report that they assisted schools with developing family involvement meeting times that meet the needs of families' schedules in 1995-96.**

Source: Council of Chief State School Officers, Survey of State Policies and Practices Regarding Family Involvement, 1996.

Coordinating with Other Parent Involvement Efforts

Most states (31 of 35) are assisting districts and schools to implement the requirement to integrate family involvement programs and activities from various federal and state programs--such as Even Start, Goals 2000, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and state-funded preschool programs--with Title I parent involvement components. In Massachusetts, a staff team called the Family Learning Collaborative meets monthly to coordinate all family involvement, literacy, and learning activities of the SEA. In Indiana, a Family Involvement Coordinator in the SEA is responsible for coordinating family involvement efforts under Title I, Goals 2000, Even Start, special education, and other programs as needed. On the other hand, only 8 of the 19 states with federally-funded Parent Information and Resource Centers that responded to the survey report assisting districts and schools with informing families about the existence of these centers.

Conclusion

The findings of the CCSSO survey suggest that most of the 36 states responding to the survey are taking an active role in supporting school and district efforts to involve parents in their children's education with an extensive array of initiatives, although the data do not allow us to make judgments about the intensity or the quality of that assistance or about the activities of states that did not respond to the survey. Almost two-thirds of the 36 states responding to the survey report that state documents have been developed to guide state-level support of school and district family involvement efforts. In more than half of the responding states, laws are in place to guide state-level support. States are also committing resources to family involvement efforts. All 36 states responding to the survey were able to identify at least one source of funding that contributed to a state-level parent involvement budget. Most states also report providing technical assistance and support that includes disseminating information, providing staff development, and supporting parent education and training. Finally, most states report assisting schools and districts in implementing the Title I parent involvement provisions, including assisting with crafting parent involvement policies and school-parent compacts, building capacity among staff and parents, and ensuring access and coordination with other parent involvement efforts. Additional study is needed to understand how many schools may benefit from these various kinds of services and in what ways.

V. EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF TITLE I PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROVISIONS

Title I, as reauthorized by IASA, places a greater emphasis on parent involvement than its predecessor, Chapter 1. Chapter 1 defined parent involvement as the building of "partnerships between home and school," but left the development of strategies for building these partnerships up to local schools and districts. Under IASA, Title I requires that local schools and districts adopt specific strategies for developing family-school partnerships. For example, the new Title I parent involvement provisions now require that schools: (1) develop school-parent compacts that outline the responsibilities of both schools and families to help children achieve high standards, (2) involve parents in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs, and (3) build staff's capacity for working with parents and parents' capacity for working with schools and with their children at home through training and other support. Together, these provisions expand the range of activities that schools must undertake to engage parents and support the development of meaningful school-family partnerships to strengthen children's learning.

This chapter reviews specific Title I parent involvement provisions, highlighting those that have been added in the most recent reauthorization of Title I, and examines the early implementation of those provisions in Title I schools. Findings are based primarily on data collected through the Fast Response Survey on Family and School Partnerships (SFSP) in Public Schools, K-8. Although the SFSP did not contain survey items geared specifically to assessing schools' progress in implementing the Title I parent involvement provisions, it did collect information on the prevalence of Title I-endorsed practices in Title I schools. SFSP data show that many of the practices required or endorsed in the legislation reauthorizing Title I--for example, parent resource centers, home visits, and the provision of information and training to parents--are already common among schools seeking to improve linkages with parents. However, survey data also show that these practices are far from universal. Because the SFSP was administered to schools in spring 1996, less than a year after the new Title I provisions took effect, this lag in implementation is probably due to the fact that many schools were still in the planning phase of implementing these provisions.

Parent Involvement Policies

Title I requires schools to develop a written parent involvement policy that describes how schools will work with parents as partners in the education of their children and how they will carr,

out the Title I parent involvement requirements. Schools must develop these written policies jointly with parents and must include parents in planning parent involvement activities.

According to SFSP data, many, but not all, K-8 Title I schools appear to comply with this provision by consulting parents in the development of parent involvement activities; 64 percent of Title I principals report that their schools consider parent input to a great or moderate extent when making decisions about parent involvement activities (see Exhibit V.1). According to SFSP data, elementary school principals are more likely to report that their schools consider parent input than middle school principals (69 percent of elementary school principals, compared with only 45 percent of middle school principals).[10]

Involving Parents in Decisions about Their Children's Education

To support parents' involvement in the development and oversight of Title I programs, Title I schools must convene an annual meeting to inform parents of the Title I requirements and their right to be involved and must involve parents in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs. Schools must also provide parents with the information they need to become involved in their children's education in a meaningful way. The types of information Title I schools must provide to parents include:

- Timely information on Title I and parent involvement activities
- School performance profiles

---

[10] As an important component of each school's written parent involvement policy, Title I also requires that schools and parents develop a school-parent compact that describes how parents, school staff, and students will share responsibility for improved student achievement. Although the SFSP did contain several items on the implementation of "voluntary written agreements (e.g., compacts or learning contracts) between the school and individual parents," the wording of these items proved to be too ambiguous to attribute principals' responses specifically to the implementation of Title I school-parent compacts. For example, it is impossible to know whether principals were referring to the use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for special education students, in addition to school-family compacts, when they responded to these items. The Department of Education expects to collect more reliable data on school-parent compacts in other studies currently underway. For example, ED's Planning and Evaluation Service is currently conducting an evaluation of the implementation of education reform and Title I at the school level, with a focus on school-parent compacts. The study will examine the impact of school-parent compacts in promoting shared understanding between schools and parents and shared responsibility for improving children's learning. Study data will be collected through surveys and case studies of schools with exemplary compacts.

Exhibit V.1

Title I Schools That Consider Parent Input When Making Decisions, as Reported by Principals

Topic of Decision-making	Extent to Which Schools Consider Parent Input	
	Great or Moderate Extent	Small Extent or Not at All
Allocation of funds	40%	60%
Curriculum or overall instructional program	45%	55%
Design of special programs	45%	55%
Library books and materials	29%	71%
Discipline policies and procedures	49%	51%
Health-related topics or policies, such as drug or alcohol abuse	47%	53%
Monitoring or evaluating teachers	6%	94%
Developing parent involvement activities	64%	35%

Exhibit reads: **Forty percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools report that their schools consider parent input to a great or moderate extent when making decisions about the allocation of funds.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

- Children's individual assessment results, including an interpretation of those results
- Descriptions and explanations of the school curriculum, forms of assessment used to measure student progress, and proficiency levels students are expected to meet

Title I schools must also provide parents with opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions, share experiences with other parents, and participate as appropriate in decisions relating to the education of their children.

Involving Parents in School Decision-making

More than three-quarters (78 percent) of Title I schools report in the SFSP that they have advisory groups or policy councils that include parents, with little variation among schools of

different poverty levels or schools serving different grade levels. A much smaller number of Title I schools report that they consider parent input "to a great or moderate extent" when making decisions on selected topics related to school programs and policies, again with little variation among schools of different poverty levels or schools serving different grade levels (see Exhibit V.1). For example, 40 percent of schools report that they consider parent input when making decisions on the allocation of school funds; 45 percent report that they consider parent input on the curriculum or overall instructional program; and 45 percent consider parent input in the design of special programs. Title I schools are only slightly more likely to consult parents on selected non-academic topics; for example, 49 percent of schools consider parent input when making decisions about discipline policies and procedures, and 47 percent consult parents on health-related topics, such as drug or alcohol abuse policies.

Parents themselves report somewhat mixed responses to schools' efforts to include them in school decision-making. According to NHES data, 71 percent of parents report that their child's school includes parents on committees or in other groups that make decisions about school policies, roughly matching SFSP data on the prevalence of these groups. Although parent representation on decision-making committees is common, fewer parents (60 percent) report that parents have a real say in school policy decisions at their child's school. In addition, higher income parents, parents with more education, and parents who speak English at home were all less likely to say that parents have a real say in school decision-making, possibly because these parents have higher expectations of the ways in which parents will be consulted and are more likely to question schools' authority to make decisions without their input. For example, 66 percent of parents earning $10,000 a year or less agreed that parents have a real say in school decision-making, while 58 percent of those parents earning $50,000 a year or more agreed that parents have a real say; parents who did not complete high school and parents who graduated from college differed in their perceptions by exactly the same amount (66 percent vs. 58 percent). The gap in perceptions of parents' influence on school decision-making is widest between parents who speak English at home and parents who speak some other language; 73 percent of non-English speaking parents said that parents had a real say in decision-making, while only 58 percent of English-speaking parents said the same.

Title I schools across the board are clearly making an effort to involve parents in school decision-making. What is less clear is how much influence parents actually exert over school policy decisions. Parents who expect their opinions to be taken seriously (typically those parents with more education and higher incomes) may be more skeptical of schools' ability to include them in decision-making in a way that really counts. These findings suggest that parent involvement in school decision-making may still be more superficial than some parents or policymakers would want.

Providing Parents with Information about School Programs

By providing information on the levels of achievement expected of all students, Title I schools can help parents better prepare their children or at least help them understand the goals that their children are expected to reach. Survey data do not provide us with any information about schools' efforts to inform parents about the content and performance standards against which students' achievement is measured, but they do show that most Title I schools provide parents with written information about the goals and objectives of their regular instructional programs. Fifty-five percent of Title I principals report that they always provide information on the school's goals and instructional objectives to parents and an additional 26 percent report that they frequently do (see Exhibit V.2). Similarly, most Title I schools give parents information about the school's performance on standardized tests; 69 percent of Title I principals report that their schools always give parents written information about school performance on standardized tests, and an additional 14 percent report that they frequently do. Title I schools are less likely to give parents examples of work that meets high standards; only 16 percent of Title I principals surveyed reported that their schools always provide such examples, although 42 percent frequently do.

Providing Parents with Information about Their Child's Achievement

Most Title I schools appear to provide some information to parents about their children's achievement on a regular basis. For example, 82 percent of Title I principals report that their schools always or frequently give parents written interim reports during grading periods. Seventy-one percent of Title I principals report that parents always or frequently receive positive phone calls or notes when their children's performance at school improves (see Exhibit V.2).

As might be expected, different methods of communicating with parents are used more often at different grade levels. For example, 71 percent of principals of Title I middle schools report that their schools always provide interim reports to parents, while 52 percent of elementary school principals report that their schools provide interim reports (see Exhibit V.3). On the other hand, elementary schools are somewhat more likely to phone parents or send notes home when their child's performance improves at school; 17 percent of Title I elementary school principals report that their teachers call or send notes, compared with 10 percent of Title I middle school principals.

Although most schools provide parents with some information on their children's achievement, schools that group students by ability are less likely to notify parents of their child's ability group placement, perhaps because they are less inclined to invite comment on, or invite

Exhibit V.2

Frequency of Communication between Title I Schools and Parents, as Reported by Principals

Means of Communication	Frequency of Communication			
	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
Parents are given written interim reports during grading periods	56%	26%	16%	2%
Parents are requested to sign off on homework	14%	47%	36%	4%
Parents have access to a school-sponsored "homework helpline"	19%	4%	5%	72%
Parents are given written information about the goals and objectives of the school's regular instructional program	55%	26%	16%	2%
Parents are given written information about the school's performance on standardized tests	69%	14%	13%	4%
Parents receive positive phone calls or notes from teachers when a child's performance improves	16%	55%	28%	1%
Parents are given examples of work that meets high standards	16%	42%	36%	6%
In schools that group students by ability, parents are notified about children's ability group placements	55%	25%	17%	2%

Exhibit reads: Fifty-six percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools report that their schools always give parents written interim reports during grading periods.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

Exhibit V.3

Title I Schools That Always Communicate with Parents on Various Topics, as Reported by Principals, by Grade Levels Served

Means of Communication	All Title I Schools	Grade Level Served		
		Elementary	Middle	Elementary/ Middle
Parents are always given written interim reports during grading periods	56%	52%	71%	63%
Parents are always requested to sign off on homework	14%	17%	2%	4%
Parents always have access to a school-sponsored "homework helpline"	19%	19%	28%	9%
Parents are always given written information about the goals and objectives of the school's regular instructional program	55%	59%	44%	43%
Parents are always given written information about the school's performance on standardized tests	69%	69%	72%	58%
Parents always receive positive phone calls or notes from teachers when a child's performance improves	16%	17%	10%	15%
Parents are always given examples of work that meets high standards	16%	19%	9%	13%
In schools that group students by ability, parents are always notified about children's ability group placements	56%	56%	61%	43%

Exhibit reads: **Fifty-two percent of principals of K-8 Title I elementary schools report that their schools always give parents written interim reports during grading periods.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

parents to participate in, instructional decisions they have made on behalf of students. According to SFSP data, of those K-8 Title I schools that use ability grouping, 56 percent of principals report that the school always notifies parents of their children's ability group placements (see Exhibit V.4). In addition, high-poverty Title I schools are less likely to always inform parents of ability groups placements than low-poverty Title I schools. Principals at 66 percent of Title I schools with poverty rates of 34 percent or less report that their schools always notify parents of ability group placements, compared with 41 percent of principals at schools with poverty rates of 75 percent or more (see Exhibit V.4). Lower poverty Title I schools may be more inclined to notify parents of ability group placements because higher income parents may be more likely to question the wisdom of the placement and more adamant that they be informed of these decisions.

Building Capacity for Parent Involvement

Title I now requires that schools undertake a variety of activities aimed at building parents' capacity to support their children's learning at home and at school, and to work in partnership with schools in support of their children's education. To build parent capacity for involvement, schools must provide information and training to parents in the following areas:

- Understanding the National Education Goals, the state's content standards, state student performance standards, state and local assessments, and Title I requirements
- Monitoring their children's progress and working with teachers to improve the performance of their children
- Participating in decisions related to the education of their children
- Helping parents work with their children to improve their children's achievement, by, for example, coordinating necessary literacy training from other sources

Schools must also undertake a long list of activities intended to enable staff and parents to work productively together, including:

- Providing parents with the opportunity to volunteer in their child's classroom
- Educating teachers, principals, and other staff in how to reach out to parents and work with them as equal partners

Exhibit V.4

Title I Schools That Always Communicate with Parents on Various Topics, as Reported by Principals, by School Poverty Concentration

Means of Communication	All Title I Schools	School Poverty Concentration			
		0-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75%+
Parents are always given written interim reports during grading periods	56%	47%	51%	65%	60%
Parents are always requested to sign off on homework	14%	10%	17%	15%	16%
Parents always have access to a school-sponsored "homework helpline"	19%	14%	19%	21%	25%
Parents are always given written information about the goals and objectives of the school's regular instructional program	55%	55%	47%	56%	60%
Parents are always given written information about the school's performance on standardized tests	69%	70%	59%	67%	77%
Parents always receive positive phone calls or notes from teachers when a child's performance improves	16%	13%	17%	18%	17%
Parents are always given examples of work that meets high standards	16%	17%	13%	17%	17%
In schools that group students by ability, parents are always notified about children's ability group placements	56%	66%	53%	59%	41%

Exhibit reads: **Forty-seven percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools with free- and reduced-price lunch rates of 0-34 percent report that their schools always give parents written interim reports during grading periods.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

- Conducting other activities, such as establishing parent resource centers or providing opportunities to learn about child development, that are designed to help parents become full partners in the education of their children

- Ensuring, to the extent possible, that information is sent to the homes of participating children in the language used in those homes

Schools may take on these activities as the basis for a comprehensive program of school-family partnerships, or they may carry them out in the most narrowly defined sense. Although SFSP data provide no information on implementation of many of the capacity-building activities described in the legislation, survey items did address a few general strategies, as reviewed below.

Information and Training for Parents

Most schools take some steps to provide parents with information on how to help their children learn at home. According to the SFSP, 96 percent of Title I schools report that they provide information to parents on at least one topic related to parenting or helping their children learn at home, and most Title I schools report that they provide information on a variety of topics. For example, 94 percent of Title I schools report that they provide parents with information on at least two of the following four topics related to general parenting: (1) child or adolescent development; (2) nutrition, health, or safety; (3) parenting skills; and (4) community services to help children or their families. Eighty-eight percent of Title I schools report that they provide information on at least two of the following three topics related to helping children learn at home: (1) helping with homework; (2) developing study skills; and (3) ideas for learning outside of the home.

Elementary schools are more likely than middle schools to report that they give parents information on topics related to helping children learn at home (92 percent of Title I elementary schools compared with 74 percent of Title I middle schools). But there is no significant variation among schools with different concentrations of poverty or between Title I and non-Title I schools, according to the SFSP. With very few exceptions, therefore, almost all schools report that they provide at least some information to parents on how to help their children succeed in school.

Although almost all Title I schools do provide information and training to parents, survey data tell us little about the quality of that information and training. Of those Title I schools reporting that they provide information to parents on at least one topic, according to the SFSP, almost all--96 percent--report that they provide at least some of that information in the form of newsletters or other printed material. Seventy-five percent of Title I schools report that they provide parents with

information in the form of workshops or classes, which tend to be less efficient for reaching large numbers of parents, but more effective as a teaching tool.

Parents' assessments of schools' performance in communicating with them on selected topics suggest that the information that schools provide does not reach all parents. According to NHES. data, for example, on each of four separate topics related to supporting their children's learning at home, a third of all parents report that their child's school does not provide them with any information at all (see Exhibit II.9 in Chapter II). On each of these topics, roughly a third of parents said that their child's school communicates with them "very well"; another third said their child's schools communicated with them "just OK." The reach, as well as the quality, of the information provided clearly varies across schools.

Providing Parents with Opportunities to Volunteer at School

Title I requires that schools address the importance of regular communication between parents and teachers in their school-parent compact by, for example, providing families with opportunities to volunteer in their child's classroom; in turn, families may volunteer as part of their promise to help support their children's achievement. According to the SFSP, 95 percent of principals of all Title I schools report that their school does provide parents with the opportunity to volunteer in classrooms, with little variation between high- and low-poverty schools (see Exhibit V.5). In addition, similarly high percentages of Title I principals report that their schools offer parents other kinds of volunteer opportunities such as volunteering outside the classroom or assisting in fundraising activities.

As noted in Chapter II, however, parent participation in volunteer and other forms of school-based activities tends to be lower in higher poverty schools. Principals of Title I schools with higher concentrations of poverty are less likely to report that parent participation in volunteer activities is satisfactory or moderately satisfactory, according to SFSP data (see Exhibit V.5). For example, principals in 63 percent of Title I schools with poverty rates of 75 percent or more report that parents' involvement as classroom volunteers is satisfactory or moderately satisfactory, compared with 94 percent of principals in schools with poverty rates of 34 percent or less (see Exhibit V.5).

Exhibit V.5

Level of Parent Involvement in Service Opportunities at Title I Schools, as Reported by Principals, by School Poverty Concentration

Level of Parent Involvement in Service Opportunities	All Title I Schools	School Poverty Concentration			
		0-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75%+
Serving as volunteers in the classroom					
Satisfactory or moderately satisfactory	81%	94%	87%	75%	63%
Unsatisfactory or moderately unsatisfactory	20%	37%	25%	13%	6%
Serving as volunteers outside the classroom					
Satisfactory or moderately satisfactory	85%	97%	87%	85%	68%
Unsatisfactory or moderately unsatisfactory	15%	3%	13%	15%	32%
Assisting in fundraising activities					
Satisfactory or moderately satisfactory	91%	99%	92%	90%	79%
Unsatisfactory or moderately unsatisfactory	9%	1%	7%	10%	21%
Attending meetings of the parent-teachers association					
Satisfactory or moderately satisfactory	63%	73%	67%	57%	53%
Unsatisfactory or moderately unsatisfactory	37%	27%	33%	43%	47%

Exhibit reads: **Ninety-four percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools with free- and reduced-price lunch rates of 0-34 percent report that parent participation in serving as volunteers in the classroom is satisfactory or moderately satisfactory.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

Services for Parents with Limited English Skills

SFSP data suggest that services for parents with limited English skills are common among Title I schools. Slightly more than half (55 percent) of all Title I schools serve students with parents with limited English skills (see Exhibit V.6). Of those Title I schools, a large number have taken steps to assist in parents' most basic interactions with the school. For example, principals in 86 percent of schools that serve parents with limited English skills report that they provide interpreters for meetings, and 69 percent report that they provide translations of printed materials. A smaller number of Title I principals (30 percent) report that their schools display signs in different languages. Given that more than half of Title I schools serve parents with limited English proficiency, these findings represent a substantial effort across a large number of schools to reach out to non-English-speaking parents. Perhaps because of the prevalence of these services for parents with limited English skills, 94 percent of parents who speak a language other than English at home report that their child's school is "understanding of parents who don't speak English," according to the NHES.

Schools with greater concentrations of parents whose English skills are limited find that they need to take the language barriers into account if they want to provide opportunities for these parents to participate in school activities and in their children's education. According to the SFSP, 69 percent of schools with poverty levels greater than 75 percent also report that they have parents with limited English skills, compared with only 45 percent of schools with poverty levels of 35 percent or less (see Exhibit V.6). Not surprisingly then, more principals of high-poverty schools report providing interpreters and other services for limited English proficient families; 90 percent of high-poverty Title I schools report that they provide interpreters for meetings or parent-teacher conferences, compared with 75 percent of low-poverty schools. Eighty-seven percent of high-poverty schools provide translations of printed materials, compared with 53 percent of low-poverty schools, and 50 percent of high-poverty schools have signs printed in other languages compared with 11 percent of low-poverty schools. It appears that in the area of services to parents with limited English skills, Title I schools are responding to increased need with increased services.

Parent Resource Centers

Parent resource centers provide parents with a place at the school to meet, exchange ideas, and get information and materials on parenting and school-related issues. Parent resource centers are an increasingly common feature among all Title I schools. According to the SFSP, 37 percent of Title I schools report that they have a parent resource center, with an additional 14 percent of Title I

Exhibit V.6

Services for Parents with Limited English Skills in Title I Schools That Serve Such Parents, as Reported by Principals, by School Poverty Concentration

Services to Parents with Limited English Skills	Title I Schools Serving Parents with Limited English Skills*	School Poverty Concentration			
		0-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75%+
Interpreters for meetings or parent-teacher conferences	86%	75%	85%	92%	90%
Translations of printed materials, such as newsletters or school notices	69%	53%	63%	69%	87%
School signs printed in different languages	30%	11%	31%	25%	50%
*Percentage of all Title I schools that serve parents with limited English skills	55%	45%	49%	57%	69%

Exhibit reads: **Eighty-six percent of principals at the 55 percent of K-8 Title I schools that serve the children of parents with limited English skills report that their schools provide interpreters for meetings or parent-teacher conferences.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

schools reporting that they are currently developing one. Elementary schools are more likely to have a parent resource center than middle schools (41 percent of elementary schools report that they have a center vs. 23 percent of middle schools), although there is no significant variation among schools of different poverty levels. Of those schools that operate centers, 15 percent say that parents make use of the center "very frequently," 46 percent say parents make use of the center "somewhat frequently," and 38 percent make use of the center "infrequently or not at all" (data not shown), with no variation among schools of different poverty levels or grade levels.

Home Visits

Home visits provide a natural opportunity to build parents' capacity to support their children's learning by demonstrating how parents can help their children learn at home in daily family interactions. Although not all home visits focus on instruction or academic issues (some aim to link families with social services and others have purely administrative goals, such as getting forms signed), they can be an effective means of teaching parents how to support their children's learning at home. Home visits--instructional and non-instructional, high-quality and otherwise--are relatively widespread among Title I schools, with more than two-thirds (67 percent) of Title I principals reporting that at least some of their staff make home visits (see Exhibit V.7). Although home visits are a relatively common practice among schools, they only reach a small number of families--an average of 17 percent each year in Title I schools.

Exhibit V.7
Home Visits by Title I and Non-Title I Schools, as Reported by Principals, by School Poverty Concentration

Features of Home Visit Program	Non-Title I Schools	Title I Schools	Title I Schools, by Poverty Concentration			
			0-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75%+
Staff at the school make home visits	58%	67%	47%	65%	78%	84%
A home-school coordinator makes home visits	9%	27%	19%	17%	29%	36%
Average percent of families that received at least one visit in the last school year	11%	17%	12%	15%	15%	25%

Exhibit reads: **Forty-seven percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools with free- and reduced-price lunch rates of 0-34 percent report that staff at their schools make home visits.**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

High-poverty schools are more likely to make home visits than low-poverty schools; for example, 84 percent of principals of Title I schools with poverty rates of 75 percent or more repor

that their staff make home visits, compared with 47 percent of Title I principals of schools with poverty rates of 34 percent or less. Similarly, elementary schools are more likely to make home visits than middle schools (72 percent of Title I elementary schools compared with 49 percent of Title I middle schools), according to the SFSP.

Relatively few schools have home-school coordinators who make home visits, probably because few schools have funds set aside to pay for such a position. Approximately two-thirds of Title I principals report that they use school staff to make home visits, while only 27 percent of Title I school principals report that home-school coordinators make home visits (see Exhibit V.7). Although home-school coordinators are relatively rare among Title I schools, they are even more rare among non-Title I schools; only 9 percent of non-Title I school principals report that their schools have home-school coordinators who make visits. In fact, this is one of the few areas in which it is possible to detect a significant difference between Title I and non-Title I schools in their parent involvement activities. Home-school coordinators are more common in Title I schools, probably because of the funding that Title I provides to supplement existing services.

Home-school coordinators are also more common in high-poverty Title I schools (see Exhibit V.7). Again, higher poverty schools generally receive more Title I funds and probably find it easier to set aside resources to pay for a home-school coordinator. Thirty-six percent of principals of high-poverty schools report that their school has a home-school coordinator, compared with 19 percent of low-poverty schools. Perhaps because they are more likely to have a home-school coordinator available to make home visits, high-poverty schools report that they reach a higher percentage of families in one year, on average. Principals in high-poverty schools report that an average of 25 percent of families received at least one visit during the school year, compared with an average of 12 percent reported by principals of low-poverty schools.

District Support for Parent Involvement Activities

Title I requires school districts to involve parents in the development of the district Title I plan, school review and improvement activities, and decisions regarding the allocation of district funding reserved for family involvement activities. Districts must also help schools plan and implement effective parent involvement programs, build schools' and parents' capacity for strong parent involvement, coordinate Title I parent involvement efforts with those of other programs, and conduct an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of their parent involvement policies. According to SFSP data, most Title I schools receive some form of assistance regarding parent involvement activities from their districts (see Exhibit V.8).

Sixty-two percent of Title I schools report that school districts provide assistance to schools on setting policies for involving parents in school activities, including, presumably, their Title I parent involvement plans (see Exhibit V.8). Schools with higher levels of poverty are more likely to receive help from their districts on developing parent involvement policies; 72 percent of high-poverty schools receive help from their districts, compared with 58 percent of low-poverty schools. Sixty percent of Title I principals report that their schools receive help from their districts in the form of technical assistance, such as workshops for school staff in developing parent programs. Seventy-six percent of high-poverty schools report that they receive this technical assistance, compared with 53 percent of low-poverty schools. Half of Title I principals report that their schools

Exhibit V.8

District Assistance on Parent Involvement Activities for Title I Schools, as Reported by Principals, by School Poverty Concentration

District Assistance to Schools	All Title I Schools	Title I Schools, by Poverty Concentration			
		0-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75%+
Help in setting policies for involving parents in school activities	62%	58%	59%	62%	72%
Technical assistance for parent programs to school staff (e.g., workshops, training)	60%	53%	54%	58%	76%
Staff to assist school in parent programs	51%	40%	49%	50%	71%
Funds for parent programs	44%	34%	37%	45%	59%

Exhibit reads: Fifty-eight percent of principals of K-8 Title I schools with free- and reduced-price lunch rates of 0-34 percent report that their schools receive district assistance in setting policies for involving parents in school activities.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8," FRSS 58, 1996.

receive help in the form of staffing for their parent programs, although this percentage varies widely by poverty level; 71 percent of high-poverty schools report that they receive staff help from districts, compared with 40 percent of low-poverty schools. Forty-four percent of Title I schools receive funds from their districts to support parent programs. High-poverty schools were much more likely to receive funding from districts than low-poverty schools, with 59 percent of high-poverty schools

reporting that they receive funds from the district for parent programs, but only 34 percent of low-poverty schools reporting that they receive similar funds.

Conclusion

Title I, as reauthorized by IASA, requires or endorses many strategies that are widely recognized as effective for supporting parents' involvement in their children's education. Many of the practices included in the legislation--for example, parent resource centers, home visits, and the provision of information and training to parents--are already common among many schools seeking to improve their linkages with parents. Although the SFSP did not contain survey items geared specifically to assessing schools' progress in implementing the Title I parent involvement provisions, it did collect information on the prevalence of Title I-endorsed practices in Title I schools. In fact, many of the practices cited in the Title I legislation are fairly common among Title I schools, including providing information to parents about the schools' programs, involving parents in school decision-making, making home visits, and providing services to parents with limited English skills, with more than 60 percent of Title I principals in each case reporting that their school provides the service. Because the Title I legislation had been in effect for less than a year at the time the survey was administered in spring 1996, these results should be considered only a preliminary measure of the progress of implementation. In addition, the small number of non-Title I schools in the sample makes it difficult to measure differences in practices between Title I schools and non-Title I schools with much precision. As a result, we cannot assess the extent to which the reauthorized Title I has prompted schools to adopt these practices for the first time, or the extent to which these practices were already widespread among schools before IASA was enacted.

VI. CONCLUSION

Most practitioners and parents would recognize the list of barriers to parent involvement that are enumerated in this report: lack of time and other resources, lack of information and training for parents and school staff, traditional school structures and practices that deter parents from becoming engaged with schools, school-family differences, and lack of external support for school-family partnerships. The research literature on barriers to parent involvement is well established, and researchers, practitioners, and parents understand the challenges facing school staff and parents as they work to develop effective partnerships.

Although evidence of the most common barriers to parent involvement can be found in almost any school, the experience of many schools and districts demonstrates that these barriers can be addressed. A closer look at schools that have been successful in involving parents in their children's learning points to some common characteristics of successful family-school partnerships. Schools that succeed in involving large numbers of parents and other family members in the education of their children invest energy in finding solutions for problems, not excuses. Successful schools view children's success as a shared responsibility, and all stakeholders--including parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders--play important roles in supporting children's learning.

Schools, under the leadership of principals, possess the primary responsibility for initiating the development of family-school partnerships. Schools can invest heavily in professional development, create time for staff to work with parents, supply necessary resources, design innovative strategies to meet the interests and needs of diverse family structures, and provide useful information to families on how they can contribute to their children's learning. Research shows that most parents want to help their children succeed, but tend to wait for guidance from schools on how to do so (Epstein, 1992). Once schools initiate dialogue and bring parents in as full partners, families are ready and willing to assume an equal responsibility for the success of their children. Ideally, this partnership should take place in a context where policymakers, community groups, and employers share the goals of the school and actively contribute to the attainment of those goals.

Many strategies used by Title I schools and districts across the country demonstrate the capacity of families, schools, and communities, working together, to influence children's learning in positive ways. Among schools that have been successful in fostering meaningful parent involvement, a number of strategies appear to be effective in moving schools, families, and communities beyond the common barriers. These include finding creative ways to overcome the time and logistical constraints facing families, often by reaching out to parents at times and in places outside of

traditional school boundaries, providing information and training to parents in a variety of media, and tapping external supports for school-family partnerships in the community and with the use of district- and state-level resources for supporting partnerships.

Successful approaches to promoting family involvement in the education of their children share an emphasis on innovation and flexibility. The experiences of the local schools and districts we studied suggest that schools must focus on strengthening the home-school partnership with professional development and training for all school staff as well as parents and other family members. Especially in impoverished communities, both school staff and families need the confidence and skills to reach out to one another and to the larger community to support children's learning. Also, schools can take advantage of the training, assistance, and funding offered by sources external to schools. These can include school districts, community organizations and public agencies, private foundations, local colleges and universities, and SEAs.

States also appear to be taking an active role in supporting school and district efforts to involve parents in their children's education. Almost two-thirds of 36 states responding to a national survey report that they have developed documents to guide state-level support of school and district family involvement efforts, and half of states report that they have laws in place to support the development of family-school partnerships. Most states also report that they provide technical assistance and support to schools and districts that includes disseminating information, providing staff development, and supporting parent education and training. Finally, most states report assisting schools and districts in implementing the Title I parent involvement provisions, including assisting with crafting parent involvement policies and school-parent compacts, building capacity among staff and parents, and ensuring access and coordination with other parent involvement efforts.

Title I, as reauthorized by IASA, is an important catalyst for the wider adoption of policies and practices that have proven effective in fostering partnerships between schools and families. Title I requires or endorses many strategies that are widely recognized as effective in supporting parents' involvement in their children's education, and many of the practices highlighted in the Title I legislation--including parent resource centers, home visits, and the provision of information and training to parents--are already common among schools that place a priority on engaging parents.

Although available national surveys do not contain items geared specifically to assessing schools' progress in implementing the Title I parent involvement provisions, the SFSP does provide us with one of the first opportunities to learn about the prevalence of practices endorsed by the reauthorized Title I in Title I schools. In fact, many of the practices required or endorsed in the Title I legislation are fairly common among Title I schools. For example, more than 60 percent of Title I

school principals report that their schools support parents' involvement in each of the following ways: providing information to parents about school programs, involving parents in school decision-making, making home visits, and providing services to parents with limited English skills.

It remains to be seen how well federal and state efforts to foster family-school partnerships will support the successful development of school-family partnerships in Title I schools. Continuing research will be needed to assess schools' implementation of the Title I parent involvement provisions and their effects, as well as the quality of the assistance that schools receive from states and districts. A close look at the strategies required or endorsed in federal and state policy--for example, school-family compacts, information and training for parents and school staff, and special strategies such as home visits--as they are implemented in schools will provide policymakers, practitioners, and parents with a better understanding of how all schools can sustain effective partnerships with families.

REFERENCES

Ames, C. (1993). Parent involvement: The relationship between school-to-home communication and parents' perceptions and beliefs. Report No. 15. Baltimore, MD: Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.

Armor, D. (1976). Analysis of the school preferred reading program in selected Los Angeles minority schools. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement (pp. 23-24). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Benson, C.S., Buckley, S., Medrich, E.A. (1980). Families as educators: Time use contributions to school achievement. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement (pp. 31-32). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Burns, R. C., & McClure, R. M. (Eds.) (1993). Parents and schools: From visitors to partners. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning. (1992, May). Research and development report, No. 2. Baltimore, MD: Author.

Cohen, D. "The Parenting Trap: Forgotten Fathers." Education Week. November 3, 1993.

Dauber, S., & Epstein, J. (1993). Parent Attitudes and practices of involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement (pp. 55-56). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Dwyer, D. J., & Hecht, J. B. (1992). Causes underlying minimal parent involvement in the education of their children. Paper presented at the 1992 annual meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL (PS 020 984). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 353 059).

Eagle, E. (1989). Socioeconomic status, family structure, and parental involvement: The correlates of achievement. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement (pp. 59-60). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Eccles, J. S., & Harold, R. D. (1993, Spring). Parent-school involvement during the early adolescent years. Teachers College Record, 94(3), 568-585.

Epstein, J.L. (1991). Effects on student achievement of teachers' practices of parent involvement. Advances in Reading/Language Research, (5), pp. 261-276.

Epstein, J. L. (1992). School and family partnerships. In M. Aklin (Ed.), Encyclopedia of educational research: Sixth edition (pp. 1139-1151). New York: MacMillan.

Epstein, J. L. (1995, May). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. Phi Delta Kappan, 701-712.

Epstein, J. L., & Dauber, S. L. (1991). School programs and teacher practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. Elementary School Journal, 91(3), 289-305.

Fehrmann, P.G., Keith, T.Z., & Reimers, T.M. (1987). Home influence on school learning: Direct and indirect effects on parental involvement on high school grades. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement (pp. 59-60). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Finders, M., & Lewis, C. (1994, May). Why some parents don't come to school. Educational Leadership, 50-54.

Fruchter, N., Galletta, A., & White, J. L. (1992). New directions in parent involvement. Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, Inc.

Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. (Eds.). (1994). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement (A report from the National Committee for Citizens in Education). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Kellaghan, T., Sloane, K., Alvarez, B., & Bloom, B. (1993). The home environment and school learning: Promoting parental involvement in the education of children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Leitch, M. L., & Tangri, S. S. (1988, Winter). Barriers to home-school collaboration. Educational Horizons, 66(2), 70-74.

Leler, H. (1983). Parent education and involvement in relation to the schools and to parents of school-aged children. In R. Haskins & D. Adams (Eds.), Parent education and public policy. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Liontos, L. B. (1991, January). Involving the families of at-risk youth in the educational process. (ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management Series, Number 5). Eugene, OR: University of Oregon.

Liontos, L. B. (1992, Spring). Family involvement (ISSN 8755-2590). Research Roundup, 8(3), 1-4.

Mannan, G., & Blackwell, J. (1992). Parent involvement: Barriers and opportunities. The Urban Review, 24(3), 219-225.

McCollum, H., & Russo, A. W. W. (1993, March). Model strategies in bilingual education: Family literacy and parent involvement. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Moles, O. (1996). Barriers and successes in involving Title I parents. Unpublished manuscript.

National Center for Education Statistics. (Forthcoming). The Fast Response Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8, FRSS 58. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Center for Education Statistics. (Forthcoming). National Household Education Survey. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Rioux, J.W. & Berla, N. (1995). Innovations in parent and family involvement. Princeton, NJ: Eye on Education.

Rutherford, B., Billig, S. H., & Kettering, J. F. (1995). Creating family/school partnerships: A review of the research and practice literature on parent and community involvement and literature related to the middle grades. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Swap, S. M. (1992). Parent involvement and success for all children: What we know now. In S.L. Christenson & J.C. Conoley (Eds.), Home-school collaboration: Enhancing children's academic and social competence (pp. 53-80). Silver Spring, MD: The National Association of School Psychologists.

Swap, S. M. (1993). Developing home-school partnerships: From concepts to practice. New York: Teachers College Press.

Tizard, J., Schofield, W.N., & Hewison, J. (1982). Collaboration between teachers and parents in assisting children's reading. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement (pp. 136-137). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Toomey, D. (1986). Home-school relations and inequality in education. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement (pp. 138-139). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

U.S. Department of Education. (1995, January). Employers, Families, and Education: Promoting Family Involvement in Learning. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Education. (1996, August). Reaching All Families: Creating Family-Friendly Schools. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Education. (1994, September). Strong families, strong schools: Building community partnerships for learning. Washington, DC: Author.

Walberg, H.J. (1984). Families as partners in educational productivity. Phi Delta Kappan, 65, 397-400.

Ziegler, S. (1987). The effects of parent involvement on children's achievement: The significance of home/school links. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement (pp. 138-139). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY ON FAMILY AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS AND THE NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD EDUCATION SURVEY

APPENDIX A
SURVEY ON FAMILY AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS AND THE NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD EDUCATION SURVEY

Data from two national surveys inform many of the findings presented in this report. The Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools (SFSP), K-8, administered under the Fast Response Survey System, provides data on a nationally representative sample of elementary and middle *schools*.. The Parent/Family Involvement and Civic Involvement Component of the National Household Education Survey (NHES) provides data on a much larger nationally representative sample of children ages 3 through grade 12; this report presents findings based on the responses of *parents* of K-12 public school students sampled in this survey.

Survey on School and Family Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8

Data from the Fast Response Survey on School and Family Partnerships describe parent involvement in Title I schools (as well as non-Title I schools) and specific strategies, including those required under the new Title I provisions, to involve parents in their children's education. Specific survey topics included: parent attendance at school-sponsored events, school communication with parents, availability and use of parent resource centers, services to parents with limited English skills, volunteer opportunities, parents' roles in school decision-making, assistance provided by states and districts, and school-parent compacts.

The Fast Response Survey on School and Family Partnerships was mailed to a nationally representative sample of 900 K-8 schools in spring 1996. ED received 810 completed surveys, a response rate among eligible schools of 91 percent. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents were principals of the sampled schools; the remainder of the respondents were other school staff members.

Sample

The number of schools responding to the FRSS Survey on School and Family Partnerships in each of several categories--Title I status, poverty level, and grade levels served--is presented in the table below. ED oversampled high-poverty schools in order to increase the reliability of estimates for these groups.

Exhibit A.1
Number and Percent of Responding Schools in the SFSP Study Sample

School Characteristics	Respondent Sample		
	All Responding Schools	Title I Schools[1]	Non-Title I Schools
Total	810 *(100%)*	620 *(77%)*	189 *(23%)*
School poverty level[2]			
75% and above	264 *(33%)*	258 *(42%)*	6 *(3%)*
50-74%	205 *(26%)*	176 *(29%)*	29 *(16%)*
35-49%	108 *(14%)*	79 *(13%)*	29 *(16%)*
0-34%	215 *(27%)*	99 *(16%)*	116 *(64%)*
Grade levels served[3]			
Elementary	593 *(73%)*	477 *(77%)*	116 *(61%)*
Middle	138 *(17%)*	76 *(12%)*	62 *(33%)*
Elementary/Middle	78 *(10%)*	67 *(11%)*	11 *(6%)*

[1] This column and the column labeled "Non-Title I Schools" added together do not equal the total in the column labeled "All Responding Schools" because these columns do not include 0.1 percent of schools that did not provide information on their Title I funding.

[2] The rows in this section added together do not equal the sum in the row labeled "Total" because they do not include 3 percent of schools that did not provide information on free- and reduced-price lunches.

[3] Schools where the highest grade level is six or lower are defined as Elementary schools; schools where the highest grade level is 7 or 8, and the school serves four grade levels or fewer are defined as Middle schools (i.e., 5-8, 6-8, 7-8, 4-7, 5-7, 6-7); all other schools are defined as Elementary/Middle combinations.

Limitations of the Sample

Because ED oversampled high-poverty schools, which are more likely to be Title I schools, the number of non-Title I schools in the sample was not large enough to produce estimates that were precise enough to compare successfully with estimates for Title I schools. In addition, when the data did allow us to identify statistically significant differences between all Title I schools and all non-Title I schools, they did not allow us to detect any differences between Title I schools and non-Title I schools with similar concentrations of poverty, because of small sample sizes. As we have seen, levels of parent involvement tend to vary with the poverty level of the school, and some parent

involvement strategies are more common among higher poverty schools. Because Title I schools tend to be poorer than non-Title I schools, it is important to take poverty levels in account when making comparisons between the two.

Data Analysis and Reporting

In analyzing survey data by school poverty level, we followed the guidelines already established by ED for the reporting of FRSS survey data. The following cut points for percentage of students receiving free- and reduced-price lunches divide schools into four groups with respect to concentration of poverty:

75% and above	Definition of high-poverty schools used in the Prospects Interim Report (July 1993) and in other reporting on Title I
50-74%	Those schools that do not meet the definition of high poverty, but are eligible to operate schoolwide programs beginning in 1996-97
35-49%	Schools that are not eligible to operate schoolwide programs in 1996-97, but can be automatically designated as eligible to receive Title I funds by their LEAs
0-34%	Schools that cannot be automatically designated as eligible to receive Title I funds by their LEAs

The differences in survey results that are presented in the text of the report are significant at the $p = .05$ level. We conducted two-sided t-tests for each of the differences reported in the text to establish that these differences are statistically significant.

National Household Educational Survey

The National Household Education Survey (NHES) is a cross-sectional telephone survey of the U.S. population. Specific topics on the Parent/Family Involvement in Education and Civic Involvement component of the NHES, administered for the first time in spring 1996, included: parent attendance at school events, parents' assessment of schools' efforts to engage them in support of their children's education, parents' confidence in their abilities to help their children with their homework, and learning compacts.

Households are selected for the NHES through random digit dialing. NHES interviewers completed a total of 20,792 interviews, 58 percent of all interviews attempted.

Sample

The percentage of children sampled in each of several categories--household income level, mother's educational level, language respondent speaks most at home, and child's grade level--is presented in the table below. For the purposes of this study, ED selected only K-12 students in public schools for analysis. Percentages in the table are weighted to reflect national population estimates.

Exhibit A.2
Percent of Children in the NHES Study Sample

Characteristics of Sampled Children	Percent of Sample
Total	100%
Household income	
$0-10,000	15%
$10,001-20,000	14%
$20,001-35,000	23%
$35,001-50,000	19%
$50,000+	29%
Mother's educational level	
Less than high school	13%
High school degree	37%
Vocational/technical training, Associate's degree, or some college	30%
College graduate	13%
Some graduate or professional training	7%
Language respondent speaks most at home	
English or English and Spanish equally	93%
Spanish or some other language	7%
Child's grade level	
K-2	25%
3-5	23%
6-8	23%
9-12	29%

Limitations of the Sample

It is not possible to link parent responses on the NHES with the type of schools that sampled children attend (e.g., Title I or non-Title I). As a result, it is impossible to compare the policies and practices of Title I schools as they are described on the FRSS and parent perceptions of those practices.

There are two other difficulties associated with our analysis of NHES data, which have already been noted on specific exhibits. First, educational level of the mother of the sampled child ("Mother's educational level") is not necessarily an accurate measure of the educational level of the person who responded to specific survey items, although it is the best available measure (see note to Exhibit II.10). Second, "Language that the respondent speaks most at home" is not necessarily an accurate indicator of whether the respondent is proficient in English, although it is the best available one (see note to Exhibit II.13).

Finally, an observation on one way in which the sample is *not* limited: Although the proportion of children in the sample whose parents do not speak English at home is small (7 percent), these children actually represent a very large number of cases (approximately 7 percent of 20,972, or 1,468). Because of the large sample size, standard errors are small, and as a result it is possible to make sufficiently precise estimates of response rates for the whole population of children whose parents do not speak English at home.

Data Analysis and Reporting

The 1996 National Household Education Survey sampled children, not parents, although a parent or guardian, not a child, responded to the parent questionnaire in each household where a sampled child lived. As a result, the findings presented here and other findings based on NHES data throughout the text represent the percentage of *children* whose parent or guardian responded in a specific way to survey items. For the sake of readability, we have described these findings as the percentage of *parents* responding to survey items. However, it is more precise to report, for example, that "91 percent of [*children had a parent or guardian who reported*] that their child's school makes it easy to be involved," than to report that "91 percent of [*parents*] report that their child's school makes it easy to be involved."

In fact, it would be very difficult to estimate the percentage of all parents or other family members who are involved in their children's education, nor would it be a very useful exercise.

Children may have one, two, or more parents or guardians, who may or may not live with the child. Estimating the percentage of all parents or guardians involved their in children's education is difficult because it is difficult to identify which adults belong in the population of parents and guardians; in addition, estimating the percentage of parents involved in their children's education tells us little about the percentage of *children* who benefit from that involvement, because there is not a one-to-one correspondence between parents and children. Because we are most interested in the benefits of parent involvement on children's learning, it is most important to know how many children have a parent (or two) involved in supporting their learning at home or in school. Hence, NHES samples children, and not parents.

The differences in survey results that are presented in the text of the report are significant at the $p=.05$ level. We conducted two-sided t-tests for each of the differences reported in the text to establish that these differences are statistically significant.

APPENDIX B: SUCCESSFUL LOCAL APPROACHES TO PROMOTING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
Alamo Navajo Community School **Bureau of Indian Affairs** Magaleno, NM	• School addresses distance and language barriers by broadcasting programs in Navajo from a local AM radio station operated by the reservation's school board. • Parents and Teachers as Partners program features a meal that teachers and parents share and workshops on language and math skills development, reading, cooking with children, and other topics. • Parent advisory committee provides an open forum for parents to voice their concerns and recommendations for the school; attendance ranges from 5 to 25 parents. • Monthly parent meetings and open houses are often combined with community events (e.g., basketball games) to attract more parents. • Bilingual home-school liaisons have visited over 75 percent of parents and students at home at least once to personalize school communications; they make an average of 25 visits each month. • All staff members use release time to visit students and parents at home; teachers visit an average of eight homes each month. Funding Sources: • Johnson O'Malley, G&T Dropout Demonstration, Indian Health Services, Title IX, Title I. Evidence of Success: • Forty to 50 percent of parents participate in at least one activity during the school year, an increase of about 15 percent over the last five years. • In 1995-96, parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences jumped from none to over 20 percent. • Principal reports parents spend more time at school events and participating rather than passively attending and listening (e.g., more parents involved in hands-on activities such as the Parents and Teachers as Partners workshops). • Alamo is phasing in a portfolio assessment system; therefore, test scores are not currently available.	K-12 350	100% Navajo	98% FRL (free or reduced-price lunch) Title I Schoolwide Program

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
Atenville Elementary School Lincoln County Public Schools Harts, WV	• Action Research Team of parents and professionals guides, evaluates, and modifies collaborative efforts using relevant research. They receive training two to three times per year and share their training with other parents and teachers on two or three staff development days. • Home-Visitor Program targets hard-to-reach families, obtains information about families' needs and interests, and collects parent input on school issues. Parent coordinator and Telephone Tree volunteer visit approximately 20 families each year. • Telephone Tree parent representative contacts 20-25 parents every month to discuss school issues and give parents an opportunity to voice their concerns. • Parent workshops take place seven times each year and address topics such as language development among young children, how to help with homework, and children's mathematics learning • Each day, 8-10 parent volunteers, approximately 100 each year, serve on school committees, read with students at lunch breaks, run an after-school tutoring program, attend staff development sessions, make site visits to other schools, and attend Board of Education meetings. • Centrally located parent resource center makes parents feel invited and included. Funding Sources: • Benedum Foundation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Institute for Responsive Education, state grants, Title I, Goals 2000 • Southern West Virginia Community College co-sponsors free for-credit courses for parents and pays Atenville instructors to teach them. Evidence of Success: • From 1991-92 to 1995-96, the number of parent volunteer hours rose from 2,000 to 7,000. • In 1995-96, 100 parents, representing almost half of the families at the school, participated in the annual volunteer training; 8-10 parents volunteer at the school each day. • Number of students participating in after-school tutoring program increased from 21 in the first year to 62 in the third year of the program. • From 1991-92 to 1995-96, CTBS scores for the third grade rose from the 59th to the 71st percentile; sixth grade scores rose from the 58th to 63rd percentile. • In 1996, Atenville parents successfully lobbied the Board of Education to keep the school's K-6 configuration.	Pre-K - 5 220	100% white	79% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
Buffalo Public Schools Parent Center **Buffalo Public Schools** **Buffalo, NY**	• Personal improvement services include seminars and classes on parenting skills, literacy, education, sewing, art, computer literacy, ESL; more than 100 parents attend. • Average of 45 students and parents each week attend computer classes for families after school; bus brings entire family to center and provides child care if necessary so parents and children can participate together in individualized tutoring and instruction. • Center features two computer labs with 100 computers. • Families who cannot visit center can also borrow one of 150 computers in the center's take-home computer program for 5-6 weeks; parents attend orientation on how to install and operate computers. • After-school tutoring program provides parents and children with individualized homework tutoring. • Mobile learning units bring teachers and learning resources directly to neighborhoods. • Child care services available. • Title I parents receive priority enrollment. Funding Sources: District general fund, Title I. Evidence of Success: • Excluding take-home computer program and field trips, the parent center serves about 250 families each semester. • All center activities serve about 3,000 parents each year. • On a survey of the 1994-95 Take Home Computer Program, 44 percent of parents reported that the program had a "significant" effect on their child's motivation toward learning; 52 percent reported that it had some effect. All parents reported noticeable or significant improvements in their children's math and reading skills. • District-wide attendance has remained at 90 percent since 1993-94. • The parent center is tracking the academic achievement of students whose parents attend, but that information is not yet available.	Birth-12 48,000	53% African American 34% white 10% Hispanic 3% American Indian, Asian	59% FRL
Buhrer Elementary School **Cleveland Public Schools** **Cleveland, OH**	• Surveyed parents expressed strong interest in helping children better prepare for state-mandated proficiency exams and in developing a GED program for parents. • Collaboration with Baldwin-Wallace College provides parents with classes in parent-child communication. • Family math offered to families twice a year in English and Spanish; 35 parents attended in 1996. • All home-school communications are provided in English, Spanish, and Arabic. • School psychologists work regularly with parents on topics that include homework helping skills and school attendance issues. • Block Parents program provides activities for parents who live far from school; staff go to a nearby library or a parent volunteer's home to address various parent concerns and share school-related information. A typical meeting attracts 18 to 20 parents. Funding Sources: General school budget, foundation grant, university partnership, Title I. Evidence of Success: • Principal reports a continuing increase in the number of Block Parents attending school functions since the program began. • Approximately 300 parents participated in Parent/Family Day and visited classrooms and met teachers. • Two hundred parents attended teacher conferences in 1995-96.	Pre-K - 5 450	40% African American 50% Hispanic 5% white	95% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
Cane Run Elementary School **Jefferson County Public Schools** **Louisville, KY**	• Five Family Technology Nights each year provide hands-on, technology-supported learning activities for parents and their children, increase parents' awareness of available technology, and offer training to parents and community adults in basic computer skills. Approximately 20-40 parents and children attend each night. • School maintains 30 laptop computers for students and parents to borrow overnight or on weekends. • More than 20 families are involved in the Even Start Program; parents study for the GED or take parenting classes while children are in school or the on-site nursery. • Family resource center links families with mental health counseling, medical services, social services, and other community resources. • Family resource center runs a summer sports program and an affordable after-school tutoring and recreation program for kids; approximately four parents volunteer each day. • As many as eight parents accompany teachers on a retreat to participate in meetings on curriculum, planning, student assessment, and other educational issues. Funding Sources: School general operating budget, Kentucky Education Reform Act funds, Title I, Goals 2000. Evidence of Success: • Since 1990, membership in the PTA has grown from 60 to 700. Most of the families at the school now belong to the PTA. The PTA has won more than 30 awards for exemplary attendance, including the state's Overall Advocate for the Child Award. • The number of parents who visit the school building daily has increased from 3-4 parents to 15-20 parents per day. • During the last two years, discipline referrals have declined 30 percent each year. • Attendance has remained steady at about 94 percent over the last few years. • The school has seen modest but steady gains in test scores over the past four years.	K-5 430	50% African American 50% white	74% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program
The Family Resource Center at Charter Oak School **West Hartford School District** **West Hartford, CT**	• School-linked system of family support and services helps involve families in the educational process (e.g., services such as child care and community referrals help families to become involved in their children's education). • School showcased as a School of the 21st Century demonstration site for the Yale/Bush Center at Yale University. • An array of adult education classes is provided including ESL, with the mission of teaching parents the language skills they need to help children with schoolwork and homework. • Principal visits ESL classes to talk with parents. • Teachers visit the home of each entering kindergarten student to include families in children's educational experience from the start. • Parents and teachers run after-school programs, which range from computing to juggling. Funding Sources: $242,000 Kellogg Foundation grant, $40,000 from the state department of education. Evidence of Success: • About 30-35 parents of preschool-age children visit the family resource center each week. • The school is evaluating the effects of center activities on student achievement; however, data will probably not be available for at least two years.	K-5 300	10% Asian 16% African American 23% Hispanic 52% white	34% FRL (est.)

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
Rodney B. Cox Elementary School **Pasco County Public Schools** **Dade City, FL**	• Monthly parent workshops conducted by school staff focus on parenting skills and parents' ability to help with schoolwork and homework. • As a full-service school, Cox offers dental care, counseling, and health care to students and their families. • A parent involvement teacher, two migrant home-school coordinators, and one minority recruiter conduct home visits that include training in parenting skills. • Parents receive transportation to meetings and other school activities. • Local adult education program offers classes twice a week at the school. • School "open door" policy ensures that teachers can meet with parents whenever they come to the school. Funding Sources: General school budget, Title I, $200,000 PECO grant with matching funds from district, $24,000 district grant, Florida First Start grant, federal Migrant Education funds, state and federal Head Start funding, Exceptional Student Education funding. Evidence of Success: • During 1995-96, 74 parents registered as volunteers; 10-20 parents volunteer at the school each day. • Up to 200 parents participate in workshops each month. • From 1990 to 1996, average participation in GED classes rose from 11 to 83. • Parents tell the principal they are now more comfortable in a school setting. • Test scores have increased over the past two years. For example, in 1994-95, 31 percent of students scored about the 50th percentile in math and 14 percent in reading. In 1995-96, 61 percent of the students scored above the 50th percentile in math and 34 percent in reading.	pre-K-5 400	40% African American 44% Hispanic 16% white	92% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program
DeForest School District **Public Library Team** **DeForest, WI**	• School district and local public library jointly sponsor a family involvement and literacy program; both commit full-time staff to the effort. • Public library (the local Even Start site) provides early education, parenting education, and adult education on-site; retention rate is 79 percent. • Program produces and distributes self-contained family activity kits each week to all Title I families, all families who participate in the library's story time, and all Even Start families (350 total); parents sign a contract pledging to carry out the activities with their children. • Library circulates copies of district curriculum and objectives; it maintains videotapes of school events such as plays and talent shows for parents to check out if they cannot attend. • Program provides series of Family Learning Nights--9-12 workshops per school year for families of students in grades PreK-12. • Program offers workshops for middle and high school students and parents on such topics as career exploration. Funding Sources: • Library operating budget, community donations, Title I. Evidence of Success: • Family learning nights held at the library average about 100 adult participants and many students. Previously, similar events held at the school had very poor or no attendance. • Regular program participation in Even Start and Family Involvement and Literacy programs has increased by at least 25 percent over the last three years. • Every child in the district now has a public library card. • Student attendance increased from 95 percent in 1993-94 to 97 percent in 1995-96.	pre-K-12 3,000	96% white 4% Middle Eastern, Hispanic	14% FRL

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
Ferguson Elementary School **School District of Philadelphia** **Philadelphia, PA**	• Parents Make A Difference Conference provides a day-long open house where parents see children reading and participating in hands-on math activities; principal, teachers, and children travel door-to-door on a Sunday to invite the community. • Teacher-directed community workshops are held up to six Saturdays a year to focus on needs of students in different grade levels; 100-150 parents attended the two workshops offered at the end of the 1995-96 school year. • Community Assistants program provides training and stipends to parents to serve as classroom aides. • Parent network meets every week to review school and community calendars and to get word out to parents about events. • Approximately six parents a day visit the parenting center, which houses computers and lending library. Funding Sources: • General school budget, partnership with Temple University, Title I. Evidence of Success: • The 1995-96 fall open house drew 350 parents, compared with 30 parents in 1989. • Fifty parents volunteer as classroom aides each week. • From 1993 to 1996, the percentage of first graders reading on grade level increased from 5 to 37 percent. • From 1993 to 1996, the number of disciplinary referrals dropped from 586 to 267. • Average daily attendance increased from 80 percent to 90 percent during the same period. • Twenty-five parents received certificates of continuing education from Temple University in 1995-96.	pre-K-5 750	75% African American 25% Hispanic	98% AFDC Title I Schoolwide Program
Family School Partners in Education **Greensville County Public Schools** **Emporia, VA**	• Mobile Parent Resource Center targets parents of Title I students and travels to four sites each day, serving 12-18 parents at a time; parents are trained as tutors to work with their children. • Six area businesses allow the Mobile Parent Resource Center to visit work sites so that employee parents can participate before or after school or during break. Funding Sources: • Title I Evidence of Success: • Parent visits to the center doubled from 1991 to 1992; approximately 420 parents have visited each year since 1992. • An average of 75 parents have been trained each year since June 1992. • Although the test scores of children whose parents visit the center are not specifically tracked, Title I students countywide have shown growth on the ITBS pre- and post-tests in reading since 1991-92 (e.g., third grade scores increased 8 percentage points in 1991-92 from the pre-test to post-test and fifth grade scores increased 12 percentage points in 1993-94).	K-12 2,764	67% African American 33% white	56% FRL

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
Hueco Elementary School **Socorro Independent School District** **El Paso, TX**	• Parent workshops and courses address general parenting skills, including effective nurturing, child development, drug abuse prevention, and health and physical well-being. The number of parents who attend ranges from eight to 30. • Classes in citizenship, ESL, GED, and computer skills support parents' own educational and personal goals. Two years ago, 20 parents became U.S. citizens through the citizenship course. • All Hueco families participate in the Super Readers program, which provides incentives for parents to read with their children. • Family Math nights introduce parents to school curriculum. Participation increased from 30 parents at the first session in 1995-96 to 80 in 1996-97. • All home-school communications and parent workshops and activities are conducted in both English and Spanish. • Twenty to 30 parents attend the monthly Parent Communication Council which allows them to share their concerns about the school with the principal and vice principal. • Teachers receive release time to conduct home visits. Funding Sources: • Private donations, district general funds, PTO fundraising, Title I. Evidence of Success: • The number of parents involved in at least one activity increased from 30 percent in the 1994-95 school year to 80 percent in 1996-97. • Parent participation in the school has grown beyond fundraising and clerical work to include participating in school decision-making, participating in classroom instruction, furthering their own educational goals, and contributing to students' learning at home. • Student attendance averages 97 percent. • For the past three years, each grade level has scored at or above the 69th percentile on all areas of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills.	Pre-K-5 600	98% Hispanic	95% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program
Clinton Kelly Elementary School **Portland Public Schools** **Portland, OR**	• In the Family Stories Project, parents and children write and illustrate family histories, which are worked into curriculum; child care is provided for preschool-aged children of participants. • Parents and teachers meet to discuss topics of interest one morning per month. • Parents took an active role in the decision to implement Boyer's Basic School program. • Parents participate in Dorothy Rich's Mega-Skills Project; parents teach other parents how to improve their children's learning skills. Funding Sources: • General school operating budget, Title I. Evidence of Success: • Participation in the Family Stories Project rose from ten in 1994, its first year, to approximately 35 currently. • Participation in monthly discussions rose from five in 1993-94 to 25 currently. • Twenty participated in first year of Mega-Skills project.	K-5 530	74% white 16% Russian 6% Hispanic 4% Asian	68% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
Maine School Administration District #3 **Thorndike, ME**	• Telephone hub site at the district high schools links all schools electronically; parents have access to computers through local schools and town offices. • Junior High Potluck Nights include dinner and child care if needed so that seventh- and eighth-grade students and parents can meet with teachers to discuss students' needs and ways that parents can help with their education. • Parents attend off-site retreats with school staff to learn about curriculum and develop strategies for increasing parent involvement; attendance increased from seven parents during the 1994-95 school year to 45 in 1996-97. • Family Math and Science Nights introduce parents to school curriculum. • Summer reading and activity calendar suggests daily activities for students and parents to do together over the summer. • Volunteer coordinators at each school help train and engage parents in school activities. • Parents are invited to sit on the curriculum committee, the math and science standards development committee, and the steering committee for the Beacon Schools State Systemic Initiative, supported by the National Science Foundation. Funding Sources: • $500,000 from the Kellogg Foundation's Rural Leadership Initiative, Noyce Grant for professional development, federal Reflective Practice Grants, Beacon Grant awarded by Maine's Systemic Initiative, general school operating budget, grant from the Department of Commerce. Evidence of Success: • Three potluck nights held in 1995-96, each reaching increasing numbers of families--roughly 50, 70, and 100 families. • Family math and science nights reach about 200 families districtwide each year. • Volunteers performed 3,500 hours of work in 1995-96 school year.	K-12 1,750	99% white	50% FRL
Wendell Phillips VPA Magnet School **Kansas City Public Schools** **Kansas City, MO**	• Parent/community liaison averages 10 home visits per week to get parents' input on important issues or to discuss children's academic or social problems. • Parent/community liaison arranges carpools, drives parents herself, or arranges for parents to take taxis to school. • Parents and other community members tutor students through a tutoring program. • Student progress reports sent to parents twice a month suggest ways schools and parents can work together to help students. • Parent/community liaison works with public assistance workers to reach families and to work with them on student attendance problems. • Parent resource room lends learning kits, educational videos, "how-to" materials, books, and tapes to support student learning at home. The resource room also provides parents with access to a computer and typewriter. Approximately 10 to 15 parents visit each day. Funding Sources: • Community resources/volunteers, Title I. Evidence of Success: • During the 1995-96 school year, approximately 150 parents attended parent/teacher conferences. • An orientation session on state, district, and school policies at the beginning of the 1996-97 school year was attended by 157 parents. • There were no increases in some tested subject areas on the ITBS from 1994-95 to 1995-96; however, first grade made some modest increases (e.g., vocabulary by three percentage points and math concepts by four percentage points); also third and fifth grades saw increases in math.	K-5 377	70% African American 8% Hispanic and other minority 22% white	79% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program Magnet School

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
The Alliance Schools Initiative **Roosevelt High School** **Dallas Independent School District** Dallas, TX	• Alliance Schools Initiative develops a strong community-based constituency of parents, teachers, and community leaders who work to increase student achievement in low-income communities throughout Texas. • Teachers and principals agree to design and implement innovative school reform strategies in collaboration with parents, with each other, and with a network of organizations. • Schools provide training for the surrounding community by involving parents in both improving educational achievement as well as in developing a community that values education. • Iniative includes 70 K-12 schools statewide. Roosevelt High School: • In a neighborhood Walk for Success, teams of faculty, parents, and other community members walk door to door to talk with parents about their needs and interests and how to improve the school. • Parent involvement is a key component of the school's $15,000 Texas Education Agency grant. • Parents of sophomores attend classes to learn about state tests and to take sample tests. • Parent liaison averages 30-60 telephone calls to parents each day. Funding Sources: • District funding, Investment Capital Fund grants from the Texas Education Agency (competitive grants received by many Alliance schools), Title I. Evidence of Success: • From 1993 to 1994, three-quarters of the 59 alliance schools improved their schoolwide scores on the state test, with 10 Alliance schools doubling the number of students passing all sections of the test. • From 1994 to 1995, two-thirds of the 70 alliance schools continued to improve their scores. Of the 50 schools that have been part of the initiative since 1993 or earlier, 31 improved their scores each year. • Approximately ten parents attended the first PTA meeting in 1993, compared with 200 at the first meeting in 1996. • From 1992-93 to 1995-96, student performance on the state test rose from the 40th percentile to the 81st percentile in reading, from the 16th percentile to the 70th percentile in mathematics, and from the 58th to the 80th percentile in writing. • From 1992-93 to 1994-95, attendance at Roosevelt rose over 11 percent.	9-12 1,067	Roosevelt: 95% African American 5% Hispanic	57% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program
South Bay Union Elementary School District Imperial Beach, CA	• Superintendent, principals, and teachers are evaluated on the extent to which they promote and increase parent participation. • All staff, including janitors and other support staff, must participate in training on how to interact with and be responsive to parents. • District provides year-round parenting classes in multiple languages. • Parent volunteer coordinator makes home visits to parents and refers parents to social service agencies. • School-based parent centers offer a variety of services and information. • Schools guarantee that students will read on grade level by the end of the third grade if parents adhere to the requirements of a school-family compact. • Parenting skills classes address behavior and discipline issues. Funding Sources: • Title I Evidence of Success: • Volunteer program hours increased from 103,423 in 1994-95 to 130,301 in 1995-96. • More than 400 students and 250 parents attend the district's annual Read to Me Conference.	K-6 10,000	62% Hispanic 18% White 9% Filipino 11% African American and other minority	76% FRL

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
South Delta Elementary School **South Delta School District** **Rolling Fork, MS**	• Student folder sent home weekly for parents to review contains child's corrected work and results of any tests, with space for the teacher to write additional notes to parents. • Parent seminars/workshops address such topics as children's self-esteem, homework, grade-specific learner objectives. • Back-to-School Night inaugurates the home-school partnership, with strategies to maximize parent attendance and inform parents about what their children should learn (e.g., students and parents demonstrate hands-on learning activities specific to each grade level). • End-of-School Night provides parents with a chance to review the school year with staff and to recommend changes for the upcoming year; attendance maximized by having parents pick up student report cards at meeting. Funding Sources: • General school operating budget, Title I. Evidence of Success: • Attendance at seminars and PTA meetings now averages 50, versus 10 in the past. • Partnership with Welfare Department has increased number of regular volunteers at the parent resource center. • Reading, language arts, and math ITBS scores increased from 1993-94 to 1994-95 for first through fifth grades (e.g., in math, increases ranged from 5 percent for third graders to 12 percent for first graders; in language arts, increases ranged from 5 percent for second graders to 12 percent for first graders). • School recently taken off probation for not meeting requirements for state mean ITBS scores.	pre-K-5 691	85% African American 15% white	90% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program
Parent Resource Center **Stockton Unified School District** **Stockton, CA**	District parent resource center provides: -- Resource materials for parents to use at the center or at home, including curriculum materials to use with children, videotapes/cassettes, instructional aids, and books covering a wide range of subjects -- Information and materials about state and federal programs -- Parenting classes, educational aides workshops, hands-on workshops in math and language arts, and workshops for parents of high-risk students; attendance ranges from 15 parents to 150 depending on subject. -- Transportation and child care services for parents attending the center -- Training for individual schools upon request • Mentor parents train both parents and school staff at the school and district level. Approximately 300 parents have become mentors since March 1993, and in 1995-96 school year they spent 400 hours making presentations. • Parents are developing a parent handbook for the district and planning next year's ongoing training for other parents. Funding Sources: • Title I Evidence of Success: • Mentor Parent program trained 61 parents and resulted in more than 5,000 volunteer hours spent in schools during 1996-97 (including nearly 2,000 hours in middle and secondary schools). • Parents volunteering at one middle school contributed 4,000 volunteer hours; the number of conduct code violations at the school dropped from 647 in 1994-95 to 349 in 1995-96, despite a 15 percent increase in the student population. • Several parent participants have become members, board members, and officers of two organizations that advocate parental involvement: The California Association of Compensatory Education and the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents. • Each year the district honors 70-75 outstanding volunteers averaging 25,000 plus hours at the district level.	K-12 34,020	39% Hispanic 21% Asian American 18% white 13% African American 5% Filipino	48% FRL In 1996-97 all elementary schools will be Title I Schoolwide Program schools

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty
Turnbull Learning Academy **San Mateo-Foster City School District** **San Mateo, CA**	• Magnet program features a school-family compact that requires families to devote 100 hours to their children's education. • Parents track their participation through a point system in which they earn an agreed-upon number of points each month for helping with homework, attending school events, and completing weekly literacy activities with their children. • Parents get weekly envelope of activities to complete with their children. • About 60 parents attend parent education workshops each month that address parenting skills; about 20 parents are in attendance at each six-week session offered twice a year in ESL skills. Funding Sources: • Title I Evidence of Success: • In 1994-95 and 1995-96, all families at the school completed their family partnership agreements. • Almost 100 Turnbull parents are active members of the PTA. • From 1993-94 to 1994-95, absenteeism fell from 15 percent to less than 1 percent. • Turnbull received the California Department of Education Distinguished School Award in 1995. • Turnbull was selected as a leadership school during the 1996-97 school year by the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative. • Third and fourth graders made gains in test scores in reading, mathematics, and language in 1995-96 (e.g., in language, third grade scores increased 12 percentage points and fourth grade 20 percentage points; in math, third grade scores rose 8 percentage points and fourth grade 1 percentage point). Second graders made a 3 percentage point gain in reading and a 14 percentage point gain in math.	pre-K-5 688	90+% Hispanic	94% FRL Title I Schoolwide Program Magnet School
Western Middle School **Jefferson County Public Schools** **Louisville, KY**	• School provides two full-day parent-teacher conferences per year; each teaching team sends home letters, calls parents, and makes home visits to encourage parents to attend; additionally, walk-ins are accommodated and welcomed. • The Youth Service Center is staffed by a parent support coordinator and a home/school coordinator; center staff run all after-school programs and activities and refer students and parents to various community resources; approximately 90 percent of Western students visit the center each school year. • In the current school year, the Right Question Project provides school staff with training on how to structure their parent involvement activities and how to train parents to be better advocates for their children. In Fall 1996, an average of two to three parents attended meetings, but the school expects an increase in attendance. • In 1996-97, the school council will include four voting parents and other community members to encourage participatory management (required by KERA). Funding Sources: • General school operating budget, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation grant, Kentucky Education Reform Act funding. Evidence of Success: • From fall 1995 to spring 1996, number of parent-conferences conducted jumped from 90 to 280.	6-8 750	69% white 30% African American 1% Pacific Islanders	86% FRL

APPENDIX C: COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS SURVEY

APPENDIX C
COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS SURVEY

Survey Design

The primary data source for Chapter V of this report is a survey of state policies and practices regarding family involvement conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in summer 1996. The purpose of the survey was to establish state-by-state baseline information on efforts by states to support family involvement in children's learning at school, at home, and in the community. The survey included eight sections which contained items on: (1) documents for guiding SEA family involvement efforts; (2) SEA programs and activities that promote or support family involvement activities; (3) SEA budgets for supporting family involvement efforts; (4) technical assistance provided and received by SEAs; (5) SEA support for activities that build and strengthen parent and family capacity for involvement; (6) SEA assistance to schools and districts to meet the parent involvement requirements of the reauthorized Title I legislation; (7) evaluation of state and local efforts to support family involvement efforts; and (8) state or local innovations. The first seven sections of the survey included 130 questions. The eighth section was an open-ended request for additional information on innovative activities supporting family involvement at either the state or local level. The survey was designed so that the sections could be separated and forwarded to the staff members best able to answer particular clusters of questions. The survey used the terms "parental involvement" and "family involvement" interchangeably and defined them as "the involvement with public school programs or activities by any person (adult or non-adult, blood related or non-blood related) who has primary responsibility for the care and/or education of a child, youth, or young adult enrolled in the school or programs."

Survey Respondents

CCSSO mailed the survey to chief state schools officers in the 50 states, District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) in June of 1996. CCSSO asked each chief state school officer to designate a single staff person to assume responsibility for completion of the survey and recommended members of CCSSO's Education Information Advisory Committee (EIAC) or, in states where there was no designated EIAC representative at the time, SEA deputy directors as possible candidates for the task. CCSSO also mailed a copy of the survey to these individuals. SEA staff

from 35 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and DODEA responded to the survey (see Exhibit C.1). Not all states answered all questions or completed all sections of the survey.

Exhibit C.1
CCSSO Survey Respondents

Alabama	Kentucky	North Dakota
Alaska	Louisiana	Ohio
California	Maine	Oklahoma
Colorado	Maryland	Oregon
Delaware	Massachusetts	Puerto Rico
Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA)	Mississippi	Rhode Island
District of Columbia	Missouri	Tennessee
Hawaii	Montana	Texas
Idaho	New Hampshire	Virginia
Illinois	New Jersey	Virgin Islands
Indiana	New Mexico	Washington
Iowa	New York	Wisconsin
Kansas	North Carolina	West Virginia

Reporting Survey Data

Tabulations of survey data reported in Chapter IV reflect only the responses of the 35 states and the District of Columbia. We did not include responses from territories in these tabulations, or the DODEA, which does not receive Title I funds. Also, we do not attempt to report on all data collected by the survey. A forthcoming report prepared for ED by the Council of Chief State School Officers will present survey findings in more detail.

The findings reported in Chapter IV should be interpreted with caution. Because the survey gathered data on many topics, most items were in the form of simple check lists, and questions we a

phrased broadly. For example, under the section on implementing Title I requirements from the 1994 reauthorization, states checked off activities for which they were providing assistance to districts and schools from a list of 29 items. The survey did not define "assistance" in this section, nor did it define some of the items on the checklist, such as family resource centers. As a result, it is likely that states interpreted questions in various ways. This supposition is confirmed in the budget section, where states' confusion about the definition of "funding earmarked to support family involvement efforts" resulted in unreliable data that we discuss only briefly in Chapter IV (see the footnotes in that discussion). The number of schools and/or districts receiving funding and assistance of various kinds from SEAs is also unknown from the survey. Therefore, although the findings cover a wide range of subjects, it is not possible to use these data to make judgments about the extent or quality of specific types of support that states are providing to schools and districts.

In order to provide a more detailed picture of state efforts to promote family involvement, Chapter IV includes selected examples of state activities based on supplemental materials submitted by the states and follow-up telephone calls to some survey respondents. These examples are not representative of all states, nor are they necessarily examples of best practices. Instead, they are provided simply to illustrate how some states are supporting schools and districts in their efforts to involve families as partners in their children's education.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

REPRODUCTION BASIS

☐ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☒ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").