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Parent Involvement in Public Education: A Review of The Literature

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Preface

At the direction of the Policy and Planning Council, a MERC Study Group began meeting in

September, 1994 for the purpose of planning and directing a study of parental involvement in

public schools. This literature review represents the first product of that process. Research over

the past several decades has shown that involving parents in the process of educating their children

provides substantial advantages for their education (e.g., Stevenson and Baker, 1987; Henderson,

1987; Moles, 1982; et.al.). In a representative statement, Rebecca Crawford Burns summarizes

the literature on the benefits of parent involvement to the educational process, as follows:

> Meaningful parent involvement results in improved student achievement, attendance,
> motivation, self-esteem, and behavior. Parent involvement also is a major contributor to
> children's positive attitude toward school and teachers. Indeed, the more parents are
> involved, the more children benefit (Burns, 1993, p.9).

Thus, an understanding of how parent involvement may be increased is important to the

improvement of education. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there is increasing interest

among educational researchers and policy makers in the dynamics of parental involvement in the

educational process -- an interest that is beginning to rival the historically strong intuitive interest of

practitioners (Carrasquillo and London,1993; Kelley, 1990; Moles, 1982).

This review of the literature on parent involvement begins at this point, conceptually. Its concern

is not with the extensive literature on the benefits of parent involvement, nor on the literature of

how much involvement is present or lacking. Instead it concentrates upon research that has

focused upon the dynamic relationship between parent, child, and school. Its purpose is to help

establish a baseline summary to guide researchers and practitioners in developing a richer

understanding of how parents interact (or fail to interact) with the complex of individuals that make

up the school community. It focuses upon the most recent literature on the subject, as well as

those older resources that are most frequently cited in the more contemporary literature.

To facilitate this summary, the literature will be discussed as it relates to the following research

questions. Each research question is used as a subject heading for the major sections of the

literature review:

1. **What definitions, understandings, and interpretations of parent involvement are reflected in the literature?**

2. **What barriers have been identified by the literature as discouraging parent involvement?**

3. **How do institutional/organizational factors impact parent involvement?**

4. **How do division leadership and school policies impact parent involvement?**

5. **What enablers have been identified by the literature as improving parent involvement?**

   Within the limits of the existing literature, each of these questions will be discussed with an eye to differences that may be present based upon socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, and gender. Consideration will also be given to the differing perspectives of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and the community at large, as applicable.

Following the summary of the literature are two annotated bibliographies. The first includes

literature that evaluates existing programs for parent involvement or that proposes such programs.

The second contains works of a more general, theoretical nature.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION:
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WHAT DEFINITIONS, UNDERSTANDINGS, AND INTERPRETATIONS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT ARE REFLECTED IN THE LITERATURE?

The problem of defining parent involvement is a daunting one. All too often in the literature, it is a problem not faced. The majority of sources considered gave no clear definition of the concept. Often the literature approaches parent involvement in a purely normative fashion -- building a definition from a prescription for change. Thus, parent involvement becomes "partnership" (Burns, 1993) or "collaboration" (Swap, 1987). However, such broadly prescriptive definitions have limited usefulness in understanding the processes at work between parents and schools. Several sources dealt with the problem of definition either as a specific part of the theoretical framework from which they analyzed the existing relationship between parents and public education or took the problem of defining parent involvement as their primary research question. These articles will make up the balance of this section.

By far the most systematic effort to define parent involvement has been that of Joyce Epstein.(Epstein, 1992; 1988; 1987a; 1987b). To explain the complexity and diversity of parent involvement, Epstein draws on her own extensive research and a review of the available literature to establish a **typology of parent involvement** that divides parent involvement into six separate types. (For another typology of parent involvement based upon three categories: involvement behavior, personal involvement, and cognitive/intellectual involvement, see Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994; For a good discussion of typologies of parent involvement in the United States and Great Britain, generally, see David, 1993). Each of Epstein's types is then subdivided into various involvement behaviors. Below is a discussion of each of these types and the behaviors included in them:

Type 1. Basic Obligations of Parents

These obligations involve meeting the basic needs of their children including "providing for their children's food clothing, shelter, health, safety, and general well-being" (Epstein, 1987a, p.6). Beyond these basic needs, Epstein also includes parent obligations to prepare children for learning. These begin with childrearing activities to develop cognitive and social skills, continuing through the maintenance of home conditions that are supportive of school learning and behavior. Parents are also obliged under Epstein's typology to continue to teach family life skills through the school years. (Epstein, 1988, p.59).

Type 2. Basic Obligations of Schools

This type of parent involvement is the obligation of schools to communicate from school to home concerning school programs and student progress. This element of involvement also includes an obligation to "vary the form and frequency of communications such as memos, notices, report cards, and conferences to improve all parents' understanding of all school programs and children's progress" (Epstein, 1988, p.59).

Type 3. Parent Involvement in School

This is the type of parent involvement most commonly examined in the literature on the subject. It includes all volunteer work in schools, such as classroom assistance, participation in fund-raising activities, etc. Another category of involvement of this type is parents as audiences, in which "[p]arents may come to school to attend student performances, assemblies, demonstrations, or sports events" (Epstein, 1987a, p.8). As Epstein points out, opportunities for involvement of this type are limited and the level of commitment and participation by parents in such activities is limited. However, the final set of parent involvement behaviors of this type is more demanding. These are "parent attendance at workshops and training sessions." Obviously, this set of parent activities requires a significant commitment not only from parents, but also from the school, itself.

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Type 4. Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home

This set of involvement behaviors grows out of the Type 1 Basic Obligations and includes efforts

by parents to help with the development of general skills that do not duplicate the teacher's efforts,

such as study habits, critical thinking, conversational skills, responsibility and sportsmanship, and

basic social and personal skills, as well as efforts to assist with the development of specific skills

related to the lessons occurring in class, such as helping with homework, playing specific learning

games, and working on specific sequences of skills needed for success in various subject areas.

These activities may be initiated by either parent, teacher, or student, and may or may not involve

direction by the teacher. (Epstein, 1987a).

Type 5. Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy

This type of parent involvement is the one least discussed in Epstein's work, sometimes not even

appearing in her typology. (Epstein, 1987b). It includes "parents in decision-making and activist

roles in governance and advocacy groups" (Epstein, 1987a, p.9). She includes participation in

PTA, PTO, or other school-connected groups in this category. It also includes participation in

independent school watchdog and advocacy groups.

Type 6. Collaboration and Exchanges with the Community

This type of parent involvement is an addition to Epstein's original typology (Epstein, 1992) and

includes those activities that help to connect schools, families, and students with the agencies,

businesses, cultural groups, and community organizations that "share responsibility for young

people's education and their future successes." (Epstein, 1992, p.4). As with several of Epstein's

types of involvement, this type requires a partnership of effort between parent and school.

Epstein's typology has several advantages over the normative definitions discussed, above. Its

categories of definition recognize the variety of forms that parent involvement takes, avoiding the

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problem of assigning a prejudged value to one form over another. The typology also allows the policy-maker and practitioner to diversify their efforts to improve parent involvement. Moreover, by providing several ways of conceptualizing involvement, it helps to prevent the misconceptions that can occur when educators, whether practitioners or researchers, narrowly define the concept. Research with parents of at-risk students has suggested that a failure to "meet parents where they are" can have serious consequences for improving involvement. By recognizing a specific parent's preferred type of involvement, it is more likely that a connection can be made between parent and educator that can be utilized to expand the types of involvement in which a parent will comfortably engage. Such diversification is important because "we do not know very much about the effects of particular practices of parent involvement on students and parents at each grade level" (Epstein, 1988, p.59). This also points to one of the major advantages of the typology for researchers. It allows them to concentrate their attention on the effects of particular types of involvement -- making their results more useful for the development of specific programs to improve educational practice -- while placing that research in the broader context of a diversity of involvement types. With all of its advantages, one must also be aware of the limitations inherent within Epstein's typology. As with any descriptive typology, it tends to simplify the processes that make up parent involvement for the sake of classification. For example, it fails to account for parent involvement's embeddedness in a variable social and cultural environment. Other sources within the literature use this embeddedness as their starting point for defining parent involvement. One such method is the parent resources approach.

The **parent resources approach** to parent involvement treats its subject as something that can only be defined within a particular environmental context. It conceptualizes parent involvement as the product of factors that can best be understood in terms of James Coleman's notion of "social capital." (Coleman, 1990). Social capital is defined as "the norms, the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child's growing up." (Coleman,

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1987, p.36). This definition of social capital must be understood very broadly, both within the community and within the family, for it extends to all the resources available to assist with the development of the child. The parent resources approach to understanding parent involvement concentrates, therefore, upon parent resources -- whether financial, educational, or social -- as a product of cultural difference.

This approach is used in <u>Parents, Their Children, and Schools</u> (Schneider and Coleman, 1993; see also, Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994; Carrasquillo and London, 1993; Lareau, 1987; Rich, 1987). This collection of essays analyzes a data set measuring parent involvement as the product of "resources that parents have and the actions that they take in their children's education" (p.2). It then evaluates parental involvement as it exists in a variety of ethnic, racial, and socio-economic settings. This allows the research to be more attuned to the differences that may exist in parenting styles than in research that classifies involvement based upon a pre-existing, researcher generated typology. The results of their research indicate that "different racial and ethnic groups differ in the types of involvement they have with their children." (p.11). Moreover, these results demonstrate that parent involvement is understood differently by parents in different settings -- resulting in different motivations and behaviors. For example:

> We have seen that whites have especially high levels of involvement only in areas for which there is a major component related to social activities and a view of education as a form of social enrichment: talking about current school experiences, knowing the parents of their child's friends, and volunteering at school. Asian Americans . . . tend not to know other parents or become involved in school. However, they are highest in restriction on television and highest in enrolling their child in extra classes. They also tend to save more money for college and spend more on education. Asian American involvement appears to be sparsest on activities in which social interaction is a significant component. [African American m]others talk with their child about high school program planning, participate in PTO, and enroll their child in computer classes at high rates. African Americans , unlike other groups appear to engage in "crisis intervention" activity at higher rates than others.

Thus it appears that different ethnic groups view parenting differently leading to different understandings of what form of parent involvement is appropriate.

These results are made less certain by Julian, McKenry, and McKelvey (1994) who analyzed data from the National Survey of Families and Households and concluded that while "[t]he findings of this study indicate some cultural variations in perceived parenting attitudes, behaviors, and involvement," . . . "there were far more cultural similarities than differences found when socioeconomic status was controlled." (p.36). Moreover, "ethnic parents differed as much between and among themselves as when they were compared with caucasians." (p.36.). In spite of the apparent contradictions, certain explanations are possible. In fact, both studies found cultural variations that were quite similar. The difficulty identified by Julian et.al concerned the amount of variance in attitude, behavior, and involvement explained by cultural factors. Both studies also emphasize the importance of socioeconomic status in differences in parent understandings of involvement (see also, Lareau, 1987). It also should be noted that the Julian et.al. study dealt only with two parent families, while the Schneider and Coleman sample was more inclusive. Its analysis was also much more heavily weighted toward parenting beliefs and attitudes with less direct concern for what style of parental involvement was seen as appropriate.

WHAT BARRIERS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY THE LITERATURE AS DISCOURAGING PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

Despite the clear evidence that parent involvement in their children's education has wide-ranging benefits, "parental involvement in school programs and activities remains rare." (Burns, 1993, p.10; see also, Epstein, 1990; Leitch, 1988; Dornbusch, 1988; Moles, 1987; Swap, 1987; Chavkin, 1987). This has led to extensive research to identify barriers to parent involvement. This section will attempt to discuss this research. For increased clarity, it will be divided into three parts: Cultural Barriers; Resource Barriers; and Communication Barriers. Institutional and administrative barriers will be discussed in the next two sections of this literature review, respectively.

Cultural Barriers

As the first section of this literature review indicates, there are varying perceptions of what parent involvement actually should be, based upon cultural and socioeconomic differences in parenting styles. This sets the stage for communication problems based upon the differing expectations of parents and teachers. Carrasquillo and London (1993) identify serious incongruities between the expectations of teachers and African American (pp.13-30), Hispanic American (35-48), and Asian American (pp.51-66) families with regard to parent involvement in child-rearing. They also point to the dramatic changes that have taken place in the context in which all American families function today (pp.3-10). Rebecca Crawford Burns reinforces the fact that in such a circumstance, "[d]ifferences between parents and teachers related to ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, and education represent a . . . barrier to home-school partnerships." (Burns, 1993, p.14). Referring to Mannan and Blackwell (1992), she points to another facet of this barrier to parent involvement: "When the educational environment is not sensitive to the home language and home culture, communication is difficult and parents may feel unwelcome at school and psychologically discouraged from initiating a dialogue with their children's teachers." (Burns, 1993, p.14). Don Davies goes further. He argues that, traditionally, communication between schools and ethnic parents has been negative since schools tend to see them as deficient and apathetic -- in fact, the source of their children's problems (unpublished manuscript, cited in Chavkin, 1993, p.179).

The role of gender in parent involvement is particularly problematic in the literature. In general, the literature fails to differentiate findings in terms of mothers and fathers. This obviously creates problems for determining whether one method is more effective with mothers or fathers. Much of the literature speaks of "parent," when it appears to assume the predominant pattern of maternal involvement (Epstein, 1990). The changing structure of families, including the rise of single-parent households (Burns, 1993) and the increase in working mothers in two parent households, suggests that such assumptions may no longer be adequate, and may reduce the possibilities for

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increased paternal involvement. A reevaluation of the differentiated roles of mother and father in parent involvement would appear to be warranted. (Biller, 1993; Mannon, 1992; Epstein, 1990; Lareau, 1989). Only limited efforts to this end are present in the literature (David, 1993; Biller, 1993; Epstein, 1990; Lareau, 1989). As with the ethnicity and class, gender must be understood as a contributing factor in communication problems concerning parent participation. The failure of teachers, parents and schools to recognize the intense challenges of cultural diversity in a climate of rapid socioeconomic change represents a major threshold barrier to parent involvement.

These cultural barriers obviously influence the attitudes and behaviors of teachers when dealing with parents of different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Teacher expectations, when frustrated by diverse parenting styles, often lead to attitudes that also function as barriers to the involvement of parents. The failure of parents to be involved as expected can lead "many teachers [to] feel that parents do not have the time or interest to interact with them" (Burns, 1993, p.11), instead of as a reflection of cultural or socioeconomic difference. These interpretations of parent behaviors can strongly influence teachers' efforts to encourage more and better parent involvement. For example, teachers who fail to use practices to encourage parent involvement who also teach children with parents that they estimate to have lower educational backgrounds are "more apt to report that the parents would not be able or willing to carry out activities related to the child's schoolwork at home." (Becker, 1982, p.97). In every category of teacher practice for parent involvement, Becker and Epstein found higher levels of "no support" for the techniques among teachers who estimated a lower educational level for the parents of their students. Even within the overall sample, they found teachers split almost evenly on whether "most parents -- although they can teach their children to sew, use tools or play a sport -- do not have enough training to teach their children to read or to solve math problems." (p.89; see also, Burns, 1987;). Thus, teachers often do not employ techniques that would encourage parent involvement in home learning activities due to assumptions concerning parent ability and willingness to do so (Epstein, 1983),

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despite the fact that the literature shows such efforts are more important to levels of involvement than any socioeconomic or other factor (Epstein, 1989a; article reprinted in Chavkin, 1993).

Given teacher's concerns about the ability of their students' parents to participate in the learning process, the improvement of parent skills in this area should logically be of concern to educational practitioners. However, the literature is not very encouraging on this point. As Becker and Epstein (1982) point out, "[a]lthough nearly 80 percent of the teachers [surveyed] conduct three or more parent conferences in a school year, only 7 percent initiate three or more group meetings or workshops for parents apart from school-sponsored parent nights." (p.88). Moreover, fewer than 50 percent of teachers reported using any but the simplest techniques to "develop teaching and evaluation skills in parents" -- largely because these efforts were seen as unrealistic or parents were seen as lacking sufficient skills to attain them. Only "asking parents to come to observe the classroom (not to 'help') for part of the day" had been tried by a majority of teachers. (Becker, 1982). Obviously, teacher attitudes, in part arising from cultural and socioeconomic factors, influenced efforts to promote parent involvement. However, teacher attitudes and perceptions are not totally unfounded, nor are they the only factors influencing teachers in their choice of practices to improve parent involvement. Beyond the attitudes of parents and teachers, whether based upon cultural and socioeconomic conditions or some other variable, are the severe resource barriers faced by both groups.

Resource Barriers

Epstein and Becker (1982) report that when asked to discuss issues related to parent involvement "many teachers" in a survey of 3700 teachers in about 600 Maryland schools "commented on the amount of time needed to prepare projects, workshops and/or directions to use and supervise at home." They then reflect the complexity of the problem facing teachers when they continued, "[t]he crucial question is whether the time required by the teacher is worth the trouble, and whether

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teachers should volunteer their time without knowing the likely effects of their efforts." (p.103). The problem of limited time during the work day for teachers to develop and engage in parent involvement activities is a common feature of the literature. (Swap, 1993; Kelley, 1990; Swap, 1987; Epstein, 1982; but see Leitch, 1988). Time limitations not only impact teacher efforts to build parent involvement, but also make parent involvement less satisfying to both parents and teachers when it does occur. Whether it is parent conferences, back to school nights, or phone contacts, parent/teacher contacts are often rushed and frustrating. (Swap, 1987; Epstein, 1983; Epstein, 1982). Of course, this assumes that time can be found for any kind of contact, at all. Both parents and teachers are under increasing demands for their time. "Time is precious; time is fragmented; teachers and parents are stressed by the multiple demands of their professional, family, and individual responsibilities and interests. These realities must be acknowledged." (Swap, 1987, p.8). These realities must also be recognized as a major barrier to parent involvement in education.

The changing nature of family life, as noted above, has also changed the time demands upon parents. As more parents are required to work longer hours to support their families, whether in a one or two parent family setting, involvement becomes more difficult. Therefore parents, like teachers, find time constraints to be a serious barrier to involvement. This is especially true for those types of involvement that require direct teacher/parent contact. Given the fact that most teacher working hours overlap parent working hours, such face to face contacts are difficult, at best. In "Improving Education for Minority Adolescents: Toward an Ecological Perspective on School Choice and Parent Involvement" in (Chavkin, 1993), Patricia Bauch reports that in her survey of 1070 secondary school parents, "Conflict with working hours" was the leading barrier to school involvement across all ethnic groups. (p.133). This finding is consistent within the literature. (Burns, 1993; Swap, 1993; Leitch, 1988). Of course, limited time also acts as a barrier to parent involvement in home learning activities. Epstein reports that this fact also impacts the

number and type of home learning activities that teachers are willing to encourage. (Epstein, 1982; Becker, 1982).

Another resource barrier reported in the literature as impacting both parents and schools in their efforts to increase parent involvement is limited financial resources. For parents, limited financial resources have obvious consequences -- even beyond the indirect demands such circumstances place on parent time resources. For some parents a lack of dependable transportation to attend school conferences or other school activities is cited as one result of inadequate financial resources. (Burns,1993). Moreover, many forms of parent involvement require a direct financial investment (i.e. bake-sales, raffles, etc.). As noted above, economic factors also influence parent and teacher attitudes about each other and their involvement behaviors. (Burns, 1993; Mannon and Blackwell, 1992; Fine, 1990). Limited financial resources in the schools are also cited as barriers to increased parent involvement. (Swap, 1993). Swap notes that in a time of shrinking budgets:

> [m]ost schools have chosen to concentrate the revenues that remain in essential personnel, programs, and supplies. These decisions make it difficult to initiate or maintain outreach programs for parents. Looked at in another way, such decisions also signal that schools do not consider home-school partnership essential for their mission. The lack of availability of money for start-up or expansion of partnership activities is a psychological and practical barrier to successful outreach. (p.24).

Thus, the lack of financial resources in schools -- as is the case with some parents -- acts as a double-edged barrier to parent involvement, as it physically reduces the opportunities for such involvement, while also contributing to attitudes among parents that are themselves barriers to involvement.

While parent time and financial resources are being increasingly threatened by modern society, the literature also notes a reduction in the "incentives for parent responsibility," including reduced parent authority, shifting domains of socialization, and changing financial responsibilities. (Schneider, 1993; Coleman, 1987). These changes reflect what Coleman refers to as the "erosion

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of social capital." (p.37). This decline in the social support structures that have encouraged parent involvement in the past, reinforces the barriers to that involvement discussed elsewhere. Moreover, Coleman argues this has led to "a relaxed and inattentive parenthood." (1987, p.35). Despite this argument, there is substantial empirical evidence that parents would like to be involved. (Dauber, 1989; Epstein, 1989; Comer, 1986). Unfortunately, parents feel unsupported and ill-equipped in their efforts to participate in their children's education. (Carrasquillo, 1993; Dauber, 1989). When all of these factors are combined the calculus of modern parenthood works against substantial involvement.

Communication Barriers

Many of the barriers, discussed above, can be traced to problems in communication between parents, teachers, and schools. Improving communication should be a simple solution to them. However, since communication, itself, involves a form of parent involvement, it is adversely impacted by most of these same barriers. For example, better communication between low SES parents and teachers could help to reduce the misunderstandings that lead teachers to opt against teaching practices that would be particularly helpful in encouraging parent involvement. Ironically, the economic circumstances of the parents who could most benefit from this communication work against it. These communication "catch 22s" present the most challenging of the barriers to parent involvement.

A major contributing factor to communication barriers is that teachers are rarely trained to understand and involve the diverse range of parents with whom they will need to work. (Burns, 1993; Swap, 1993; Chavkin, 1988). When 575 teacher educators were surveyed concerning the inclusion of parent-teacher relations training in their course, the results were indicative. Only "4% indicated they taught a complete course on the topic; 15% reported providing part of a course on parent involvement, and only 37% reported having one class period on the topic." (Chavkin, 1988,

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p. 87.). This is in contrast to the literature reporting the need for such training. In the same study, Chavkin and Williams also surveyed 4,000 educators regarding their attitudes and experiences concerning teacher training for parent involvement. 86.6% agreed that training for working with parents was necessary. (p.87). Moreover, Burns reports "that many teachers admit that they do not know how to involve parents in their classroom and still maintain their role as teacher, probably because they have not had the training and support needed to work with parents." (1993, p.14). Parents also reflect the concern for better teacher training for communication with parents to encourage involvement. Dorothy Rich reports that in her Home and School Institute conferences on "Single-Parent Families and the Schools" and "Working Parents and Achieving Children" an often-heard priority for parents was "[i]n-service training for teachers and administrators in dealing with today's families, including improved communication between home and school." (Rich, 1987, p.21).

The lack of training combines with the other barriers to parent involvement to weave a complex web of communication failure. Obviously, language and perception differences make communication difficult or impossible. The shortage of bi-lingually trained teachers is a direct barrier to the involvement of minority language parents (Mannon, 1992). Even when language problems are not an obvious barrier, communication problems, arising from poor communication and conferencing skills on the part of teachers, are often attributed by both parents and teachers to attitudinal problems on the part of the other participant. (Burns, 1993; Kelley, 1990). When combined with the time and financial barriers already discussed, this leads both teachers and parents to often judge involvement activities to be a poor investment of limited resources.

Two other factors are enumerated in the literature as contributing to poor communication as a barrier to parent involvement -- ritualized communication and communication as a crisis activity. In discussing ritualized communication, Swap explains: "It is important to recognize that the

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blueprints we have created for interaction in American schools are ritualized and ineffective. They are ineffective for two basic reasons: they do not permit the development of relationships and they do not contribute to effective problem solving." (Swap, 1987, p.10). For Swap, the "fascinating aspect" of these ritual parent conferences, open houses, and Parent-Teacher Association meetings is "that the format is so obviously unsupportive of good relationships." (p.12). Yet, these ritual events do make a contribution to parent involvement. They are important signals to parents that their presence is important. They become a barrier when they are perceived as an idealized version of parent/teacher collaboration -- something they are always destined to fall short of -- instead of invitations for additional contact. As Swap points out, when ritual events become an end unto themselves, they diminish "the energy and optimism that might be applied to developing additional or alternative formats for contact ('Meet with this parent again? But I just finished parent conferences!' ' Go back to school for a program on Thursday night? You've got to be kidding!')." (pp.14-15).

Beyond these ritualized communications, schools and parents -- especially low SES parents with significant time constraints -- primarily engage in crisis communication. (Swap, 1993; Leitch, 1988; Swap, 1987). The implications of such limited communication are negative and wide-ranging for improving parent involvement. Much of the literature reports that parents frequently view communication from the school as a negative. (Burns, 1993; Kelley, 1990; Swap, 1987; et.al.). Teachers also are reported as recognizing the negative quality of much home-school communication. (Leitch, 1988). Teachers report having the most contact with the parents of students who are having discipline or learning difficulties. (Becker, 1982). Obviously, this fact impacts the perception that parents have about how the schools view them. (Carrasquillo, 1993). Moreover, since parents with limited time for school contacts spend an even larger percentage of their contacts in negative communication they are even more likely to be negatively impacted. As Swap (1987) points out, crisis communications is difficult and dangerous. It is difficult for crisis

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communication to lead to a sense of collaboration and trust between parent and teacher. Such communication always involves a variety of strong emotions among all participants, including a sense of embarrassment and failure in parents and a sense of loss in teachers. The danger of denial is always present, as is the potential for blaming (Swap, 1987). Moreover, the communication of negative information takes special communication skills. (Swap, 1993). Therefore, the widespread failure to train teachers for the skills needed for successful parent communication becomes an even greater barrier to effective and continued parent involvement in crisis situations.

HOW DO INSTITUTIONAL/ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS IMPACT PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

As the section on barriers to parent involvement indicates, certain institutional/organizational factors act as barriers to involvement. The institutional value placed upon ritual events such as open house or teacher conference day for their own sake can have the effect of transforming these events from positive icebreakers for parent involvement into the barriers discussed above. (Swap,1987). Therefore, the literature would indicate that such institutionalized examples of parent involvement must be recognized and communicated to parents and practitioners as "invitations to additional contact," and not an end unto themselves. (Swap, 1987, p.14). Moreover, these events could be far more positive with an organized system of teacher training for parent involvement as a part of the process. (Swap, 1993).

The ritualization of activities, discussed above, is one characteristic of organizations discussed by Davies (1987) in his discussion of parent involvement programs. In an effort to explain why parent involvement remains low and resistance to it appears high "despite the currently fashionable rhetoric about the topic," he points to four important characteristics of all organizations:

- organizations perform their functions through routines or standard operating procedures that make possible regular and coordinated activity but make it difficult to respond to crisis or changing external demands (such as a school effectiveness project or a required citizen participation mechanism);

- organizations try to avoid uncertainty and seek stable internal and external relationships;

- organizational procedures and repertoires of activities usually only change incrementally and new activities typically consist of marginal adaptations of existing programs and activities;

- organizations will usually allow only a limited search for alternative solutions problems and generally will choose a course of action that "will do" rather tan one that might seem optimum but would require higher risk or more change in standard operating procedures. (This is the organizational principle of "satisficing.") (p.158).

Beyond these characteristics of schools as organizations, generally, Davies also points out four

other special characteristics that he identifies as special to schools as organizations:

- The goals of schools as organizations are diffuse, multifaceted, and subject to widely varied interpretations.

- The "technology" of achieving goals is fragmented with responsibilities divided among administrators, counselors, classroom teachers, teaching specialists, families, and the students themselves, and the connections between a particular activity and a given goal are often uncertain.

- The informal norms of school organizations are particularly powerful. The norms and specialized language of teachers as a professional group are buttressed by teachers' training and by their professional associations and unions. One such norm is "professional autonomy" in decision making.

- The formal structure of schools is unique. The various levels of decision-making activity -- federal, state, district, school, and classroom -- operate relatively independently from each other, with limited coordination and control. As many have pointed out, public education is a loosely coupled system. This means that mandates from one level to another are never self-enforcing (p.159).

These "organizational realities" help to explain the frustrations and failures in improving parent

involvement. Programs to improve parent involvement must take these factors into consideration

or they will also face the resistance that arises from these organizational realities.

The literature points to several organizational changes that can have a positive impact on parent

involvement. Organizing for a more open and welcoming environment seems to be a common

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theme. (Swap, 1993; Epstein, 1991; Kelley, 1990; et.al.). Positive organizational features include: the provision of a full-time coordinator for family/school programs -- at least at the district level, at the school level, if possible; providing development grants for parent involvement programs; and making physical space for parents in the school, itself. This space could also serve as a parent-friendly space for parent/teacher interactions. A variety of school-level initiatives have been shown to be effective in developing parent involvement. (Epstein, 1982; see also the listing of literature on school-level programs in Appendix A). The literature also points to the importance of providing for parent input in governance and advocacy. This requires the development of structures that facilitate and utilize this input. (Swap, 1993; Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1989b). The literature also reports parent and teacher feelings of disconnection from the larger systems of control in school systems. (Leitch, 1988). Thus, the more decision-making occurs at the larger system level -- school board, city council, etc. -- the less parents are encouraged to be involved. (David, 1993; Leitch; 1988). This points to the paradoxical position occupied by division leadership in encouraging parent involvement through policy. Therefore, a discussion of division leadership and policy for parent involvement is warranted.

HOW DO DIVISION LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL POLICIES IMPACT PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

As noted above, organizational factors often make parent involvement programs difficult to implement successfully. In such an environment, it is important to consider the impact of policy mandates for overcoming organizational resistance. The Institute for Responsive Education in studying state mandates for parent and citizen participation found that a mandate, "whether it is a policy of a local school board or a state or federal law, is likely to work best if:

- the policies are specific and prescriptive,
- periodic evaluation and monitoring are required, and
- support (money, technical assistance, staff time) is provided to assist implementation."
(Davies, 1987, p.160-161)

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Moreover, the literature suggests that parents should be brought into governance and advocacy

programs for schools. This involvement is an important avenue for expanded involvement of

parents and also improves attitudes about involvement among teachers and administrators. (Swap,

1993; Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1992).

Unfortunately, research by Chavkin and Williams indicates that division leadership often has a

narrow view of parent involvement -- "failing to encompass the full range of parent interests and

abilities." (1987, p.169). In a survey of 2538 school superintendents and 2423 school board

presidents, they found that these district level leaders supported parent involvement as a concept

and recognized its value to the educational process. While supporting the traditional, ritualized

forms of participation, a large majority of these administrative officials (over 88%) *disagreed most*

strongly with parents being involved in shared decision-making activities -- school administrative

decisions such as teacher selection, equipment purchases, and teacher assignments; job

performance evaluations of teachers; and job performance evaluations of principals. This finding

was consistent throughout the survey. When the opinions of parents (n=3103) were compared to

these results, it was obvious that while parents and administrators both view involvement as an

important part of the educational process, they disagreed over what types of involvement were

useful. As Chavkin and Williams note:

> Parents expressed strong *support* for parent involvement in the schools, and they were *in
> accord* with administrators' views that parent involvement was an important component of
> education. The differences between parents and administrators are *most* evident in the
> area of shared decision making. Parents felt that they were trained enough to *help make*
> school decisions, that they should have the *final* word in decisions about their own
> children's education, and that they should *help evaluate* teachers and principals.
> Administrators *disagreed* and did not perceive it as useful to have parents involved in nay
> of these areas. (p.180).

Thus, parents and division leadership appear to have strong disagreements in the breadth of what

parent involvement is useful and appropriate. It is desirable, therefore, that prior to developing

policies on the subject, "administrators and parents must get together and build a mutual base of

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understanding about the goals of parent involvement. . . . Such an approach will help to ensure

parent involvement that is mutually acceptable to and agreed upon by the partners." (p.181).

Once mutually supported policies are developed, the literature indicates that they can have a

positive influence on parent involvement and student achievement (Chrispeels, 1991; Henderson,

1987). However, the evidence is far from consistent. Often parent and teacher attitudes work

against program success. As Chrispeels reports in discussing California's state policy on

developing parent involvement:

> Although policies cannot mandate changes in beliefs, they can serve several useful
> functions. First, policies create an institutionally sanctioned framework to guide practice by
> determining, for example, what type of parent involvement activities should have priority.
> Second, policies express "official" beliefs that can, over time, influence the beliefs of
> others. Third, policies supported by effective strategies for implementation can apply
> pressure for change by recognizing, supporting, and rewarding specific attitudes and
> behaviors (Chrispeels, 1991, p.368).

It must also be recognized that mandated programs, like any programs, for developing parent

involvement will take time to be effective (Epstein, 1991). Perhaps the best evidence for the

advantages of policy mandates for parent involvement can be seen in the programs that have been

developed to meet the requirements of Chapter 1 where creative approaches have led to real gains

(D'Angelo, 1991). Davies sums up the research on policy mandates as follows:

> A mandate for parent involvement should be seen as a necessary but not sufficient
> condition to produce positive involvement in its varied forms. The mandate simply
> provides the framework. Since mandates are not self-enforcing, mechanisms for
> monitoring, enforcing, and providing technical assistance during the implementation of
> new programs are also clearly needed (Davies, 1987, p.160).

WHAT ENABLERS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY THE LITERATURE AS IMPROVING PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

The preponderance of the literature on parent involvement focuses upon the improvement of the home-school relationship. Much of it analyzes single aspects of the problem -- either one style of involvement os case studies of existing programs for the enhancement of involvement. The exceptions to this pattern are some of the broad-based surveys of Joyce Epstein and her collaborators and the prescriptive literature that proposes programs based upon the empirical evidence available and certain normative assumptions. To review this varied literature, I will discuss the generalizable conclusions available in the literature concerning enablers for parent involvement. A listing of the literature reviewing or proposing specific programs is then included in Appendix A.

School and Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement

The strongest conclusion available in the literature concerning improved parent involvement is that school and teacher practices of parent involvement largely get the desired result. (Epstein, 1990; Dauber, 1989; Epstein, 1984; Epstein, 1983; Becker, 1982; among others). Moreover, school and teacher practices are more important in improving parent involvement than any other variable -- including race, parent education, family size, or family structure. This variable is even more important than grade level -- a very important variable for parent involvement. However, in the upper grades, the influence of status becomes a stronger predictor of parent involvement. One explanation for this difference is the decline in teacher practices that encourage parent involvement in the upper grade levels, thus increasing the impact of other influences. (Epstein, 1990; Dornbusch, 1988; Bauch, 1988). It is also important to consider the nature of the school and teacher practices that are utilized at the various grade levels.

Epstein strongly recommends that practices to encourage parent involvement be tailored to all of the

types of parent involvement in her typology (i.e., Basic Obligations of Parents; Basic Obligations of Schools; Parent Involvement in School; Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home; Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy; see discussion in **What definitions, understandings, and interpretations of parent involvement are reflected in the literature?** section) (Epstein, 1987a; 1987b;1988;1992) . However, the balance in emphasis among these types must be varied according to circumstance. At higher grade levels, strategies must change. (Dornbusch, 1988; Baker, 1986). For example, as grade level increases, parents report that they feel less qualified to help their children with home study (Epstein, 1983), although they continue to express the same level of interest in involvement (Dornbusch, 1988). Despite their interest, research has shown that involvement declines as grade level increases (Pisapia and Hoyt, 1994). Thus, teacher practices to involve these parents should take into account the change in parent role perception, so as to attempt to maintain some form of involvement. The research shows a willingness among parents to be flexible in their involvement behaviors (Baker, 1988). It is important that teacher practices mirror this flexibility. Moreover, changing student attitudes concerning their parents' involvement can also impact the effectiveness of teacher practices (Dornbusch, 1988). At the higher grade levels, involvement that is more intrusive in the school environment may need to give way to other forms of involvement. Research has indicated that involvement in learning activities at home are the most effective for improved achievement at all levels (Epstein, 1983). However, given the perception of parents concerning their skill level in these activities, supplementary training may need to be made available for them. Epstein reports that her research has shown that "parents received most ideas for home learning activities from teachers who were rated by principals or parents as leaders in parent involvement activities. A variety of techniques to involve parents in learning activities at home are discussed by Becker and Epstein (1982). While this list of activities is not exhaustive, it may be useful to list them for reference:

Activities Emphasizing Reading

- Ask parents to read to their child regularly or to listen to the child read.

- Loan books, workbooks, etc. to a parent to keep at home for short periods as extra learning material.

- Ask parents to take their child to the library.

Learning Through Discussion

- Ask parents to get their child to talk about what he/she did that day in your classroom.

- Give an assignment that requires the children to ask their parents questions - for example, that children write about their parents' experiences.

- Ask parents (one or more) to watch a specific television program with their child and to discuss the program afterwards.

Informal Learning Activities at Home

- Suggest ways for parents to incorporate their child into their own activities at home that would be educationally enriching.

- Send home suggestions for game or group activities related to the child's schoolwork that can be played by parent and child.

- Suggest how parents might use the home environment (materials and activities of daily life) to stimulate their child's interest in reading, math, etc.

Contracts Between Teacher and Parent

- Establish a formal agreement where the parent supervises and assists the child in completing homework tasks.

- Establish a formal agreement where the child provides rewards and/or penalties based on the child's school performance or behavior.

Developing Teaching and Evaluation Skills in Parents

- Ask parents to come to observe the classroom (not to "help") for part of a day.

- Explain to parents certain techniques for teaching, for making learning materials, or for planning lessons.

- Give a questionnaire to parents so they can evaluate their child's progress, or provide some feedback to you. (Becker, 1982, pp.92-93)

Beyond merely engaging parents in activities that supplement school-based learning are those activities that encourage parents to improve the over-all home environment for the child's cognitive development. While these activities still fall within type four of Epstein's typology (i.e. parent involvement in learning activities at home), they also include some type one activities (i.e. basic obligations of parents). Programs to involve parents in these activities are sometimes called "home intervention." "Most broadly defined, home intervention is a term used to describe any program that sets out to help a family foster children's mental and/or physical development." (Kellaghan, 1993, p.84). Such programs vary from the comprehensive approach, which concerns itself with the economic, educational, health, and social service aspects of the family, to the highly particularized programs that are much closer to the programs associated with parent skill training in the Epstein model. (for an extended discussion see Kellaghan, 1993). It must be remembered that these suggestions cover only one -- or in the case of a comprehensive home intervention program, two -- of Epstein's five types of parent involvement, and a fully effective program should cover them all. Moreover, each teacher practice or school program must be aimed at the needs of particular parents and children, each within a special environment. Understanding that environment becomes an important enabler for parent involvement.

Understanding the Home Environment

The literature points to teacher understanding of student home environments as an important enabler for parent involvement. The literature reports that parents and teachers who have similar home environments are more likely to engage in cooperative behaviors (Leitch, 1988). For example, "teachers who were parenting were generally realistic about the constraints faced by working parents." (p.74). However, in many cases the differences between teachers and parents are real. "[F]ar fewer teachers than parents were single parents; the teachers were older on the average than the parents; they were, on average, better off economically; and they were better educated. They were also more knowledgeable than parents about the limitations of the school

system." (p.74). These SES differences account for the "attitudinal distance" that often complicates and constrains parent involvement. As discussed above, differences are also present due to ethnicity, race, language, and gender. Increasing teacher awareness of these differences can pay dividends in parent involvement (Julian, 1994; Carrasquillo, 1993; Chavkin, 1993). While in-service training and improved teacher education in this area can help to improve awareness of the diversity of home environments surrounding any public school (Chavkin, 1988; 1993), perhaps the strongest catalyst to improved attitudes among parents and teachers is face to face contact. Experience has indicated that home visits are one of the best methods for increasing parent-teacher awareness and cooperation (D'Angelo, 1991; Davies, 1991). While home visits are important, they are also time-consuming and often difficult to coordinate. However, less difficult face to face contacts between parents and schools are possible. The key is in improving the communication that occurs.

Improving Communication

Among the most important enablers for improved parent involvement are programs to improve the quality and quantity of home-school communication. The quality of communication will be improved by reducing the "attitudinal distance" between parents and teachers. However, this requires an emphasis upon communication that is not exclusively crisis-centered and that can facilitate the building of a trusting, respecting relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators. A major part of the process of building such communication involves meeting parents "where they are" and attempting to include them in the broad range of the educational activities. (Epstein, 1990; Swap, 1987; Swap, 1990). Establishing activities that facilitate positive communication can be particularly useful. Susan McAllister Swap suggests the following activities as examples:

Activities for Building Relationships:
Teacher's Reports of Ideas that have Worked for Them

1. Happy-Gram. Send home a weekly Happy-Gram telling one good thing that the child did that week.

2. Call Hour. Establish an evening hour to call each week.

3. Newsletter. Send home a weekly newsletter. It might include information about what the children have been doing, ideas for special projects, anecdotes, reports of joint or individual accomplishments, cartoons and children's art work, announcements of important expectations or upcoming meetings, and the teacher's telephone number.

4. Diary. Invite each child to keep a diary throughout the year. Allot five minutes a day for each child to write in his/her diary. Include photos. Ask the children to share these with their parents at regular intervals.

5. Photo essay. Throughout the year, keep a photo record of important or interesting events. As they are developed, post the pictures in the classroom for parents to see. At the end of the year, allow parents to order andy pictures they would like to keep. Variation: Ask children to write or dictate stories to go with each picture. Keep stories and pictures in a scrap book that children and parents can look at through the year and new parents can peruse in subsequent years to learn about the class.

6. Board for parents. Put up a bulletin board for parents at the front door of the classroom or wherever they are most likely to see it. Post articles of interest and invite parents to contribute.

7. Special day. At the beginning of the year, schedule a special day for each child. Invite the child's parents.

8. Lunch. Invite parents to join the class (or school) for lunch.

9. Father's Workshop (or Mother's or Grandparents). Open the school on Saturday from nine to one. Invite fathers to share their special skills or interests with the children and teachers.

10. Parents' Night. Invite parents to learn about activities and expectations for your class. Show slides of the sequence of activities for a sample day. The parents enjoy learning about the day and seeing their children in candid shots. Variation: Repeat the program at a breakfast to which parents and children are invited.

11. Show and Tell. Have a show and tell in which every child is invited to bring in something to illustrate a them (teddy bears, transportation, toys, stuffed animals, favorite books). Create a display. Invite each child to explain why the object is special. Invite mothers (grandparents, siblings) to come.

12. Alphabet Days. (For children who are learning the alphabet). Set up a schedule for when you are going to introduce each letter of the alphabet. share the schedule with parents and invited them to send in any object that would illustrate that letter. Make an alphabet story book that lists or shows all these objections. Variation: Rainbow collage. (for children

who are learning colors). The teacher made a rainbow which covered one whole wall. Parents and children were urged to bring in colored objects from home that could be glued onto the appropriate band of the rainbow.

13.   Parent Party. have a party for parents at the beginning of the year. Find out if they have any strengths or special skills that they might like to share with you and the children in the classroom (e.g., knowing about the celebrations of a particular religion or culture, creative writing, music, art, puppetry, organizations of volunteers, science, computers.)

14.   Thanksgiving Celebration. Have a potluck meal, in which each family is asked to bring a traditional Thanksgiving food or something special from their culture. Have nametags and an activity in which parents have the opportunity to talk with parents whom they do not already know.

15.   Breakfast Conference. (Especially for families where both parents are employed.) Schedule conferences before school starts and offer coffee and danish.
        (Swap, 1987, p.26-27)

While some of these activities are not appropriate for all grade levels, they give examples of ways

in which creative opportunities for positive communication can be established. It should also be

noticed that several activities are planned for working parents. Time is obviously a major

constraint upon parent involvement, as well as for teachers who might choose to plan activities for

parents. However, improvements in communications technology have made staying in touch with

parents easier for schools and teachers.

Communications technology allows teachers and parents to communicate more often. Among the

possible uses of communications technology mentioned in the literature are:

Hot Lines and Help Lines

Dial-in systems are widely used to provide, among other services: help with questions about

homework; parenting counseling and referrals when needed; school-related information -- either

by tape loop or sometimes with a menu of recorded messages. These services have proved

effective in a wide range of applications. (see e.g. D'Angelo, 1991).

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Automated Calling

These systems allow prerecorded messages to be delivered to a selected group of parents automatically. The systems are especially good for notification concerning parent involvement activities, in addition to certain negative forms of communication for which it was originally developed (e.g. notification of student absences). (Burns, 1993).

Voice Mail and Voice Messaging

Voice mail is a relatively new and exciting use of communications technology. It is used to provide a 24 hour per day message from teachers and administrators to parents or students with the added benefit of allowing the parent or student to leave a message for the teacher or administrator in their "mailbox." Rebecca Crawford Burns cites 1992 data from 20 Vermont schools that use a voice mail system. She reports heavy use of the system, with "[m]ore than 86% of parents and 90% of teachers [using it]." (1993, p.38). While this technology shows great promise, its ultimate usefulness is yet to be seen.

Computer Applications

At least one experiment has taken place utilizing inexpensive laptop computers for language arts instruction, both in schools and at home. The computers were used to provide a link between the classroom and home. The program began with an open-house for parents explaining the use of the laptops and explaining the program. Although anecdotal, the program was very successful in improving student achievement. However, its impact on parent involvement was unclear. (Smith, 1994). Innovative uses of computer technology, although more costly than other forms of communications technology, may be an important resource for the future.

Several publications are available through the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium that deal with the uses of technology in the classroom. For an extensive review of the literature on

educational technology, see <u>Learning technologies in the classroom: Review of literature</u> (Pisapia,

Schlesinger, & Parks, 1993) and <u>Learning technologies in the classroom: Annotated bibliography</u>

(Parks & Pisapia, 1994). For a richer discussion of the use of educational technologies, see

<u>Learning technologies in the classroom: A study of results</u> (Pisapia & Perlman, 1992) and

<u>Learning technologies in the classroom: Lessons learned from technology intensive schools</u>

(Pisapia, 1993).

Organization and Leadership for Parent Involvement

The literature emphasizes the importance of school leadership and organization as enablers for

parent involvement. As Epstein reports, a school environment that supports teacher practices for

parent involvement is more likely to see such practices occur. (1991; 1983; 1982). Moreover,

division support can be the determining factor for the success of parent involvement programs --

especially technical and financial support (Davies, 1991). For entrenched organizations, like most

schools, federal, state, or division-level policies for can have a positive impact on parent

involvement -- if those policies are developed cooperatively with parents and teachers and are

supported properly. (Davies, 1987). Providing a coordinator of home-school programs, whether

at the school or division level, requires financial resources that may be beyond the limits of an

individual school. Technical innovations in communication also require financial support that

would require a commitment of resources beyond that available at the school level.

Individual schools can make organizational changes that will encourage parent involvement. In-

service training in communication and conferencing techniques, as well as sensitivity training for

the changing family environment can be helpful (Julian, 1994; Carrasquillo, 1993; Swap, 1990).

Efforts to reconceptualize ritualized parent contacts such as conference day or parent night can be

valuable. Remember that ritualized events should never be an end unto themselves. They should

merely be an opportunity to encourage further contact. "Determine what they do and do not

accomplish. Find out what parents, teachers, and principals want them to accomplish. Finally, experiment with alternative or additional formats that will help you to achieve your goals. And then remind yourself to examine the effectiveness of these formats after a trial period." (Swap, 1987, p.15). Schools can also take steps to make their physical surroundings more open to parents. Maintaining a parent room in the school can help to achieve this goal. Finally, schools must develop and support a comprehensive plan for parent involvement that involves parents from the start and recognizes the diversity of parents and types of parent involvement.

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APPENDIX A

The following annotated bibliography details books and journal articles that concern programmatic responses to the problem of parent involvement. They include discussions of existing programs or suggest new, comprehensive programs.

1. Bermudez, A. B. and Y. N. Padron (1988). "University-School Collaboration That Increases Minority Parent Involvement." Educational Horizons 66: 83-86.

This article reports on a teacher training program designed to familiarize student teachers with the barriers to minority parent participation and to provide an opportunity for them to practice minimizing those barriers. The program, which involved collaboration between the English-as-a-second-language students and Hispanic parents, resulted in improved attitudes toward minority parents among the students and increased knowledge about and interest in involvement among the parents.

2. Chrispeels, J. H. (1991). "District Leadership in Parent Involvement." Phi Delta Kappan 72: 367-371.

This article describes how the coordination of state, district, and individual school efforts to involve parents is being promoted in the state of California. The author provides a list of elements that promote successful initiatives for local-state cooperation for programs that encourage parent participation.

3. Comer, J. P. (1986). "Parent Participation in the Schools." Phi Delta Kappan 65: 442-446.

This article discusses the impact of programs to involve parents in their children's education. The focus is upon the impact of such programs on education in a world of change and insecurity for parents and children. The article finally analyzes the effectiveness of the Yale Child Study Center Team's work with the New Haven public schools. The author closes with a summary of the most effective elements of the program.

4. D'Angelo, D. A. and C. R. Adler (1991). "Chapter 1: A Catalyst for Improving Parent Involvement." Phi Delta Kappan 72: 350-354.

This article analyzes several Chapter 1 programs to determine what information can be gained for improving parent involvement throughout the public schools. The author finds that some of the greatest lessons involve improved communications. Several useful suggestions are included for programs aimed at improved communications between parents and schools.

5. Davies, D. (1991). "Schools Reaching Out." Phi Delta Kappan 72: 376-382.

In the family support movement, three themes are central: providing success for all children, serving the whole child, and sharing responsibility. The Institute for Responsive Education used these themes to develop a national project (Schools Reaching Out) designed to redefine and expand parent involvement as part of urban school reform. The article discusses the national program with numerous references.

6.   Epstein, J. L. and S. L. Dauber (1989b). Effects of the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Social Studies and Art Program on Student Attitudes and Knowledge (No. 41), Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Research has shown that parent involvement in a child's education at home and school has a significant impact on the student's success. The Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) project, which has been operating in a Baltimore City middle school for 3 years, offers processes and models designed to increase the involvement of parents in productive roles as volunteers and provides a structure for the middle grades teacher to develop and provides a structure for the middle grades teacher to develop a conduct a program integrating art and social studies. the process links art appreciation, history, and criticism to middle school social studies curricula and uses parents to present lessons on well-known art work government, and citizenship. This paper presents the first formal evaluation of the TIPS process. Data were collected from over 400 middle school students and questionnaires measured students' recognition of and reactions to American artists and paintings that they saw in their social studies classes. The data is analyzed and presented in tabular form; and it is concluded that the TIPS process can be a useful way of providing students with a background in art awareness, art history and art criticism, especially when teachers trained in art education are scarce, time is tight, and budgets are low.

7.   Kelley, M. L. (1990). School-Home Notes: Promoting Children's Classroom Success. New Yory, The Guilford Press.

This book describes the school-home notes program for improved parent-teacher communication. After outlining the value of improved communication in the educational process, the author discusses how school-home notes programs can be established and maintained in schools. Following a detailed discussion of the program including governance issues and special problems within other programs, the book closes with useful case studies to expand understanding of the program.

8.   Reglin, G. L. (1993). At-Risk "Parent and Family" School Involvement: Strategies for Low Income and African-American Families of Unmotivated and Underachieving Students. Springfield, IL, Charles C. Thomas.

This book is designed to serve as a guide for preservice, inservice, and Chapter I teachers as well as counselors, school administrators, parents, and staff development coordinators. It provides innovative suggestions, strategies, activities, and models for developing parent involvement for improved achievement among low SES and African-American students.

9.   Rich, D. (1987). School and Families: Issues and Actions. Washington, D.C., National Education Association.

This book gives very specific recommendations for programs, policies, and home learning activities to increase the quality and quantity of parent involvement. It begins with a discussion of the significance of parent involvement and what expectations people have for schools. After this discussion, the author begins her recommendations. Also included in this discussion is a short chapter on the affects of demographics in schools. The book includes several appendixes of useful information for establishing programs for parent involvement.

10.   Rioux, J. W. and N. Berla (1993). Innovations in Parent and Family Involvement. Princeton Junction, NJ, Eye on Education.

This book describes innovative programs for parent involvement, determining common characteristics of the programs, describing methods for the evaluation of such programs, and discussing the recent research about parent involvement. It also gives a useful list of references about parental involvement programs as well as a list of resources. The program descriptions are effectively classified according to grade level or organizational level (i.e. preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, district-wide programs and community programs).

11.   Smith, R. A. and L. K. Anderson (1994). "Connecting the Home, School, and Community." The Computing Teacher 21: 24-25.

This article discusses the use of inexpensive laptop computers to improve writing instruction. Parents were also invited to learn the use of the computers in a special evening open house. With the highly portable computers, students were able to transport them home for home assignments and to involve parents. The program showed significant success.

12.   Solomon, Z. P. (1991). "California's Policy on Parent Involvement: State Leadership for Local Initiatives." Phi Delta Kappan 72: 359-362.

This article discusses California's state initiatives for parent involvement. California state initiatives designed to involve parents fell into four categories: government, client services, parents as teachers, and parents as parents. These initiatives aligned with the state's curriculum reform strategies, required a five-year action plan for enabling school districts to develop local policies and plans that would involve all families.

13.   Swap, S. M. (1993). Developing Home-School Partnerships: From Concepts to Practice. New York, Teacher's College Press.

This book begins with a discussion of the connection between parent involvement and student achievement. Following a discussion of the literature on the subject, the author determines that parent involvement is unquestionably important to achievement. Given this important relationship, the author moves to a discussion of barriers to parent involvement and three "less than adequate" models of parent involvement (the protective model, the school-to-home transmission model, the curriculum enrichment model). This discussion leads her to "A New Vision: The Partnership Model." Building upon Joyce Epstein's typology of parent involvement, Swap develops four elements of a "true partnership between home and school." These elements -- two-way communication, enhanced learning at home and at school, providing mutual support, and joint decision-making -- are then discussed in detail. The book concludes with an outline of three "paths to partnership." The book is supported with five appendices that provide suggested forms and activities.

14.   Vandegrift, J. A. and A. L. Greene (1992). "Rethinking Parent Involvement." Educational Leadership 50: 57-59.

This discussion of the Arizona At-Risk Pilot Project results suggests that the most effective means to involve parents are those that establish personal rapport between someone from the school and a parent and do not initially require high levels of commitment or participation. The article concludes that the "ideal" parent may be hard to find, but getting to know parents individually and assessing their needs are good first steps.

15.   Warner, I. (1991). "Parents in Touch." <u>Phi Delta Kappan</u> 72: 372-375.

This article provides an extensive description of the strategies used in the Indianapolis Parents in Touch program. The article includes a discussion of the communication techniques used at the elementary (K-6), junior high (7-8), and high school levels. The techniques include parent conferences (the major program emphasis), activity calendars, student/teacher/parent contracts, student/teacher/parent folders, and a course record. The article also discusses technological methods of communication (such as "Homework Hotline" and "Parent Line/Communicator" system), as well as seminars and advisory council memberships

APPENDIX B

This appendix contains an annotated bibliography consisting of books, journal articles, and reports that give general information concerning the improvement of parent involvement in the education of their children. The sources include discussions of all grade levels and demographic characteristics.

1.   Baker, D. P. and D. L. Stevenson (1986). "Mother's Strategies for Children's School Achievement: Managing the Transition to High School." Sociology of Education 59: 156-166.

This authors examine the strategies used by 41 mothers of eighth graders, so as to expand the model of how parents participate in their children's school careers. The article finds consistency in the number and types of strategies used, suggesting standard methods, but identifies different ways that these strategies are implemented based upon the socioeconomic status of the mother. The differences and implications of these strategies are then discussed.

2.   Bauch, P. A. (1988). "Is Parent Involvement Different in Private Schools?" Educational Horizons 66: 78-82.

This article reports the results of a survey of 1,070 parents in five nationally representative, inner-city Catholic secondary schools. The survey was designed to obtain information concerning parent involvement in schools of this type. The survey found that in the surveyed schools parent involvement was limited. The highest area of parent involvement was as homework monitors, while the lowest level of involvement was reported to be in governing activities. these results were not found to be dependent upon whether a working mother was present, nor whether it was a single parent household. Parent education, reasons for choosing the school, and the school itself exerted a statistically significant effect upon all types of parent involvement. Moreover, the article identifies several findings that apply to all kinds of schools including: (1) Focusing parent involvement on student progress may be the most effective form of parent participation; (2) The degree of involvement may not be nearly as important as the form of involvement; (3) Schools that are focused more academically are likely to have higher levels of parent involvement than those that are more custodial in their orientation.

3.   Becker, H. J. and J. L. Epstein (1982). "Parent Involvement: A Survey of Teacher Practices." The Elementary School Journal 83: 85-102.

This article describes the results of a survey of 3,698 teachers in over 600 elementary schools in Maryland. The survey sought information on teacher practices and attitudes concerning traditional teacher-parent communications, the feasibility of parent involvement, and fourteen specific techniques for involving parents. These techniques are divided into categories including those involving reading and books, learning through discussion, informal learning activities at home, contracts between parents and teachers, and helping parents to teach. The survey also reports intensity of support for each of these activities. Differences in the use of techniques for parent involvement at various grade levels, parent educational level, and subject matter. The article also discusses home visits, parents in schools, and the effect of the school environment on teacher practices and attitudes for parent involvement.

4.   Biller, H. B. (1993). <u>Fathers and Families: Parental Factors in Child Development</u>. Westport, CT, Auburn House.

This book emphasizes the special contributions of the father in the context of his sharing of parental responsibilities. It integrates research findings from many different sources to attempt to suggest practical guidelines for improving the father-child relationship. A further reading section is included in each chapter to facilitate more in-depth study of the subject. A chapter is included on "Family, School, and Education," which discusses the father's involvement in the educational process and ways it can be improved.

5.   Burns, R. C., Ed. (1993). <u>Parents and Schools: From Visitors to Partners</u>. NEA School Restructuring Series. Washington, D.C., National Education Association.

This volume of essays begins with an essay discussing the advantages and problems that face parent involvement today. The next two essays discuss communication between parents and schools -- its problems and some possible solutions. Recent technological advances in communication and their possible uses in parent involvement programs are discussed. The essays are then concentrated upon discussions of existing programs for parent involvement and their effectiveness. The programs discussed are: The Family Connections Program; Mynderse Academy; and Stewart Community School. The book concludes with an essay that summarizes the findings from the program analysis.

6.   Carrasquillo, A. L. and C. B. G. London (1993). <u>Parents and Schools: A Source Book</u>. New York, Garland Publishing.

This book discusses the impact of change and diversity on families. It discusses the experiences of various ethnic and racial groups in American society. The authors then discuss ways that parent involvement and student achievement can be improved through developing diverse communities of education.

7.   Chavkin, N. F., Ed. (1993). <u>Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society</u>. Family Systems and the Life Cycle. Albany, NY, State University of New York Press.

This volume includes an introduction by the editor and 15 articles. It is divided into four parts: (1) An Overview; (2) Current Research; (3) Practice Perspectives; and (4) Opportunities Ahead. It includes many of the most important current researchers on parent involvement including the editor with David Williams; Oliver Moles; Joyce Epstein with Susan L. Dauber; Patricia Bauch; and Don Davies; among others. The volume concentrates much of its attention upon minority learners, but also presents valuable information concerning both parent and teacher behaviors that promote learning through parent involvement.

8.   Chavkin, N. F. and D. L. Williams (1987). "Enhancing Parent Involvement: Guidelines for Access to an Important Resource for School Administrators." <u>Education and Urban Society</u> 19: 164-184.

This article places questions about parent involvement in the following four categories: (1) coproduction or partnership, (2) decision making, (3) citizen advocacy, and (4) parent choice. The article further discusses these categories, identifies examples or models, and offers recommendations for action by parents, policymakers, and practitioners.

9.   Chavkin, N. F. and D. L. Williams (1988). "Critical Issues in Teacher Training for Parent Involvement." Educational Horizons 66(Winter 1988): 87-89.

This article reports the findings of a 1980 study of 3000 parents and 4000 educators, with follow-up inquiries. It focuses its attention upon parent, teacher, and administrator attitudes concerning the need for programs to train teachers for parent involvement, as well as determining the amount of training that was actually occurring. After noting the great difference between the attitudes about such training and its availability, it then discusses a prototype for preservice and inservice teacher training programs for parent involvement.

10.   Coleman, J. S. (1987). "Families and Schools." Educational Researcher (August-September 1987): 32-38.

This article argues that families at all economic levels are becoming increasingly ill-equipped to provide the setting that schools are designed to complement in the educational process. It describes the sources of these deficiencies and outlines those elements that it sees as missing from home and community. It makes these arguments in terms of social capital which is defined as the norms, the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value to the development of the child.

11.   Dauber, S. L. and J. L. Epstein (1989). Parent Attitudes and Practices of Parent Involvement in Inner-City Elementary and Middle Schools (No. 33), Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

This study used data drawn from about 2,300 parents of children in eight chapter 1, inner-city Baltimore (Maryland) elementary and middle schools to examine the extent of parent involvement at home and at school. Also examined was the extent to which the schools used practices designed to involve parents. Survey questionnaires included over 75 items on: (1) parent attitudes toward their children's school; (2) school subjects parents wanted to know more about; (3) the frequency of various forms of parent involvement in children's education; (4) the degree to which school programs and teacher practices informed and involved parents in children's education; (5) what workshop topics parents would select; (6) times of day parents preferred for school meetings or conferences; (7) amount of time children spent on homework; (8) whether parents helped with homework; and (9) background information about parents' education, work, and family size. Parents reported little involvement at school. They expressed a desire for advice about how to help their children at home and better information from schools about what their children were doing and were expected to do in school. The level of parent involvement was directly linked to specific school practices designed to encourage parent involvement at school and guide parents in helping at home.

12.   David, M. E. (1993). Parents, Gender, and Education Reform. Cambridge, MA, Polity Press.

This book considers educational reform and its impact upon gender relations. The discussion is set in cross-cultural perspective with its primary focus on American and British cultures. The authors begin with an historical review of educational policy and its reform. The place of gender and family in this history is then discussed. The modern reform movement including the moves to parental voice and school choice are then discussed. This discussion sets the stage for a concluding analysis of parent involvement movements and their impact upon mothers and families.

13.   Davies, D. (1987). "Parent Involvement in the Public Schools: Opportunities for Administrators." Education and Urban Society 19: 147-163.

This article discusses parent involvement by discussing the following four categories: (1) coproduction or partnership, (2) decision making, (3) citizen advocacy, and (4) parent choice. The author discusses The categories are discussed, giving examples of each category. The importance of the categories to policymakers and practitioners is then discussed.

14.   Dornbusch, S. M. and P. L. Ritter (1988). "Parents of High School Students: A Neglected Resource." Educational Horizons 66: 75-77.

This article reports the results of a survey of 7836 high school students, 3746 parents, and 307 parents at six San Francisco Bay area high schools. The article is one of only a few such reports of high school parent involvement, and discusses the questions: What is the nature of high school parent involvement? How frequently do these parents communicate? Who initiates contact? and What do parents and teachers discuss?

15.   Epstein, J. (1987a). "What Principals Should Know About Parent Involvement." Principal .

This article, focussed upon the needs of school principals, discusses in detail five ways that parents can be involved in their children's education. Beyond this discussion of Epstein's typology of parent involvement, the article provides 16 ways for principals to involve parents.

16.   Epstein, J. (1988). "How Do We Improve Programs for Parent Involvement?" Educational Horizons 66: 58-59.

This short article summarizes Joyce Epstein's research on parent involvement. It explains Epstein's five types of parent involvement and how they can be utilized to develop a comprehensive program for improved and increased involvement.

17.   Epstein, J. L. (1983). Effects on Parents of Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement (No. 346), The Center for Social Organization of Schools.

A survey of parents of 1269 students in 82 first, third, and fifth grade classrooms in Maryland was conducted to investigate the effects (on parents) of parent involvement techniques (used by teachers) for learning activities at home. Some of the teachers were recognized by their principal for their leadership in the use of parent involvement, while other teachers frequently used parent involvement, and some used few, if any, parent involvement techniques. Survey results indicate that parents have generally positive attitudes about their child's school and teacher. However, many parents receive few or no communications from the school, few are involved at the school, and most believe that schools could do more to involve parents in home learning activities. It was also found that teacher-leaders used parent involvement practices more often and more equitably with parents of all educational levels. Parents of children with teachers who frequently use home learning activities are more aware of teachers' efforts, receive more ideas from teachers, know more about their child's instructional program, and rate the teacher higher in interpersonal skills and overall teaching quality. Other types of parent involvement, such as routine communications from the school or parent involvement at the school, do not have as strong or consistent effects on parents.

18.   Epstein, J. L. (1984). "School Policy and Parent Involvement: Research Results." Educational Horizons 62: 70-72.

This article discusses research that found that the more teachers involve parents in their teaching practice, the more parents will be involved in their children's education and will recognize the efforts and merits of teachers.

19.   Epstein, J. L. (1987b). "Parent Involvement: What Research Says to Administrators." Education and Urban Society 19: 119-136.

Based upon a review of the available literature and the author's prior, independent research, this article identifies and discusses four important types of parent involvement in schools (e.g. "Basic Obligations of Parents," "School to Home Communications," "Parent Involvement at School," and "Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home"). It also discusses the role of the principal in establishing and monitoring programs to encourage each identified type of parent involvement. The article also discusses the extended role of principals: (1) in maintaining parent involvement through the high school years; (2) assisting teachers in dealing with all types of families and family structures; (3) expanding programs of teachers who effectively utilize parent involvement through communication and reward structures; (4) identifying goals and essential components of parent involvement programs; and, (5) using basic administrative tools of coordinating, managing, supporting funding, and recognizing parent involvement.

20.   Epstein, J. L. (1990). "School and Family Connections: Theory, Research, and Implications for Integrating the Sociologies of Education and Family." Marriage and Family Review 15(1): 99-126.

The purpose of this article is to argue for linking the sociologies of education and the family. The author justifies this linkage in terms of parent participation and its value to education and the family. She reviews the history of parent participation theory and the empirical evidence that has been gathered concerning it. Moreover, she discusses the advantages of parent participation for school and family connections. She concludes with a discussion of the parent involvement research and its implications for the linkage between the sociologies of education and the family.

21.   Epstein, J. L. (1991). "Paths to Partnership." Phi Delta Kappan 72: 345-349.

This article introduces a special section of the Phi Delta Kappan that shows leaders at the national, state, district, and school levels are following new paths to partnership between schools and families. This article presents an overview of the research concerning and history of federal, state, and division policy efforts to increase parent involvement. The article indicates that most programs make teachers' jobs easier and should continue throughout childhood and adolescence and include all families without requiring frequent school visits.

22.   Epstein, J. L. and H. J. Becker (1982). "Teachers' Reported Practices of Parent Involvement: Problems and Possibilities." The Elementary School Journal 83: 103-113.

This article describes several major issues related to parent participation in the comments of over 1,000 teachers who responded to a survey regarding their practices in the area of parent involvement. Eight issues that may prompt new research in this area are identified.

23.   Epstein, J. L. and L. J. Connors (1992). "School and Family Partnerships." The Practitioner 18: 1-8.

Concerns about and characteristics of family/school partnerships are the theme of this issue of a "newsletter for the on-line administrator." Because of the changing natures of students, families, and schools, school administrators must take a leadership role in facilitating parent involvement in education. The six major types of involvement for comprehensive partnership programs are outlined. These include basic obligations of families; basic obligations of the school; involvement at the school; involvement in home learning; involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy; and community collaboration. Questions to be considered for organization of partnerships are discussed; some of these include the development of a written policy, a leadership and committee structure, a budget, and an evaluation process. Examples of each type of partnership that has been implemented in middle and high schools are provided. A brief program description and contact information are included.

24.   Epstein, J. L. and S. Dauber (1989a). Teachers' Attitudes and Practices of Parent Involvement in Inner-City Elementary and Middle Schools (No. 32), Center for Social Organization of Schools.

This study uses data from 171 teachers at eight inner-city elementary and middle schools in Baltimore to examine general patterns and connections between teacher attitudes about parent involvement, school programs, and the actual practices that teachers use. These patterns are examined at different academic levels, in different academic subjects, under different classroom organizations, and under different levels of support for parent involvement. Classrooms were self-contained, semi-departmentalized, or departmentalized. Results are discussed in terms of: (1) how teachers feel about parent involvement in general; (2) interrelationships between five types of parent involvement; (3) parent participation practices that are most important to teachers of different subjects, including English/language arts, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies; (4) the effects of school level, student and teacher characteristics, and specific teacher practices on school programs of parent involvement; and (5) the effects of levels of support for parent participation on the strength of school programs. Discussion formulates conclusions from the data that warrant further study.

25.   Fine, M. (1990). ""The Public" in Public Schools: The Social Construction/Constriction of Moral Communities." Journal of Social Issues 46: 107-119.

This article explores ways in which public schools, which are supposed to be universally accessible moral communities, engage in patterns of systematic exclusion. The article presents three case studies of secondary schools in which issues of exclusion of groups of students have arisen concerning ideologies of merit, choice, and tradition.

26.   Fine, M. (1993). "[Ap]parent Involvement: Reflections on Parents, Power, and Urban Public Schools." Teacher's College Record 94: 682-710.

Parents are being invited to step in to help improve public education, but they enter with neither resources nor power. Real parental involvement requires commitment to organizing parents and restructuring schools, as well as inventing rich versions of diverse educational democracies of difference.

27.   Goldring, E. B. and R. Shapira (1993). "Choice, Empowerment, and Involvement: What Satisfies Parents?" Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 15: 396-409.

Questionnaire responses from 337 parents in Israel examine the nature of interrelationships between parent satisfaction with public schools of choice and parent empowerment, parent involvement, and the congruence of parental expectation with school programs. Findings indicate the importance of socioeconomic status as a factor in these relationships.

28.   Grolnick, W. S. and M. L. Slowiaczek (1994). "Parent's Involvement in Children's Schooling: A Multidimensional Conceptualization and Motivational Model." Child Development 65: 237-252.

This article examines the relationship between parental involvement in their children's schooling and children's motivation and academic achievement. Subjects were of 300 11- to 14-year-olds. Data from parent, student, and teacher evaluations suggest that parental involvement manifests itself in many ways. Children who are confident in school may actually push parents to become actively involved in school.

29.   Henderson, A. T. (1987). The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement. Columbia, MD, National Committee for Citizens in Education.

This article reviews the literature on parent involvement in education and student achievement. Following an earlier review of the literature by this author, the article demonstrates the strong positive connection between involvement and achievement.

30.   Julian, T. W., P. C. McKenry, et al. (1994). "Cultural Variations in Parenting: Perceptions of Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American Parents." Family Relations 43: 30-37.

This article examined cultural variations in parenting attitudes, behavior, and involvement of mothers and fathers in two-parent families. Findings from Caucasian (n=2,642), African-American (n=469), Hispanic-American (n=357), and Asian-American (n=49) parents revealed that, as group, ethnic parents indicated greater general emphasis on children exerting self-control and succeeding in school than did Caucasian parents.

31.   Kellaghan, T., K. Sloane, et al. (1993). The Home Environment and School Learning. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

This book focuses on the all-important family environment for child development and achievement in school. After discussing the research concerning the importance of the home-school partnership and the impact of family environment, the authors discuss the dramatic changes taking place in family relationships, today. Following this introduction, they discuss home-centered programs designed to promote learning, as well as the variety of family intervention programs that are currently being utilized for family development. The book closes with a discussion of techniques for involving parents in educational roles as a part of family life.

32.   Lareau, A. (1987). "Social Class Differences in Family-School Relationships: The Importance of Cultural Capital." Sociology of Education 60: 73-85.

This article summarizes a qualitative study of family/school relationships in White working class and middle class areas. It concludes that schools have standardized views of the proper role of parents in schooling. The research suggests that the concept of cultural capital is useful to understand social class differences in children's school experiences.

33.   Leitch, M. L. and S. S. Tangri (1988). "Barriers to Home-School Collaboration." Educational Horizons 66: 70-74.

This article reports on a study of parents' and schools' concerns about barriers to collaboration between parents and teachers. Work was the major reason given by employed parents for nonparticipation. Teachers' attitudes varied with job satisfaction and length of teaching experience.

34.   Mannon, G. and J. Blackwell (1992). "Parent Involvement: Barriers and Opportunities." The Urban League Review 24: 219-226.

This article explores parent involvement in an environment of educational reform. It argues that the evidence shows that voluntary parent involvement, as advocated by many reformers, may not be adequate. Moreover, he argues, in a world of changing economic pressures, work-related variables have become more critical. Therefore, businesses and industries that are interested in educational reform must take an active role in establishing conditions that will allow parent involvement in education.

35.   Moles, O. C. (1982). "Synthesis of Recent Research on Parent Participation in Children's Education." Educational Leadership 40(1): 44-47.

This article reviews the research concerning parent participation in children's education. It discusses: the effects of parent participation on achievement; how parents participate; barriers to home-school collaboration; some promising school programs; and teacher practices.

36.   Moles, O. C. (1987). "Who Wants Parent Involvement? Interest, Skills, and Opportunities Among Parents and Educators." Education and Urban Society 19: 137-145.

Through a review of the pertinent literature, this article examines the attitudes and actions of parents and educators regarding parent involvement. While mention is made of parents as volunteers and as participants in school policy-making, the emphasis of the article is on parent involvement in the education of their children through home learning activities. While reporting that generally parents of all SES backgrounds had an interest in being involved in their child's education and in participating in this process in a variety of roles (i.e. "audience" at school meetings, home tutor, school program supporter, etc.), their actual participation is reported to be highly dependent upon perceived obstacles to such participation. Among reported obstacles are: (1) low skill levels of both parents in knowing "how" to help and of teachers in communicating what help is needed; (2) home responsibilities of both parents and teachers; (3) special problems of single and low income parents. Suggestions are made to create opportunities for collaboration, including: (1) early contact; (2) parent resource centers; (3) workshops and parent training sessions; (4) sending ideas home for parent-child educational activities; and, (5) special training for teachers in encouraging parent involvement.

37.   Nardine, F. E. and R. D. Morris (1991). "Parent Involvement in the States." Phi Delta Kappan 72: 363-366.

This article summarizes two studies conducted by the authors -- a 1988 survey of the states to learn more about their investment in parent involvement and a follow-up survey that canvassed the states on the status of parent involvement legislation and guidelines. The surveys found limited investment in parent involvement, both in funds and in personnel. Moreover, states provided little technical assistance or evaluation of local programs for parent involvement. While the states with parent involvement legislation in place tended to provide more support to localities, they also tended to be the largest states. Thus, in per student terms the difference was not significant. The authors conclude that most state legislation for parent involvement provides little but lip service to real parent involvement.

38.   Schneider, B. and J. S. Coleman, Ed. (1993). Parents, Their Children, and Schools. Boulder, CO, Westview Press.

This collection of six essays considers parent/student/school relations in several of their dimensions. After an introductory essay, the essays utilize quantitative methods to consider the following subjects: (1) the context of parent involvement including parent expectations for their children's education, home-based parent involvement, and the degree of involvement in community and school;(2) family structure, parent involvement and student achievement; (3) minority involvement in schools; (4) parent choice programs and inequality.

39.   Stevenson, D. L. and D. P. Baker (1987). "The Family-School Relationship and the Child's School Performance." Child Development 58: 1348-1357.

This article uses a nationally representative data set to examine the interrelationship of the educational level of mothers to parent involvement in school, school performance of children, and children performing to ability. The study also considered these relationships in light of differences in student age and gender. They found that parent involvement mediates almost all of the influence that mother's education has on student performance. It also found that age and gender influence levels of parent involvement. The parents of younger children and male children tended to be more involved.

40.   Swap, S. M. (1987). Enhancing Parent Involvement in Schools: A Manual for Parents and Teachers, New York, Teachers College Press.

This book presents practical advice for improving the quantity and quality of parent involvement in schools. The book operates from the thesis that parent involvement has positive impacts upon children's education and presents an introduction and five additional chapters to present methods for improving that involvement. Following an introductory chapter (Chapter 1) in which the benefits of parent involvement are outlined, the author presents a chapter on "Common Barriers to Parent Involvement." (Chapter 2) This chapter discusses the problems for developing adult relationships between parents and teachers in an environment characterized by time constraints for both parents and teachers, ritualized parent-teacher interactions and efforts to communicate only during crisis. By setting up the nature of the barriers to communication the author can move to possible solutions. Chapter 3 presents several methods for "Initiating Positive Contacts." These include various activities to promote good relationships, providing adequate notice to parents, incentives, and most important, a welcoming and respectful attitude toward parent contracts. Chapter 4 presents suggestions for improving the quality of conferences with parents, including physical improvements, enhancing communication skills, and creating a collaborative environment.

Chapter 5 presents a plan for "Finding Out What Parents Want." This presents suggestions for gathering and assessing data and assessing needs over time. The final chapter (Chapter 6) involves "Involving Parents in Solving Problems and Making Decisions." The book also includes three useful appendices that include activities, communication exercises, and audio-visual resources.

41. Wheeler, P. (1992). "Promoting Parent Involvement in Secondary Schools." NASSP Bulletin 76: 28-35.

By focusing parent involvement programs on the parents and families instead of student "type," schools should identify parents not served by traditional outreach programs and find surrogate parents for certain students, as needed. Maintaining parent involvement depends on keeping records, respecting family culture and language, encouraging parents to visit the school, building trust, and designing appropriate activities. Eight references are included.

42. Zill, N. and C. W. Nord (1994). Running in Place: How American Families are Faring in A Changing Economy and An Individualistic Society, Child Trends, Inc.

This report examines the situation of families in the United States in the 1990s as they face the challenges of meeting the demands of a changing economy, the dangers of negative peer influences, and maintaining control as children grow older. The report emphasizes that how a family functions is more important than its structure (although structure can impact function), multiple risk factors are more significant than single risk factors, and that families exist within a social and economic context that is critical to its functioning. The report closes with suggestions for dealing with the problems that it discusses. Important among these suggestions is a discussion of family-school partnerships. The report utilizes extensive data and presents that data through a multitude of figures and tables.