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A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF A HOME LEARNING PROGRAM ON READING ACHIEVEMENT AS ANALYZED IN LONGITUDINAL DATA

By

Gladys Peeples Burks

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A B S T R A C T

A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF A HOME LEARNING PROGRAM ON READING ACHIEVEMENT AS ANALYZED IN LONGITUDINAL DATA

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INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In this study, the investigator tested the proposition that parent-student interaction using school designed reading activities at home coupled to and correlated with teacher instruction at school, resulted in a higher level of reading achievement than that of students who did not receive such help. The materials used in the homes were developed by classroom teachers and represent the concepts and skills being taught in the classrooms. It was hypothesized that first-grade students who participate in a home-learning program will demonstrate a higher level of academic achievement in reading than those who do not participate in a home-learning program. The first-grade students in this study fit the description of Title I (now Chapter I) participants. Such children attend elementary schools having a higher than average (more than fifty-nine percent) number of low income families residing in the attendance area of the building.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES USED IN THE STUDY

Ten variables were identified and analyzed. One-way analysis of variance was used to analyze the data. Cumulative gain, recorded for each year of the study, was analyzed. Results from two groups, control (non-Project HELP) and Project HELP were reported.

MAJOR FINDING OF THE STUDY

The statistical analysis of the posttest average group mean for Project HELP and non-Project HELP did not reveal a significant difference at the five percent level of confidence. Comparison of the posttest average group means for the two groups indicated a yearly gain after the second year of the study on the part of Project HELP students. These students initially equalled, then surpassed, non-Project HELP students in the third and fourth grade. Positive parental response to the opportunity to support classroom instruction was recorded.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents:

James and Pauline Peeples.

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To all those, family and friends, who supported and encouraged me during the writing of this dissertation, I express appreciation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this study, the investigator tested the proposition that parent-student interaction using school designed reading activities at home coupled to and correlated with teacher instruction at school, resulted in a higher level of reading achievement than that of students who did not receive such help. The materials used in the homes were developed by classroom teachers and represent the concepts and skills being taught in the classrooms. It was hypothesized that first-grade students who participate in a home-learning program will demonstrate a higher level of academic achievement in reading than those who do not participate in a home-learning program. The first-grade students in this study fit the description of Title I (now Chapter I) participants. Such children attend elementary schools having a higher than average (more than 59%) number of low income families residing in the attendance area of the building.

Many of these children currently attending elementary public school are in need of remedial reading instruction. These students did not acquire the skills, taught in the early elementary grades, that would have enabled them to read with ease, enjoyment and comprehension as they progressed through the public school system.

Extensive research has been conducted to identify the causes of this failure to learn to read. More important, research identifies methods and strategies that can be used to assist teachers and parents to help children learn to read better. The federal government has spent millions of dollars to study the effects of compensatory education. Researchers have investigated early intervention programs that utilized parents in the instructional setting. As the reports are completed and the data are summarized, the evidence grows.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the study is to investigate whether reading-skills acquisition is greater when home-learning materials are used by parents with their children than when they are not. Further, the cost-effectiveness of home-learning will be presented as an additional practical solution to the problem of providing supplemental instruction to students in need of additional assistance in reading at the first-grade level. The objectives of this study are as follows:

(1) to compare the year-end reading achievement scores of students who participated in a home-learning program as first graders with the scores of students who did not participate as first graders in a home-learning program.

(2) to record and analyze the second and the third grade reading scores of the students who participated and the scores of the students who did not participate in a home-learning program as first graders.

(3) to compare the test scores of participating and nonparticipating first graders in a home-learning program as reflected in the fourth grade on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test.

(4) to compare the test scores of participating and nonparticipating first graders in a home-learning program as reflected in the seventh grade on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test.

These objectives were met in the comparison of the data analyzed in this study.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

A study of parent participation and student achievement was completed in 1981 by the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE). The NCCE study reinforces the belief widely held by many teachers and parents that parents are a valuable resource to public education. Among the studies summarized in the NCCE report are some that look at the various roles parents play in the education of

their children. Coleman (1966) reported that family background was the most important factor in a child's education. This report was analyzed by Mayeske in 1973 and three family characteristics were identified: (1) family expectations for high academic performance, (2) the extent to which students and their parents engage in activities to support these expectations, and (3) the students' attitude toward hard work as necessary to success.

Jencks (1972) also analyzed Coleman's study and found that schools with an active parent group had higher average student achievement, regardless of the social background of the parent group.

These studies, and others, urge educators to reassess the value of parent training and involvement. It is apparent that a very valuable resource has been neglected for too long a period by far too many public school systems.

When the research is reviewed, public school systems' administrators can identify strategies that can be adopted for use in their local districts. The question most asked by school officials is: "How can poor parents who feel helpless and unimportant became involved in their children's academic growth?" The answer can be found, in part, in the premise that a parent is a child's first and most important teacher.

Despite the use, by schools, of modern techniques, technology and updated teaching methods, parental attitudes leave a more lasting influence on children. This influence, according to research, can be positive and productive

and can result in higher academic scores for children when parents are involved at the time that their children are eager for learning, that is, in the early childhood development stage.

Bronfenbrenner (1974) reported in his research that long-term gains in cognitive growth were achieved by early intervention only if the mothers were actively involved in their children's education.

Since 1965, the federal government has directed, in addition to research, millions of dollars to public school systems in an effort to increase student achievement for all students. The intent of the government was to provide financial resources to local education agencies in order that supplemental instruction, compensatory education, would be provided to students in need of reading and math remediation. The federal government further instructed schools through federal Title I laws to involve parents in programs designed to increase academic achievement for their children. Included in those instructions were requirements to evaluate and report academic achievement results demonstrated by the students who participated in Title I funded programs. Federal funds were provided for that specific purpose. According to the February 1, 1984 edition of Education Week, 6,900 published reports were analyzed by researchers between 1965 and 1983. Kendall O. Price, President of the Center for Leadership Development and Director of Research, was quoted, "It looks like there

has been research that people want done, but people in the field don't know it exists or how they can get it. There is a real gap between getting the research done and getting it to the people."

In the eighties, federal funds will continue to lessen, thus creating a need to seek other means of providing compensatory remediation. It is fortunate that research was encouraged during the sixties and seventies while a high level of federal financial support was maintained.

Studies such as those described in this report may be of value in helping federal decision makers set priorities that favor support to local school districts. Parents are lobbying to focus more attention on their willingness to become partners with teachers in the education of their children. Parents and teachers can rely on research such as that found by Carter (1977) in a study conducted by Systems Development Corporation. That study reports the effect of Title I instruction in reading through the first three grades. Researchers reported that Title I resources at least did the children no harm. This conclusion was based on an analysis of data that revealed no substantial difference in a wide range of tests between the performance of pupils in Title I programs and that of pupils in control groups in non-Title I programs. Stickney (1982) reported in a "National Assessment for Educational Progress" report, that significant reading achievement gains were made by 9-, 13- and 17-year-old students in schools offering

compensatory education compared to students in schools not offering such services.

Ralph Hoepfner, Director of the Sustaining Effects Study, adds that the study may indicate that increased knowledge about the teaching of basic skills may account for more favorable results in recent years and therefore feels Stickney's study substantiates the finding which reflected a faster learning rate for Title I students receiving compensatory reading instruction.

The problem of dwindling federal funds has already caused a reduction in many public school systems of federally paid reading technicians, consultants and remedial reading teachers. As school systems begin to reassess available resources, areas heretofore untapped are being considered. One such area, parental involvement, can be developed into an impressive resource.

Studies show that parents, when encouraged to do so, will work with their children at home (Gallup 1981). Included in such studies were questions relating to parent-teacher conferences, help with homework, time limits on television viewing and provision of child care and preschool with federal funds. A comparison with earlier surveys reflects an increased number of parents who express a willingness and who, in fact, help their elementary children with homework.

The child who uses reading support materials with his or her parents at home, in addition to being taught by the regular classroom teacher, has a far better chance to

perform at grade level or better. David P. Weikart, President of the High Scope Educational Research Foundation used the Verbal Interaction Record (VIR) and the Mutual Problem-Solving Task (MPST) to observe the interaction between mothers and their children. The findings were interpreted, along with other data, to identify positive aspects of parent-child relationships and a prediction of the child's performance on standardized achievement tests which relate to effective parenting (Weikert 1979).

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES IN NULL FORM

(1) There is no difference in reading achievement of first-grade students who participated in a home learning program and the reading achievement of first-grade students who did not participate in a home-learning program as measured on a locally developed Objective Referenced Test approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

(2) There is no difference in reading achievement of second-grade students who participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of second-grade students who did not participate as first-grade students in a home-learning program as measured on a locally developed Objective Referenced Test approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

(3) There is no difference in reading achievement at the third-grade level of students who participated as as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement at the third-grade level of students who did not participate as first-grade students in a home-learning program as measured on the California Achievement Test.

(4) There is no difference in reading achievement at the fourth-grade level of students who participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement at the fourth-grade level of students who did not participate as first-grade students in a home-learning program as measured on the California Achievement Test.

(5) There is no difference in reading achievement in the fourth grade of students who participated as first graders in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of fourth-grade students who did not participate as first-grade students in a home-learning program as measured on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test.

(6) There is no difference in reading achievement in the seventh grade of students who participated as first graders in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of the seventh-grade students who did not participate as first-grade students in a home-learning program as measured on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

The following basic assumptions underline this investigation:

(1) The test instruments are valid.

(2) The students did participate in the home teaching program.

(3) The scores are accurately recorded.

DESCRIPTION OF SETTING AND POPULATION

The study was conducted in Benton Harbor, Michigan. The total school population in the initial year of the study was 9,754 in grades K-12. There were 5,814 students attending twenty-three elementary schools, of whom 908 were first graders. The Benton Harbor Area Schools identify students for purposes of needed remediation and to satisfy federal (Title I) evaluation guidelines.

In the 1977-78 school year, Project HELP (Home Education Learning Program) was implemented for the second year. Approximately 250 students were given Project HELP activities to take home. These students at the first-grade level, identified as Title I , did not participate in the district's Title I pullout remedial reading program. Supplemental instruction through the use of home-learning activities sent home by the teachers, was provided by parents to their children at home.

Both participating and nonparticipating students attended Title I schools. Neither group received Title I remedial reading services in the first grade. These

schools were identified as Title I because of the number of poverty-level families residing in the attendance area of each elementary building. Each identified school had in attendance a large number of children of low socio-economic status. These children attending a school located in a low socio-economic area were eligible for Title I services once they were further identified as educationally deprived, that is, functioning below grade level.

The low-income factor in the Benton Harbor Area Schools is defined in the application for free and reduced priced meals as outlined in Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1758) and Section 4(e) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1773[e]) in the poverty guidelines for determining eligibility for participation in the National School Lunch Program during fiscal year 1978, Family Income Criteria (see appendix A).

In addition, the 1977-78 application for compensatory education in the Benton Harbor Area Schools carried a statement of assurance that children receiving Title I services resided in the attendance area of a designated school, were eligible and were identified as Title I students. Those building (school) designations follow:

School Name	Total Population	Low-income Families	% of Total
Bard	471	328	70%
Boynton	354	272	77%
Calvin Britain	476	286	60%
Henry C. Morton	428	350	82%
Seeley-McCord	566	363	64%
Sterne Brunson	621	368	59%

Within each Title I school building there were participating and nonparticipating classrooms. This situation created control groups. In each classroom, low socio-economic status low achievers, low socio-economic status average achievers, and low socio-economic, above average achievers were present, together with middle-income, low achievers and middle-income, average achievers. It was not determined that above middle-income students were represented in these classrooms.

In Benton Harbor the analysis of data from objective referenced tests and norm-referenced tests is used for program design, reporting to the Michigan Department of Education and improvement of Chapter I instruction.

Continued analysis of the data gathered from Project HELP students will be made. The information from studies such as this can be used to encourage greater emphasis to early intervention programs that incorporate parental support. The Benton Harbor Area Schools' office of evaluation and testing keeps on file test data on all students preschool through twelfth grade. This information, recorded on a yearly basis, was made accessible to the investigator. The data used in this study were selected for analysis of the academic achievement of specific students in the Benton Harbor Area Schools. Approximately one-half of the total first-grade population in the district attended Title I, now Chapter I, schools. Traditionally, Chapter I schools house low SES, predominately minority, students. Further, the majority of the teaching staffs are less experienced teachers. All of these characteristics were observable in the Benton Harbor Area Schools during the years of this study. These characteristics were considered by the program designer in the development of the course of action to be taken in the evaluation of the project. It was recognized that the need to provide periodic feedback to participants existed. As support to Title I buildings, information summarized in the process evaluation was disseminated

at the end of each school year. An example of the information available to program implementors is displayed in appendix D.

Despite these less than positive characteristics the process evaluation that took place provided useful information to program planners, parents, teachers and administrators.

The design of Project HELP allowed for specific feedback to parents and teachers. The need for changes in Project HELP, when detected, was discussed by program designers and implementors. These changes were completed where appropriate.

The school district of Benton Harbor, Michigan, is representative of many urban school districts. The student population is predominantly black. The teaching faculty is predominantly white. Only at the supervisory level is equity in racial representation observable.

It was hoped that through the use of carefully constructed home-school activities, academic achievement for thousands of poverty level students would be positively impacted.

Benton Harbor, with its low socio-economic status, offers a test for parental involvement. Generally poverty-level parents are hesitant to respond to the traditional methods offered by school systems to encourage parental participation. Benton Harbor is located in a very depressed area in Michigan. A recent survey conducted by Rand McNally

placed Benton Harbor, Michigan as the sixth worst place to live in the United States. Information of this type serves to establish negative attitutes in the minds of citizens. Children, students in a school system, in this instance the Benton Harbor Area Schools, may reflect a negative attitude toward school as a result of such criticism.

This study then can be of use to districts with similar characteristics, predominance of minorities, declining tax base, white flight, absentee landlords, high teen (and adult) unemployment, etc. A program, such as the one described in this study, meeting with success in a school district such as Benton Harbor, is worthy of replication in other school districts.

As federal dollars dwindle, indeed as local and state monies for education lessen, it becomes increasingly important that cost-effective educational methods are employed by public schools.

In 1977, following the first year of Project HELP implementation, a cost-effectiveness study (see appendix E) of the Project HELP program was compiled by the Benton Harbor Area Schools' director of state and federal programs. As local districts seek appropriate ways to address some of the problems they face, cost-effective methods have been considered. In the Project HELP study a cost of $4.31 per Chapter I student was calculated as opposed to $563.00 per student for pull-out remediation. Project HELP, utilizing parent teaching at home, provided appropriate support

to classroom instruction while reducing the cost of effective remediation at the first-grade level.

The cost-effectiveness study conducted as part of the Project HELP program offers additional support to the premise that schools can and should actively involve parents in the education of their children.

A more extensive review of the research of parental participation in curriculum planning and implementation is included in Chapter II. The efforts of educators who encourage school personnel to incorporate parental support in public education have been ongoing since the early sixties. The anticipated reduction in federal support to education and the more and more frequent failure on the part of taxpayers to pass millages to finance schools necessitate even greater attention to the need to seek additional resources to aid public school systems.

AN OVERVIEW OF A HOME-LEARNING PROGRAM

A home education learning program was developed in the Benton Harbor (MI) Area Schools in 1976. The program, Project HELP, Home Education Learning Program, was initiated at the first-grade level in Title I identified schools and at the Catholic elementary school. The program consisted of a set of teacher designed activities that were sent home on a systematic (weekly) basis with the student. Each activity was written in easy-to-read language to allow for participation by parents with minimal reading ability. The activities were developed using the language in the district's first grade basal reader. The items tested at the first-grade level in the district's evaluation program were also included in the design of the activities.

In the first two years of the program 1976-77 and 1977-78, an objective referenced test (ORT) approved by the Michigan Department of Education was used for evaluation at the first-grade level. In the 1978-79 school year, the third year of the program, use of the ORT was discontinued and the California Achievement Test was adopted for use.

The results from the district's objective referenced testing program indicated for the teachers the areas needing reinforcement. Teachers made a sincere effort to avoid designing activities that required items not usually found in poverty-level homes.

Parents were asked to test the activities at home. They responded with comments such as, "It took longer than the time stated on the activity." "I didn't have a cookie-sheet so I couldn't do the activity." "We had a lot of fun with this." "Is it all right for my younger children to do the activities?" These comments were of great help to the program developers. Accordingly, the activities were revised and program implementation was begun, the intent of which was to establish consistent home-learning by students, regardless of the parent's socio-economic level, educational background, or race.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TRADITIONAL READING PROGRAM

The regular reading class consists of fifty-five minutes of instruction. The classroom teacher generally divides the reading class into groups according to each student's reading level. Instructional methods vary from room to room. In most classes, however, teachers are observed directing instruction to the entire group, initiating activities in workbooks for a group that will perform independently while the teacher listens to another group read orally. A third group may be working, with varying degrees of time on task, on ditto pages or teacher prepared work sheets. In some instances, a teacher's aide assists with small groups or individual instruction. Observable in such situations are students who fail to listen while instructions are being directed to the group, lose interest

while working in their workbooks and stop working, spoil their ditto pages or worksheets and sit until the teacher notices they are not working, and refuse to read aloud or to wait until their turn to read. These observations illustrate the need to provide additional time on task in reading for students who cannot or will not perform independently in classrooms where the teacher cannot provide direct and constant instruction.

THE SELECTION OF SAMPLE

Students who participated in their first-grade year in Project HELP were selected from the total first grade Title I population. As was expected, the number of students remaining in this five year study was not constant. For that reason, only the scores, pretest and posttest, recorded from first grade through the fourth grade (1977-1980) are included. In addition the MEAP scores at the fourth- and seventh-grade level for the same students were recorded and reported as part of this longitudinal study.

Some characteristics of this poverty level inner-city minority student population were identified. They were high mobility, late enrollment for children whose family could not provide clothing at the opening of school, and failure to attend on a regular basis. The school system also contributes to the fluctuations in attendance on the part of students by assigning students to Special Education classes after the start of school and by shifting classes of students (and sometime teachers) to establish effective teacher/pupil ratios and class size. The control group consisted of students who did not participate in their first-grade year in Project HELP. The control group was also selected from Title I schools. First-grade students, participant and nonparticipant, from which the sample was selected numbered 461. The investigator determined that the student populations in participating and nonparticipating classrooms were equivalent. This determination,

coupled with equivalency, was established with investigation of socio-economic status, minority percentage and pretest scores. An analysis of Title I identification and number of Project HELP activities completed (for Project HELP participants) ensured equivalency.

Scores for the 211 nonparticipants and those of 250 Project HELP participants were recorded. Of the original group of 461 students, the scores of students who did not participate; students who participated and returned fewer than six of the twelve Project HELP activities; students who participated and returned six or more of the twelve Project HELP activities together with the scores of students who failed to return any of the activities were recorded.

PROCEDURE

In the 1977-78 school year, within the first two weeks of school, the students were tested as first graders with the Objective Referenced Test. At the fourth-grade and seventh-grade level, students were administered the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test. Classroom teachers administered both tests.

The investigator recorded the 1977 pretest and the 1978 posttest scores of first graders who participated in the home-learning program, Project HELP. The 1977 pretest and the 1978 post-test scores of first graders who did not participate in Project HELP were also recorded. The pretest and posttest scores of students in the home learning

participation group and the home learning nonparticipation group as second graders, for 1977 and 1978 respectively, were recorded, as were the 1978 and 1979 California Achievement Test pretest and posttest scores for third and fourth graders, participants and nonparticipants.

The 1980 fourth grade reading scores of the home-learning participation (MEAP) group and the home learning nonparticipation group were recorded. The 1983 seventh grade reading scores of the home-learning participation (MEAP) group and the home-learning nonparticipation group were recorded.

A parametric technique was used in this study. The test used was one-way analysis of variance. Following are the assumptions for ANOVA that are met in this research project:

(1) The scores on the dependent variable are measured on an interval scale.

(2) The underlying population totals are normally distributed.

The constants in this study are grade-level and remedial reading status, one year or more below grade level. Subjects were selected from the first-grade population.

The independent variable in this study is the home education learning program, Project HELP. The dependent variables result from scores on the 1977-78 Objective Referenced Test (ORT), the 1978-79 California Achievement

Test Scores, the fourth grade 1980 Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) Test and the seventh grade 1983 MEAP Test.

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

The first and primary learning environment of the child is the home. As acceptance of this premise increases, educational programs are increasingly focused on parent-child interaction. Olmstead, Ware and Newell (1976) described various areas of evaluation of home-school programs. They offered, among others, intelligence, achievement, self-concept and social behavior as areas that might be measured. These writers suggest that each home-school program examine its goals and then select evaluation measures, techniques and methods most appropriate to those goals.

The participation of parents as leaders in planning and developing curriculum in local school districts was described by Della-Dora in 1979. His description outlines steps that parents could and should take in order to be more than "rubber stamps" or "advisors." First, parents should be advised of what is involved in curriculum development; second, they should assess their own knowledge and decide what they know and can contribute to the development of curriculum. Finally, parents should be prepared to convince the educational decision makers that they have something to contribute and should participate.

A question could be raised regarding the ability of poverty level families, many possessing minimal reading skills, to provide a productive support system. Research indicates that, regardless of socio-economic status, parent involvement affects student achievement. Benson (1979) conducted a study of parents of 764 sixth graders in Oakland, California and concluded that children whose parents spend time with them in educational activities achieve more in school, regardless of socio-economic status. Additional answers to the question of parent abilities can be found in the studies of Bronfenbrenner (1974); Coleman (1966); Comer (1980); Gallagher (1976); Rich (1976); and others.

Researchers have found that individual and group studies of parent involvement reflect lasting effects on the performance of children in school. Early education programs, preschool and early elementary, significantly reduced the number of children assigned to special education classes or retained in grade, regardless of their initial abilities or home background, and increased children's scores on fourth-grade math and reading tests. Graduates of all the projects maintained higher IQ scores for up to three years; graduates of three of the projects maintained higher IQ scores ten-to-fifteen years later. In addition, children who attended pre-school were more likely to have attitudes related to achievement, and their parents were more likely to have higher aspirations for them.

When the researchers attempted to determine if one program design was more effective than another, they found all the programs reviewed in the Systems Development Corporation study to be about equally effective with all types of children whether of high or low IQ, male or female, educated or uneducated parents.

Although parent involvement was not isolated and separately measured as a factor in program effectiveness, largely because there was substantial parent involvement in all the programs studied, the researchers feel that it is an integral part of a "cluster" of factors essential to program success. They also cautioned that a program must be well designed to be effective.

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the study is described in Chapter I. In Chapter II the related literature will be reviewed. In Chapter III the population, procedures, instruments, design, and procedures for analysis will be described. Study results are analyzed in Chapter IV. Chapter V will include discussion of the results, conclusions and implications resulting from the study.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

In order to ensure clarity of use, the following definitions are cited:

TITLE I (CHAPTER I) of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) [formerly Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)] is the largest federal aid program for elementary and secondary public schools. Chapter I provides federal dollars to school districts to enable schools in poverty level neighborhoods to provide extra educational services for children who are below grade level in school. Chapter I funds can be used to train and promote parent participation in Chapter I programs.

THE MICHIGAN EDUCATION ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (MEAP) is an effort to provide information about student achievement in all of Michigan's public schools. Simply stated, the state assessment program asks the question, "How are our students doing with what we want we want them to know and do?" Answers to this question are secured from the results of statewide testing in reading and mathematics every fall.

OBJECTIVE REFERENCED TESTS (ORT) in the Benton Harbor Schools resulted in a concern regarding the correlation between the test series and the reading and mathematic books in use. In June, 1972 all Michigan school districts were informed that the Michigan Department of Education would no longer accept scores on the basis of standarized tests in kindergarten and first-grade. Districts had to select Objective Referenced Tests available on the market or develop their own. The Benton Harbor Area Schools chose to develop local tests reflecting the scope and sequence of its curriculum. These tests were approved by the Michigan Department of Education and administered for the first time in September, 1972 as pretest and in May, 1973 as a posttest as objectives in the districts' reading and testing program.

THE HOME EDUCATIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM (HELP) was originally intended to serve first grade students who would be eligible for Title I ESEA services. Home-teaching activities, developed by Benton Harbor teachers, were sent home on a weekly basis with students. The activities or "recipes" are based on objectives in the districts' reading and testing program. The parents complete the activities with the children, in actuality extending and reinforcing the teaching that took place in school. A checklist attached to the activity (the KEY report) is detached, completed by the parent and sent back to school with the child. In this way, the teacher is assured that the parent is assisting the child at home.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In Chapter II, the studies conducted to analyze the value of parent support to instruction, the effect of parent support (at home) on academic achievement, and methods used to establish home-school support will be covered.

A review of the pertinent literature reveals growing evidence that parents are effective teachers of their own children.

For many years teachers, secure in their ability to teach, advised parents not to interfere with the education of their children. Teachers further advised parents that if any help was needed from them that help would be requested by the teacher and dictated by the teacher. Parents for the most part left the education of their children to the schools. This assumption on the part of teachers must now, with good cause, be reexamined.

A review of the literature related to the study reflected evidence that parent involvement does have a positive effect on academic achievement in reading.

In the Benton Harbor Area Schools the constant erosion of the best and brightest students to private and parochial schools is observable. Within the system an increasing number of specialized programs; gifted and talented, creative arts and computer assisted programs that tend to attract the more able student have been established. Left in the more

tradition classrooms are the children from low-income, single parent, minority and poverty-level families, families in which parents feel powerless in many instances to help their children succeed in school.

In this study test scores of low SES students in the Benton Harbor Area Schools were analyzed as a dimension of the concept of parental involvement. Because the majority of the student population in the study are minority and black, the results of the study are of significance to urban school districts having similar student populations.

In 1983, ECIA, Chapter I replaced Title I. New laws were written, old laws amended and local school districts were encouraged to continue their parental involvement activities, but the activities were no longer mandated. Since the elimination of parent involvement mandates, experts have continued to advise various federal education committees of the value of meaningful parent involvement. As recently as June of 1984, the work of James Comer, Professor of Child Psychiatry at Yale University's Child Study Center was reviewed in the nationally disseminated Report on Education of the Disadvantaged. Comer's program involves parents of children attending low-income, low-achieving schools. In the Comer program parents play a role in school management and decision making. Comer stated, "The active role of a core group of thirty to forty parents and the decision-making power of their three or four representatives made the school

a place of trust and hope throughout the community it served. The project has led to better relations between parents and teachers, student achievement gains and higher staff, student and parent aspirations."

In the same report, Joyce Epstein, director of the School Organization Program of the John Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools was quoted as follows, "Sometimes schools and teachers have to choose between parent involvement at school and parent involvement in learning activities at home." Extensive research conducted by the John Hopkins center indicates that having parents support instruction as part of their student's learning at home makes teachers comfortable about asking them to help with learning activities. Parents who help with learning at home develop a stronger sense of how to help their children.

In an abstract prepared by John Hopkins University researchers, evidence that parents of first graders in Maryland hold positive attitudes about the school and the teachers of their children was presented. Further, a survey conducted by the National Institute of Education (NIE), U.S. Department of Education reveals that, "Parents with children in classrooms of teachers who frequently use home learning activities are more aware of teacher's efforts, receive more ideas from teachers, know more about the child's instructional program and rate the teacher higher in interpersonal skills and overall teaching quality."

The summary compiled by the John Hopkins University staff capsulizes the essence of parent involvement. At best, this summary will expand and encourage thoughtful consideration of the notion that area resources are now available, in impressive numbers, to address the concerns evident in pupil skill acquisition in the eighties.

The premise that parents are an important resource is one that has been under consideration for some time. In the 1977 Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, an article, "Parents as Teachers--A Resource," described parental involvement as the locally developed aspirations that parents have for their children. It seems then that parental aspirations, translated into a sense of ownership on the part of parents for increased student achievement, can be channeled into a willingness to work with school systems to upgrade curriculum and instructional programs.

Parents are the only verifiers and clarifiers of their own personal experiences in parental involvement. Research reveals that parents perceive the inclusion of parent teaching in home learning activities as a worthwhile use of their time. A bibliography provided in the John Hopkins University report contains over twenty-five sources suitable for further analysis of the data collected about the effect of parental involvement and teacher practices related to parental involvement on the academic achievement of children. The report, completed two years ago, in 1983, correlates with evidence presented in the Project HELP study. The

evidence revealed that in classrooms where teachers were parent involvement advocates, parents were more likely to respond to teacher requests for parental cooperation.

It is known that most parents are involved on a fairly regular basis with their children at home--at least for brief periods of time. The research suggests 85% of the parents surveyed spent fifteen minutes or more with their children as their children did homework activities. A study by Zill and Peterson (1982) indicated that 83% of parents helped their children aged seven to eleven with their homework.

Among five groupings of techniques favored by teachers as effective and useful parent involvement practices are activities and games using materials common to the home. This technique is an intrinsic component of Project HELP. The other techniques are: (1) parents reading books to their children; (2) discussions between parents and children; (3) formal contracts and supervision among teachers, parents and children; (4) tutoring and drilling children in skill acquisition exercises.

In the introduction to this study it was noted that federal dollars for compensatory education are declining. At the same time studies show that parents are willing to participate with teachers to improve their children's education.

The recently developed "Michigan State Board of Education A Plan, A Blueprint for Action," outlines some recommendations to local school districts. The recommendations

follow the statement, "But educators alone cannot strengthen curriculum standards. There must be a partnership of citizens, parents, teachers, administrators, and students working together for better education for Michigan citizens." Stated in recommendation number one is an outline for a long-range (three-five year) School Improvement Plan for local school boards when reviewing the standards of Quality Document developed in 1984 by the Michigan Board of Education.

This action by the Michigan Board of Education was foreshadowed by years of research that indicated that educators were in need of assistance to meet the needs of a rapidly changing student population. Students had begun to question, challenge and dispute teachers. The automatic respect for teachers and the knowledge they held was no longer evident in the attitudes of many students.

In 1980, Benjamin P. Ebersole, President of the Association for Supervision of Curriculum Development wrote, "The ring of respect encircling students, teachers, and parents is an essential relationship for effective learning. A break anywhere in the circle results in a breakdown in student performance. If there is close communication, cooperation, sincere caring, however, there seems to be no limit to what might happen--students learn more, teachers are more fulfilled, and parents feel better about their children and themselves." The Association for Supervision

and Curriculum Development (ASCD) has expressed deep interest in the positive interaction between the home and the school. The ASCD booklet contains a summary of practices, perceptions, assumptions and analyses of parent participation, parental role for power sharing and suggestions for developing productive home/school relationships. The findings reported in that summary, the research done by Ira J. Gordon and the studies completed by Dorothy Rich, will be presented to encourage further consideration to the application of the parent involvement concept.

Parental involvement takes many forms. In addition to the presentation of the findings of Gordon and Rich, the review of the literature for this study will be organized around four definitions of parent involvement:

1) parent involvement in the form of teaching children at home

2) parent involvement in the form of parent education

3) parent involvement in the form of input in the development of curriculum

4) parent involvement in the form of home-school interaction

Parental involvement has value. The existing literature reflects many examples of worthwhile and successful programs which involve parents. The idea that parents should be involved in the education of their children emerged some thirty years ago in the 1950's. At that time the public began to question the quality of public education.

Researchers, in their attempts to determine why children were or were not learning, found that among other reasons, parental involvement seemed to contribute to success in schools. In the mid-sixties, federal funding was provided for the specific purpose of developing and encouraging parent involvement activities in the nation's public school systems. The four definitions of parent involvement follow.

TEACHING CHILDREN AT HOME

Many local education agencies experience problems in recruiting parents to help in the schools. Communities with diverse ethnic groups, uncertain financial resources and high concentrations of minority, poverty level and single parent families face an even greater degree of problems in garnering parent involvement and support.

This section of the study is written to describe the outcome of concentrated and deliberate efforts to involve parents in the education of their children.

Parent involvement in the form of parent participation in the instruction of their own children can capitalize on the fact that parents are the largest single influence on their own children.

In 1976 a Gallup Poll survey of parent participation in public schools reflected that 8 out of 10 persons surveyed expressed approval of courses for parents to help their children in school.

The summary, "A Decade of Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education 1969-1978", presented the conclusion that parents should be considered as part of the teaching team.

Gallup (1978) maintained that problems faced by the schools in the seventies were solvable only if parents became much more involved.

One task of the schools in the seventies was to identify those parents who were capable of and willing to teach their children at home.

Identification of capable and willing parents continues. This effort should be encouraged by educators and teachers as part of the sharing of school power with parents. Intervention of this type can also help public school systems. In communities where classes are large and school districts lack the financial resources to reduce class sizes and thereby lower the teacher-pupil ratio, parents can provide additional attention to the children who may not receive needed attention from the teacher. Once teachers have presented skills to the children, parents reinforce those skills at home.

It is encumbent upon schools to continue to provide parents with the tools: support, information and expertise to teach their children, at an early age, in the home. Jencks (1972) asserted that schools are unable to eliminate inequality among children brought on by variables in a child's background. However parents, having recognizable influence on the life of children, can impact academic

achievement. Mayeske (1973) concluded that family background, through the values held by members of the family, plays a vital and profound role in achievement level of the child.

Among the tools needed to encourage involvement by parents is support. The anxiety level of parents should be reduced. Another tool is patience. Parents should be encouraged to be patient with their children in order to enhance the home teaching atmosphere. An additional tool is information. Low-cost materials and the utilization of items already present in the home will help to produce an effective learning environment. Parents, when encouraged to use low cost items in the home, can teach their children at home with the knowledge that they are supporting and reinforcing those concepts presented by the classroom teacher.

The home abounds with materials for learning. With creativity and encouragement, parents can constantly provide a home curriculum that reinforces the teaching that takes place in school.

The inequality noted by Jencks can be alleviated when parents help bridge the gap that exists between their children and a teacher from a culturally different background. Parents may be able to explain ideas more effectively than teachers. Parents have, in varying degrees, learned some coping skills and have adapted to society. This accomplishment, if it has taken place, will enable parents to

help their children assimilate what is taught at school with what is taught and learned at home and in the community.

PARENT EDUCATION

This form of parent involvement incorporates activities, training sessions and seminars that are intended to give parents specific skills (legible handwriting and reading ability, for instance) that will help them to meet their own personal needs as well as those of their children.

In addition to basic educational skills, parent education may also include parent effectiveness training, community resource awareness and encouragement to be self-actualized.

It is felt that any training that will help parents function better in the home is training or education that will help the child. The realization that parents need training to be effective has come to many forward looking educators.

Some of the areas in which parents need education are physical care, education techniques and inter-personal communication. Ginott (1965) described the ways communication can improve the relationship between parent and child. Ginott explains that parents, when made aware of the importance of constructive communication, can provide positive reinforcement to their children by responding to the feelings of children rather than to the words the children say.

Teachers, often burdened with paperwork, large class size and time schedules dictated by curriculum, may not be able to provide this type of individualized response.

Gordon (1972) cites still another area of parent education. His program, Parent Effectiveness Training, bases the treatment of children as people in the communication process. This educational technique utilizes what Gordon refers to as the no-lose approach. Parents are taught, educated, to be active listeners. Parents are taught to set up, establish and maintain a two-way system of communication. The benefits of such situations are evident especially when parents are reinforcing concepts that have already been presented by the classroom teacher. A child, having listened to the teacher in class, and for whatever reason is unable to ask questions or receive additional information would have another opportunity, at home, to inquire and seek more understanding. Parents, trained to respond as active listeners, can provide sorely needed support to a child who may be unsure and hesitant about his understanding of what is being taught. Gordon's no-lose method involves six steps:

1. Identifying and defining the concept
2. Generating possible alternative solutions
3. Evaluating the alternative solutions
4. Deciding on the best acceptable solutions
5. Working out ways of implementing a solution
6. Following up to evaluate how it worked

Training sessions to educate parents in the practical application of the no-lose method can be arranged by school districts seeking to establish viable parent involvement activities. Joseph and Larie Broga (1974) offer advice to parents regarding positive self-concept. Parents as teachers of their own children must be aware of this important aspect. The importance of parents, also growing as individuals, is stressed in the writings of these two authors.

Parents, hopefully, with a great deal of follow-up and encouragement will provide positive conditions and demonstrate loving care with their children while teaching them at home.

Many parents, of course, are well educated and motivated to provide the best that they can for their children without prompting from others. Morrison (1978) reminds us that the same level of interest and involvement should not be expected from all parents.

Actually the level of involvement does not alter the influence that parents have on their children. Public school systems would do well to recognize this and develop strategies to improve their parent recruitment activities.

Offering more than one form of parent education activity is an effective parent recruitment strategy.

This study concentrates on child orientated activities. It is recognized that adult basic education courses, General Educational Development (G.E.D.) training and other self-improvement interests, all play an important part in the training of parents.

Successful recruiting of parents would include the following steps:

1. identifying the areas that interest parents
2. locating resources: personnel and materials to meet the needs of parents
3. utilizing more than one method to inform parents of what is available to them

The comfort level of parents may not be very high. For that reason, it is important to approach parent education with sincerity and a strong commitment to parent advocacy.

Gordon (1975) describes parent education through the training of parents to perform appropriate instructional tasks which can be transferred from the school setting into the home setting with ultimate goals being a more effective home learning environment.

A parent educator according to Ira Gordon would use materials developed to reach not only the goals of the school, but appropriate for use by the family regardless of the families' goals, expectations, lifestyle and value system.

Parents are viewed as people who can contribute to the education of their own and other children. When viewing parents as contributors to education, it is necessary to develop appropriate instructional tasks for parent teaching use.

In situations where the physical care of children is identified as a need, schools should through community resource awareness training for parents, address that need before attempting other types of parent education.

Through parent education, the physical and social needs of children can be addressed. It may become evident, however, that awareness of the societal needs of families must be brought to the attention of educators, teachers and administrators. Parenting skills include some knowledge of child development, behavior modification and sex education as basics. Certainly the ability to make wise decisions in the area of nutrition should be taught to parents.

A review of the literature reflects that parents who are educated to instill good eating habits through the provision of certain foods and vitamins can contribute immeasurably to the positive climate needed in the schools. This climate is established and maintained when children leave homes in which junk food is prohibited, or allowed in minimum amounts, and come to the classroom alert, well fed and well rested. Learning is far more likely to take place when the children reflect this type of caring from the home.

Schools can and should--indeed must, considering the current withdrawal of federal support to educational and social services to communities, look to local community resources to assist in the provision of counseling services, family planning and educational assistance to parents.

In the community, agencies such as local government, health clinics, church groups, fire and police departments, public libraries as well as trained specialists; university professors, doctors, lawyers, dentists, social workers are available to schools to implement parent education involvement. Bronfenbrenner (1973) predicted some critical conditions that impinge on the development of children. The conditions, employment status of the family bread-winner, the family income level, the number of children per room in the household, the presence of another adult in addition to the principal care giver and the parents' education, are those addressed in most communities in the provision of social services and adult education.

Hetherington and Cox (1979) investigated the conditions faced by children of well-to-do families. Their data reveal that children of divorce are less likely to respond to the mothers' requests. The continuing practice of awarding the custody of children to the mother when a divorce occurs presents still another family need. Even when family income is not an issue the needs of children of divorced parents remain to be answered, in part, by the schools. Hetherington provides some insight as a result of a pilot study initiated on the impact of family support systems on the family functioning and the development of the child. The results of the study are described by Leichter (1979) and revealed feelings of stress, under certain conditions by intact, two-parent families unable to provide needed family resources.

Leichter poses the question, "Who needs parent education?" The answer, based on an analysis of the data, is nonparents, the general public, and actual and potential decision makers in all segments of our society. Leichter further advises that parents know these things already.

The existing literature identifying and describing the conditions under which families; single parent, female heads of the household, poverty level, adolescent/teenaged etc. function is extensive. The task at hand, for educators, is to plan to accomodate and address those conditions through parent education and intelligent and meaningful curriculum planning.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

In order for parents to be involved in the development of curriculum, it will be necessary to identify the successful practices that contribute to parent decision making in curriculum.

Parent input should be continuous. A one-time request to rubber stamp what has already been approved by educators does little to inspire parents to become involved in curriculum matters.

Parent input should also deal with important areas. The selection of textbooks, for instance, is important. The cost is generally substantial. In addition, important aspects: sexism, racism, and ageism in teaching materials must all be thoughtfully considered. Parents, requested to meet continuously, to consider and assess curriculum

materials will realize the importance of what they have been asked to do.

Parent input should have impact, that is, what they offer must be acted upon. Parents must be educated to work in groups to reach desired goals. Parent involvement in the form of curriculum development, is sure to result in the articulation of a wide variety of ideas and opinions from parents. This information must be shared and discussed as part of the group process. As parents work in the schools, either as paid staff or volunteers, they are often better equipped to guide their own children's growth and they gain a greater degree of understanding regarding the curriculum.

Brofenbrenner (1974) found that parent input in curriculum is enhanced by parent education and home visits by educators.

Curriculum can be defined as a set of experiences designed for and delivered to children along with a plan to provide the experiences.

The three distinguishable aspects of curriculum are content, classroom process and environment.

Content, what is to be taught, consists of skills to be acquired by the children. Parents having studied the districts' curriculum would be expected to articulate the skills they feel are necessary for students to acquire in order to become fully functioning adults.

In 1980, during the White House Conference on Families, a summary of the issues compiled by more than 100,000

people in various state conferences included parental involvement in education as one of the major recommendations to the federal government.

Delmo Della-Dora (1979) offers advise to parents in order that they can participate as something other than "advisors" to the administration. Della-Dora cites six different definitions of curriculum. He describes the first as "all the facts and skills taught in the classroom." Experiences provided by school personnel is listed second by Della-Dora. Extra or co-curricular activities are included in this category. Field trips, work/study programs as part of the curriculum and the "community school concept" which became popular following World War II are listed as third and fourth. The community school concept included all of the educative experiences of young people in their formulative years. T.V., in later years, was added to the list which includes churches, family neighborhoods, friends, the media: radio, magazines and newspapers as experiences encountered by young people as they grew up.

Della-Dora's fifth definition, pioneered by Tyler and Toba (1940) reflected curriculum as the answer to the following inquiries:

1. What educational purposes should schools strive to attain?

2. How can learning experiences be selected which will help schools attain these purposes?

3. How can schools organize learning experiences to achieve effective instruction?

4. How best can evaluation of effective learning experiences be accomplished?

The Tyler (1949) rationale for curriculum development demonstrates systematic curriculum planning.

Della-Dora notes a sixth and final definition of curriculum development. That description states that young people, as such, individualize their response to life while they are growing up. Further they make meaning out of what happens to them from their own perspective of what they experience in school. Art Combs (1962) explains in greater detail the educational consequences of this type of curriculum. Della-Dora maintains that very few educators know of his sixth definition of curriculum and even fewer try to use it. Of the six definitions mentioned here, Della-Dora states that the third definition is the one pursued most often. That definition, that curriculum consists of all experiences under the direction of school people in and out of school, allows the inclusion of parents and other lay community members and students in curriculum planning. The premise that parents and other lay community people as well as students in curriculum planning leads us to the fourth and final definition of parent involvement as defined in this report.

It should also be kept in mind that no one, especially parents, wants to feel that they are being "talked at." Therefore the tendency to tell parents what is needed should be carefully considered. Information ideally should be communicated back and forth from parents to school. (Figure 2.1 illustrates one example of one-way and two-way communication.)

Schools then would avoid communicating with parents only when something is needed. Educators will have to make a conscious effort to keep parents informed. This includes letting parents know when problems develope, with the intent that parents will help resolve those problems and letting them know when good things happen so that they can share in the pleasure of knowing that the schools are providing rewarding experiences for the students.

Newsletters and flyers that are written in language that intimidates parents or that are filled with educational jargon are to be avoided.

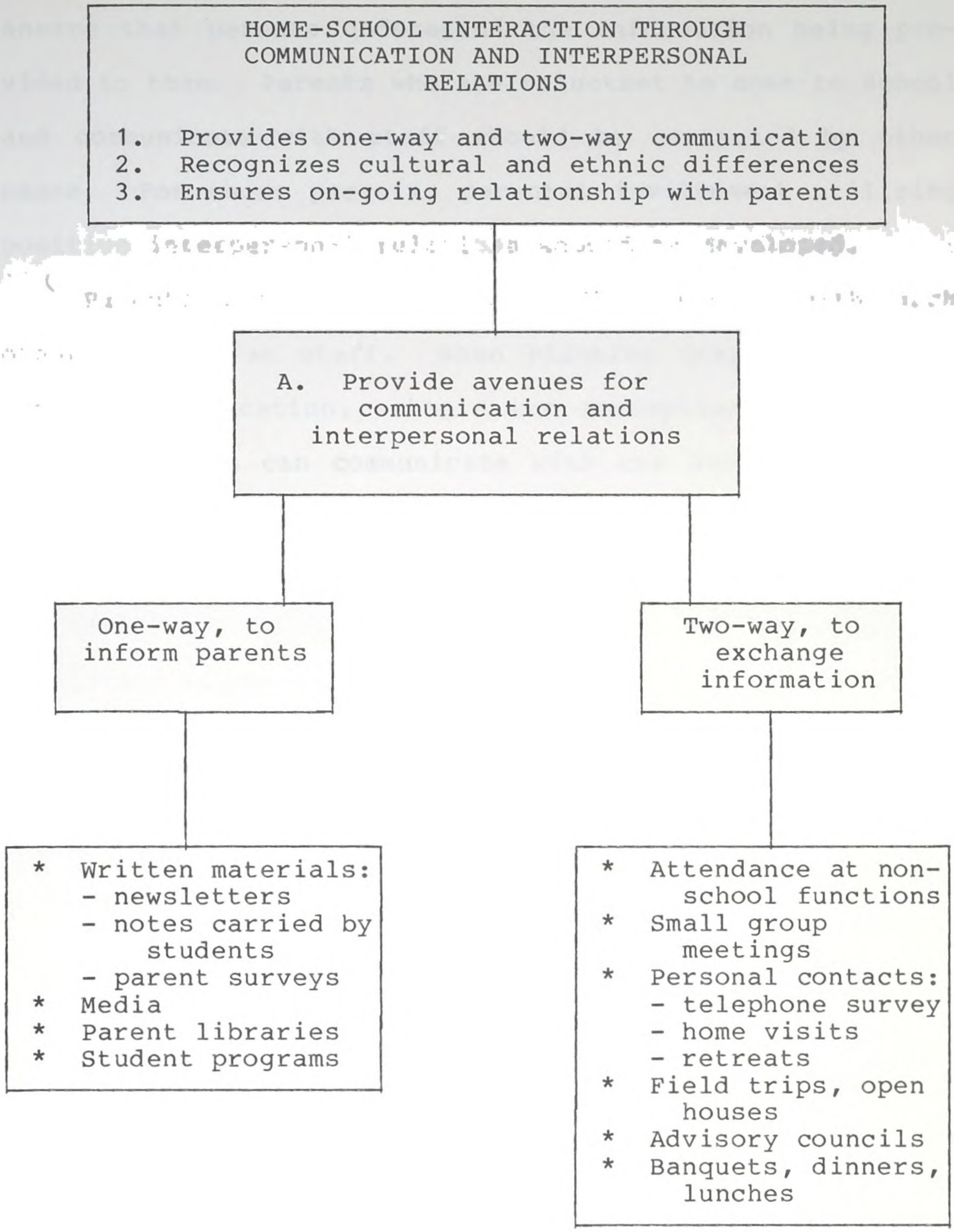


Figure 2.1. Home-School Interaction Through Communication

Source: School-Community Interaction, Saxe, Richard W., McCutchen Publishing Corporation, Berkeley, California

Sensitivity, on the part of schools, is needed to ensure that parents understand the information being provided to them. Parents who are reluctant to come to school and communicate with staff should be contacted by other means. For those parents, parental involvement utilizing positive interpersonal relations should be developed.

Parents need an opportunity to interact with each other as well as staff. When planning training sessions for parent education, schools can accomplish a dual purpose. Parents can communicate with one another and with staff and observe others (parents and staff) in an informal interactive atmosphere.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN HOME-SCHOOL INTERACTION

The interaction between the school and parents of children attending the school and participating in programs implemented by the school can be described as communication and interpersonal relations.

Communication between the schools and parents is of vital importance. When compensatory, desegregation or other special projects are being implemented by the schools, communication, good communication becomes essential. Schools must know the concerns, interests and desires of the parents whose children are participating in such activities. Schools then must communicate to parents the desire to include parental input and involvement in the design and carrying out of activities planned for the children. Parents have a right to know the why, what, how and when of the special programs the schools provide for their children.

Parents often represent different cultural backgrounds. Many communities are made up of predominately low income, minority or single parent families.

Recognition of the tendency on the part of school people to question the ability and all too often the rights of parent to become involved in the education of their own children is made by Dwight Roper in a paper, "Parents as the Natural Enemy of the School System." Parents are viewed by many educators as a potential threat to the public school institution.

Through the years, as early as 1846 when a state superintendent cited a major failure of schools in the state as "apathy of the parents and the public generally," the blame for failure has been placed with parents. The past two-and-a-half decades reflect a change in that short-sighted attitude.

Parenthood is also an institution. Parenthood is often diverse, unorganized and varied. These two institutions; parenthood and public education must combine their respective resources to combat the devastating forces that impinge on the education of children.

Dr. James P. Comer, Director of the Yale Child Study Center Schools Program, reported on the use of knowledge of social, behavioral science and education in an intervention project in the New Haven, Connecticut public school system. In his book School Power, the resolution of school-community tensions by parents and school staffs is outlined. Dr. Comer retraces and reviews the changes that have taken place in power relationships since the forties. It is now recognized that the problems of education cannot be resolved solely by educators.

School staffs, as described by Dr. Comer, are components of an organized, directed and centralized unit. Parents as part of the less positive environment evidenced in many homes are prone to divert the sense of frustration they hold against the schools. According to Comer, school

staffs must relate to parents and children of parents whose backgrounds differ greatly from that of the teaching staffs. Comer cites the reasons for academic failure; inadequately trained principals; poorly trained teachers, declining financial resources and the resulting societal problems of race, housing decay, and public apathy. These overwhelming concerns added to the long neglected need to train school staffs to work with community people and parents prompted Comer to analyze school power and to initiate a program that rejects the notion that low-income parents cannot adequately prepare their children for school.

The Comer program hypothesis reads: "The application of social and behavioral science principles to every aspect of a school program will improve the climate of relationships among all involved and will facilitate significant adacemic and social growth of students." The program, funded by the Ford Foundation, is mentioned here because of its strong parent program component.

An underlying premise of the Comer program is that parents are likely to support a school program in which they are partners in decision-making and involved in the instructional progress.

The implications of Comer's intervention project are fully explained in School Power. For further support to the school-parent interaction concept we will now turn to some observations made by Sara Lawrence Lightfoot,

Professor in the Department of Social Policy at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. An article adapted from Exploring Family-School Relationships: A Prelude to Curriculum Designs and Strategies describes contracts in power in much the same ways as Comer. Lightfoot speaks of the institutionalized ways of establishing boundaries between insiders (educators) and interlopers (parents) under the guise of mutual cooperation. She further states that lower-class black parents will continue to feel helpless in situations where schools develop methods of exclusion rather than inclusion.

A hoped for goal is the creation of a learning environment at AND in the home, one complementing and supporting the other.

Lightfoot outlines a triangular family-school relationship in which parents, teachers and children are included.

Finally the research of the late Ronald Edmonds of Michigan State University is considered here. Edmonds in Volume 6, A Discussion of the Literature and Issues Related to Effective Schooling, (written for the National conference on Urban Education) stated that "Schools must serve pupils and their parents." In support of that statement, Edmonds cites the research reflecting positive effects on student learning. In a summary of a study conducted by W. B. Brookover and L. W. Lezotte in improving and declining schools in Michigan, ten results were described. The ninth

is repeated here: "Differences in the level of parent involvement in the improving and declining schools are not clear cut. It seems that there is less overall parent involvement in the improving schools; however, the improving school staffs indicated that their schools have higher levels of parent initiated involvement. This suggests that we need to look more closely at the nature of the involvement exercised by parents. Perhaps parent initiated contact with the schools represents an effective instrument of educational change." Parent initiated contact then can be fostered by school people when parent involvement is encouraged, fostered and welcomed.

It is recognized by many educators that the home and the school are dominant forces in the lives of children. Educational research in recent years has concentrated on several important areas. Some are: basic skills; parity in education; school finance; education and work and management of resources.

Since 1972 public opinion polls, most notable the Harris poll, shows that America's faith in its public education system has suffered a noticeable decline.

Parents have begun to hold educators accountable for the quality of education their children receive. This accountability incorporates three aspects of the much needed harmonious relationship between school people and parents. The first aspect is the present status of home-school interaction. The second aspect, the barriers to

achieving effective parent-teacher relationships, identifies the problems faced in such relationships. The final aspect considers the effectiveness of the various approaches to parent-teacher, home-school interaction.

Eight years after the negative results of the Harris poll were disseminated, the Gallup poll of attitudes toward public schools in 1980 revealed the opinion that good parent-teacher relationships ranked fourth on a list of fourteen elements. In the seventies and eighties a significant number of studies of parent-teacher interaction including the actual amount of contact; McPherson (1972); Lortie (1975); Carew and Lightfoot (1979); involvement of parents and citizens in the political process; Verba and Nie (1972); Liechty (1979) and Salisbury (1980); Jackson and Stretch (1976) offers a a variety of conclusions which may be a result of differing approaches to the collection of data.

All of this information points to a need to increase understanding for teachers and parents of the value of positive parent-teacher relationships.

It is important to link educational research with what actually takes place in public schools.

The time when schools would accept the research conducted by educational research in a particular discipline and apply them to the methods used to teach students is gone. The accountability called for by parents of public school students require that teachers, administrators and

local citizens be involved in educational research. Some very good ideas related to educational improvement can be teased out of such involvement especially when parents are represented among local citizens.

In this way the critical problems facing public education will be addressed by a partnership of teachers and parents as promising solutions are determined.

The schools will have to address the problem of reluctance and a feeling of alienation when communicating with parents. It should be recognized that all parents will not respond, just as all children do not respond, to written communication. The ability of illiterate or non-English-speaking parents to communicate to written messages should be considered. Other methods should be employed. Parents should be invited to help decide the alternate methods best suited to accomplish good, open communications.

A United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare office Human Development, Office of Child Development, Home Start publication outlines some successful strategies for arranging social experiences for parents. The outline contains suggestions that will result in parents and staff relaxing and having fun. Listed among the suggestions are morning coffee at a family's house, picnics or an evening of conversation at a home. Informal get-togethers are of great value. The setting facilitates conversation and increases the comfort level of parents and staff.

Hymes, Jr. (1974) cautions against treating the area of home-school relations too lightly. Adjustments must be made to accommodate parents and teachers. Attitudes of both groups must be considered and altered where necessary. The two-way process mentioned earlier, according to Hymes, must, in order to be effective, include a flow of ideas, energy, creativity and leadership from school to home and from home to school.

Advisory groups as a body can be most helpful in establishing effective interpersonal relations. Many parents will be comfortable in the role of advisory group member. Parent members can share information about their concerns and, in this arena, demonstrate their creativity of thought and ability to lead. Passow (1963) describes the common messenger approach. This approach solves the problem of communicating with nonreading parents to a great extent. Common messengers are identified as parents who work in the schools and teachers who live in the neighborhood. Parents serve as guards, teacher aides, tutors, and volunteers. These persons would serve as channels of communication on behalf of school-home programs. As the students bring home experiences into the school so will the common messenger link school and home in the sharing of information about each system.

Passow cites risks as well as advantages to the common messenger approach. Among the advantages cited are: no problems of access and acceptance, continuity of interaction and appropriate areas of interest to either group. The difficulties related to the approach can be observed in conflicting expectations from either group, the extent to which schools can establish priority over the home and the limitations that dual membership, i.e., simultaneous roles as school messenger and home messenger, encountered by parents and teachers alike. Biddle and Thomas (1966) explain in greater depth, some safeguards to prevent damaging interferences when utilizing the common messenger approach.

Persons living in the community possess a higher level of credibility than those who do not. With guidance and sincerity of purpose, common messengers can greatly enhance home-school interaction. Much of the previous discussion written in this study centers around home-school interaction. That fragile and all too often undeveloped relationship must be nurtured and allowed to grow into a strong sustaining link between the home and school. Attention then must be paid to the four definitions of parent involvement.

Mortimer J. Adler, in The Paideia Proposal, states that two obstacles facing the reform of basic schooling, the understandable but nevertheless one-sided emphasis that too many parents place on economic and material advantages in thinking of their children's future, stand in the way of

achieving needed reform. Adler goes on to remind his readers that a part of the population in public school systems comes from disadvantaged minorities, some severely disadvantaged, who if allowed to drop out, become delinquent or merely mark time while in school and will add to the shameful waste of human resources.

Adler charges that--"The enlightenment of parents with regard to the goals of basic schooling"--will result in the development of humans who are committed to productive, useful well-being. In the final analysis an improved quality of human life for all, the encouragement of parents to reverse what is perceived as a decline in the quality of public schools can be had through enlightenment. This reversal may indeed be initiated and continued through parental involvement.

Brembeck (1971) suggests that children will not respond appropriately and with understanding, in the absence of, cooperative relationships between family and school. Friedman (1974) found that parents who know more about the school and receive more information from the school tend to be more supportive of the school and less critical of the goals of the school than those parents with less contact.

Douglas (1964) reports that the degree of parent interest in the education of their childen influences academic achievement.

In the December, 1983 issue of Phi Delta Kappan, in an article co-authored by Benjamin D. Stickney and Virginia

R. L. Plunkett, the academic achievement of Title I students was shared. In an excerpt from the article, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that students in schools eligible for Title I posted significantly greater gains between 1970 and 1980 than did students in non-Title I schools at all three age level tested (9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds). Research findings list as the components for the success cited as greater time on task, more frequent monitoring, and more parental involvement.

The Common Goals of Michigan Education published by the Michigan Department of Education states as a goal, "Michigan education must develop effective means for involving parents in the educational development of their children and encouraging them to meet their responsibilities in this regard." This goal is mentioned here to reaffirm the need, for educators, especially Michigan educators, to support that goal. In school districts having large numbers of minority students, large numbers of poverty level families and a predominance of middle-class teachers, the challenge to involve parents can be threatening. A great many educators agree that strong parental involvement observable in home and in school can counteract the problem of low motivation among students, especially minority students.

A significant amount of research exists that points to evidence that disadvantaged children as well as average

children will benefit where parents are viewed as participants in the educational process. Disadvantaged parents as participants should be considered by educators.

Title I instruction, especially instruction in which parents of Title I students are involved, will do much to ensure that disadvantaged children who participate in Title I instructional programs will "catch up" with their nondisadvantaged peers.

While the evidence pointing to the most effective means of raising academic achievement for disadvantaged children remains scarce, some recognition might well be given to the encouraging findings now coming to light. Researchers are now finding that greater time on task, early intervention and a greater degree of parental involvement are consistent components of successful basic skill instruction.

The July 11, 1974 report, "A Longitudinal Study of the Effects of The Benton Area School's Preschool Program" states, "early childhood education programs continue to establish and maintain a high level of parent involvement and participation in the program." Observations noted in the July, 1979 study made by the, then, preschool coordinator and that of the principal of the districts' largest elementary school in the study, "An Evaluation of Instructional Program for Disadvantaged, Low-Achieving Youngsters" in August, 1979 add to the existing body of research that offers support to the conceptual design of this study. Both reports conducted as part of dissertation study were

completed in the Benton Harbor Area Schools. Recommendations in the dissertations and longitudinal data compiled by the director of evaluation reflects the value of interaction relationships, between the home and school, between the child and parent as part of a "ring of respect" as a respectable goal for which educators and parents can strive.

Rich (1973) shared the results of her research relative to parent involvement in children's success in school. The community, home, and parents have been cited by Bloom, Coleman, and Jencks as vital influences intimately linked with student success. Goodson and Hess (1975) report that programs using the model of parents as teachers have consistently produced significant, immediate gains in children's IQ scores and school performance and seemed to alter, in a positive direction, the teaching behavior of parents.

The relationship between parent involvement in the education of their child is, therefore, worthy of further consideration. A clearly defined set of strategies which describe specific parent intervention activities and the relation of these parent activities with student achievement would do much to illustrate the value of increased parental involvement. There is existing data that indicates that parents are willing to get involved in the education of their children. The studies reviewed in this chapter define the instances in which parent participation resulted in achievement gains.

According to the 1981 Gallup poll, forty-nine percent of parents help their children (twelve years and under) regularly with homework and ten percent had six or more meetings with the teacher during the school year.

The possibility of increasing student academic achievement through systematic parent teaching at home is exciting. The reduced cost of this type of intervention is helpful and the liklihood that parent support to the school will increase is rewarding. Related to the reduction in costs, a 1977 National Institute of Education study showed that first-grade, Title I students made better progress in reading and math when they stayed in their regular classrooms than when they were pulled out for remediation. This finding was mentioned in a comprehensive review of Title I which was mandated by Congress in the Education Amendments of 1974 (P.L. 93-380).

According to results of a study of the New York State Experimental Prekindergarten Program, the students who tended to score highest on three measures of cognitive development were those whose parents spent the most time participating in program related activities. Research showing a generally favorable effect due to parent involvement has been completed by Robin (1972), Donachy (1976) and Hubbell, (1977). The following parent-as-tutor of their own children model, Figure 2.2, reflects parents as learners as well as tutors of their own children.

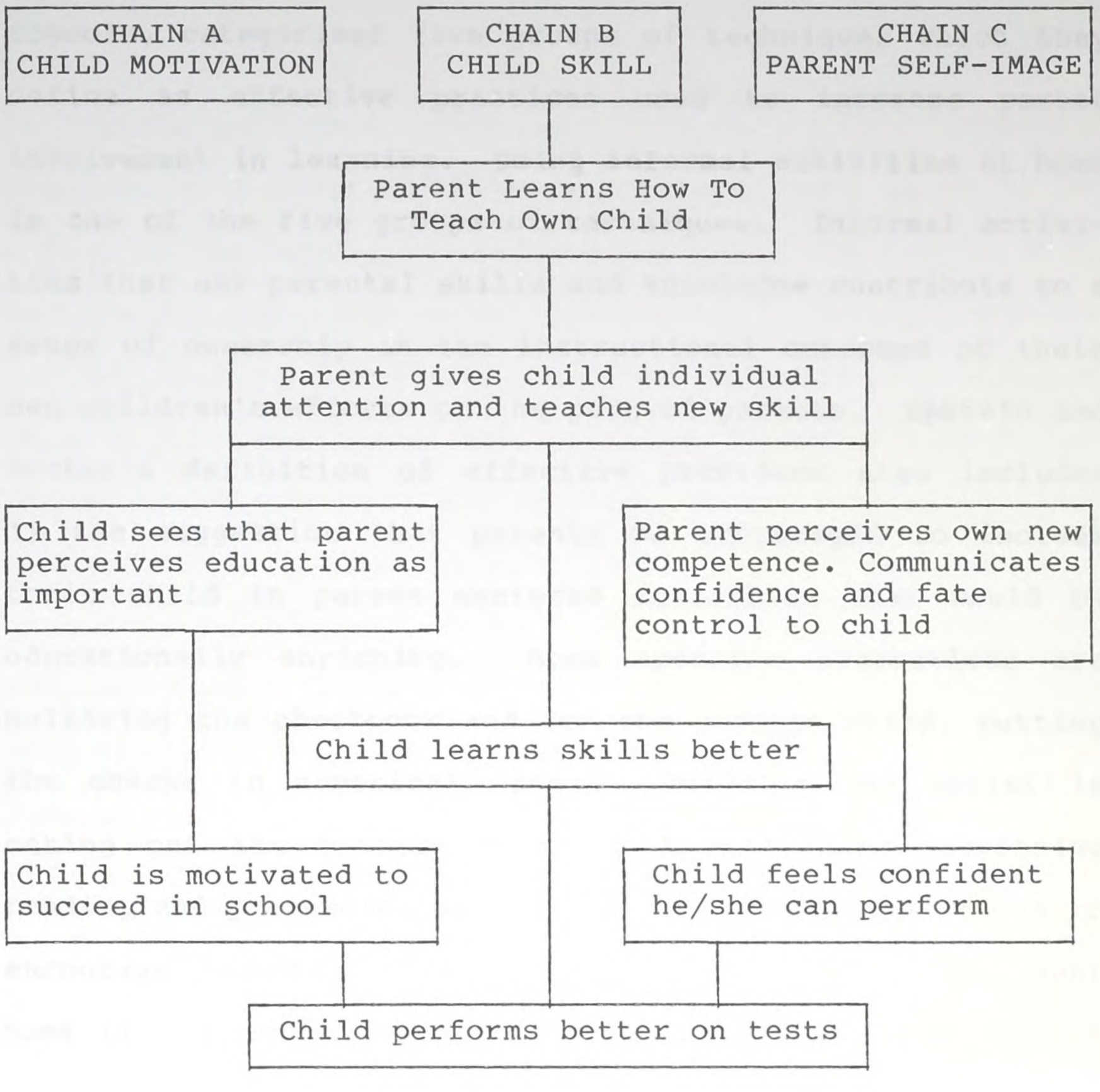


Figure 2.2. Parent as Learners and as Tutors of Their Own Children. Model by Mimi Stearns

Source: ASCD booklet, Partners: Parents and Schools, Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 79-90730 p.30

Joyce Epstein and Henry Jay Becker (1981) of the John Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools, categorized five groups of techniques which they define as effective practices used to increase parent involvement in learning. Using informal activities at home is one of the five groups of techniques. Informal activities that use parental skills and knowledge contribute to a sense of ownership in the instructional outcomes of their own children's efforts on the part of parents. Epstein and Becker's definition of effective practices also include: 1) the suggestion that parents be encouraged to include their child in parent centered activities that would be educationally enriching. Some specific suggestions are balancing the checkbook and for the younger child, putting the checks in numerical order. Children can assist in making out the grocery shopping list thereby increasing reading and prereading skills; 2) a second suggestion is to encourage parents to use games or group activities, sent home by the school that relate to work being done by the child in school; and 3) parents can be given suggestions as to how to use the home environment to stimulate their child's interest in math, reading and other subjects.

Gordon (1969) explored the need for parental involvement, how parents were to be involved, the approaches used in the past and appropriate for now and the future and existing knowledge about effectiveness. In a paper

presented at the March, 1978 Conference as ASCD in San Francisco, Gordon explained four models of parent-school-community relationships. The parent-impact model will be cited in this study.

Early childhood home visit programs in California and Florida--Head Start and Home Start--are among those Gordon offers as demonstrating a strong belief in the abilities of parents to learn and accept information. This information can be used by parents to improve their capabilities to provide, in the home, the positive learning environment needed to impact cognitive growth. Gordon further explains the influence of what he defines as comprehensive services which the schools provide to families through dissemination of information regarding nutrition, health, social and psychological development. This information is provided to parents in order that they can enrich the home environment so that the child will come to school more able to learn. School programs that maintain continuing contact with parents as providers of health services, community (dental, mental) services and guidance counseling are those such as Follow-Through and Title I. The 1977 Gallup poll, according to Gordon, indicates that parents are seeking help from the schools in areas other than the cognitive or "basics." Parent education on drugs, alcohol and dating was also cited as a need by parents in the 1977 Gallup poll.

When recognizing that a system approach subscribes to the premise that agencies do not operate in isolation, the influence of outside forces on the family and the influence that the family, in turn, plays on outside forces are reciprocal. Gordon incorporates the work of Orville Brim and Urie Bronfenbrenner in a further definition of his parent-impact model, Figure 2.3.

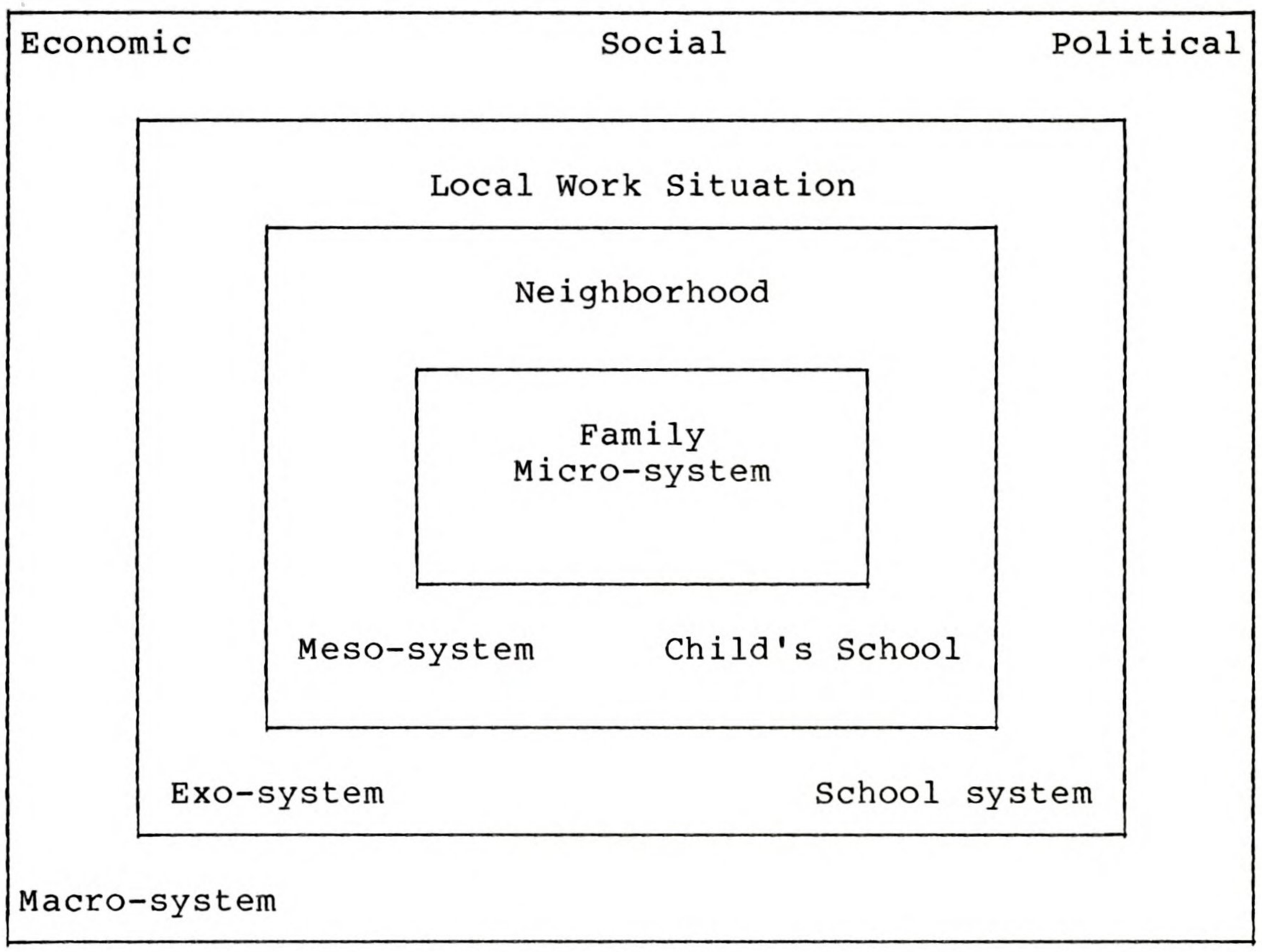


Figure 2.3. Ira Gordon, The Effects of Parent Involvement on Schooling

Source: ASCD booklet, Partners: Parents and Schools Library of Congress Catalog Card #79-90730

Gordon's explanation of the system aproach follows:

"Let us begin with the family. The parent-impact model assumes we can influence the roles and relationships and the amounts of time people spend with each other. That is a micro-system view, but the family exists inside a second system consisting of the neighborhood school, the neighborhood itself, local stores, and recreation facilities. This system, too, exists inside the exo-system which includes the school system, local media, work settings, local agencies, transportation networks, and the like. Finally, we can place that system in the context of the American or any other social macro-system in which one's belief and behaviors in the economical, political, legal, educational, and communication realms all influence the other systems down to and including the family, and to some degree are in turn, through democratic processes, in this country at least, influenced by subsystems."

When one revisits the premise that parents have the ability to learn, to grow, to accept information and use it to enhance and enrich the home as a learning place, Gordon's parent-impact model, closely scrutinized, forces the observer to recognize that tremendous individual family differences are evident in ethnic groups, social classifications and other identifiers. These differences, when viewed in the systems context, create a need for educators to realize that while parents are the first teachers of children and much of what is learned is learned in places

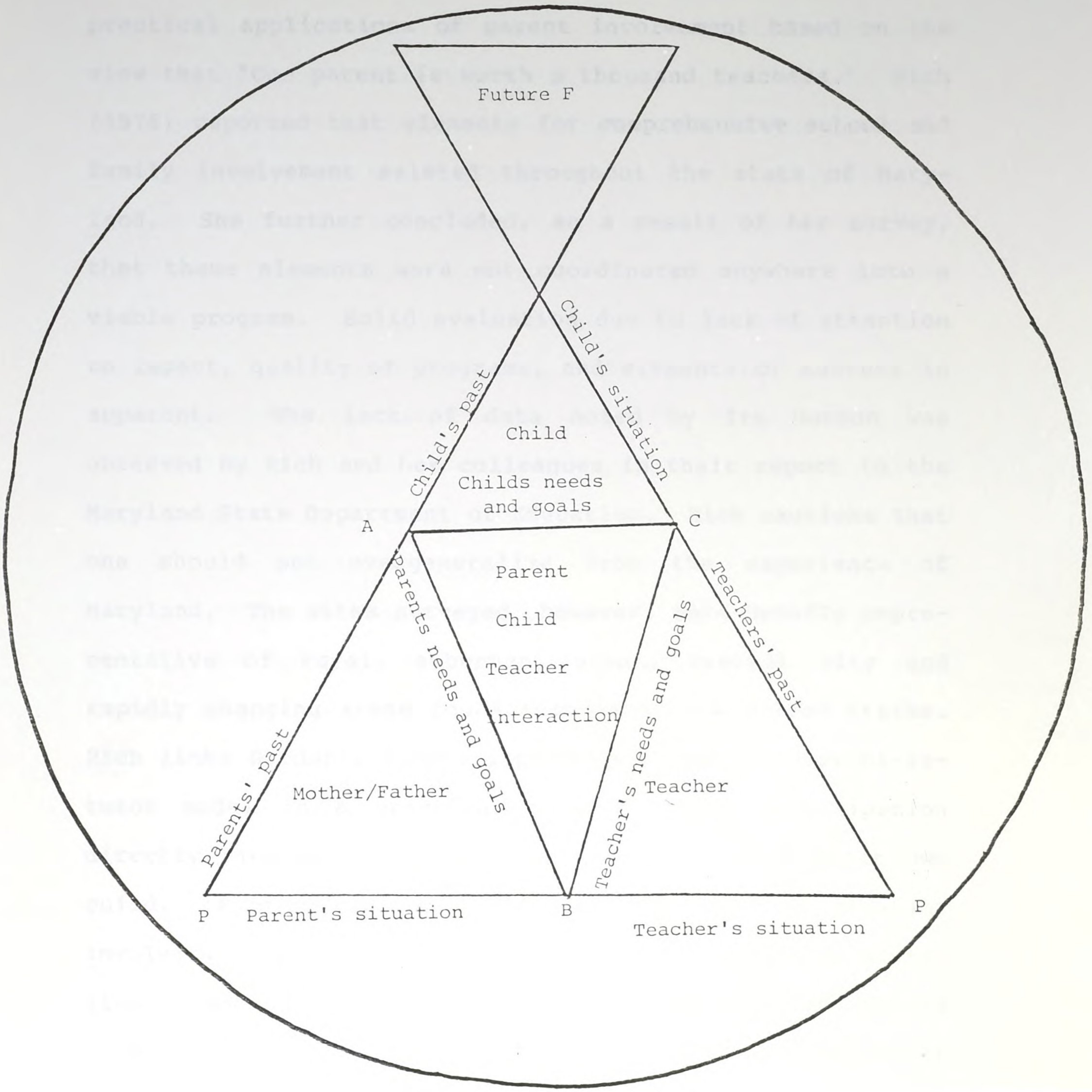
other than the schools, the responsibility taken by educators to use this information must take into account the impact of a variety of social forces on the family and parents. Gordon further explains the influence of the school-impact model and the community-impact model which will not be discussed here. It must be noted, however, that in the school-impact model, parents play a role in all of the categories: adult learner, classroom volunteer, teacher of own child, paraprofessional, adult educator and decision maker. The acceptance of these roles, on the part of parents, is viewed as the willingness to be influenced by agencies and to influence the agencies with which they come in contact.

In summarizing his report, Gordon presents evidence of success. The success of parent involvement programs in preschool years is evidenced in data reported to the American Association for the Advancement of Science by Irving Lazar (1977). Earlier, Barbara Goodson and Robert Hess (1975) reached a conclusion regarding long-lasting effects of parent impact model programs.

In school programs other than preschool, parent-impact programs are supported by less data indicating significant positive effects of long-term parental involvement. Gordon's evidence, admittedly sparse, indicates that home visits made by school personnel seem to be the single most influencing variable relative to achievement.

Gordon's findings are supported by Follow-Through reports. A dissertation by Olmsted (1977) reflects a relationship between desirable teaching behavior by parents through the presentation of a set of desirable teaching behaviors and academic achievement. At the time Gordon made his report to ASCD (1978) he used what he termed as a "very weak signs" test. He found that more of the studies, taken from ERIC files, tended to be positive than negative. Gordon stressed that the studies revealed more about the state of the art than the effectiveness of the program. Further, he stated, solid evidence was not determined one way or the other due to differences in nature of the programs, types of children served, grade level of children, length and intensity of programs and among other variables, psychological learning rationale.

The reports of Dorothy Rich (1978, 1979) reflect continued documentation that parent teaching, at home, can influence achievement levels of school-age children. A parent-teacher-child triangle reveals the "ring of respect' required to create a positive learning environment in which the interdependence of all people are involved in the process of schooling. Figure 2.4, which follows on page 72, illustrates the parent-teacher-child triangle within the ring of respect.



ABC = Interaction triangle
ABP = Parent triangle
BCP = Teacher triangle
ACF = Child's triangle

Figure 2.4 - Catherine Chilman's Parent-Teacher-Child Triangle

Source - Practical Applications of Research
Phi Delta Kappa, newsletter Vol. 4
no. 2 December, 1981, page 2

This section of the review of the literature describes practical applications of parent involvement based on the view that "One parent is worth a thousand teachers." Rich (1978) reported that elements for comprehensive school and family involvement existed throughout the state of Maryland. She further concluded, as a result of her survey, that these elements were not coordinated anywhere into a viable program. Solid evaluation due to lack of attention to impact, quality of programs, and elements of success is apparent. The lack of data noted by Ira Gordon was observed by Rich and her colleagues in their report to the Maryland State Department of Education. Rich cautions that one should not overgeneralize from the experience of Maryland. The sites surveyed, however, were broadly representative of rural, suburban, urban, central city and rapidly changing areas found throughout the United States. Rich links Gordon's Parent Impact Model and the Parent-as-tutor model in a practical mode in which participation directly involves the parent in the education of their own child. Rich is quoted here, "As a group, the programs involving parents as teachers consistently produced significant immediate gains in children's IQ scores, and seemed to alter, in a positive direction, the teaching behavior of parents." The work of Dorothy Rich is based on the premise that family strength, ability to learn, willingness to receive information and motivation to improve the environment accentuates the positive elements that impact student

achievement. Cognitive development is observable in the work of Rich and her colleagues. Some assumptions are made by Rich among which are found the premise that all children have undergone meaningful experiences - disadvantaged children may have had fewer and those may be less appropriate in the school setting - but no less meaningful! All children come from a home environment to school, all parents can contribute to their child's ability to succeed in school. Rich describes other nondeficit approaches but those mentioned here will suffice in this review.

The first premise in which meaningful experiences are described as those which, because of cultural deprivation, result in a situation in which children with limited life experience in the home, participating in a disintegrating family, and lacking language development are doomed to non-contributory status in society. This description fits millions of minority and poverty level children in the United States. Rich's research prompts the response that schools should start with what the family has and not worry about what the family doesn't have. This response further encourages schools to assist the family (parents) to provide materials and support to help parents to function as skilled participants. Parents using their ability to learn, to receive information and to alter the home environment will demonstrate at home support to the schools.

Rich maintains that the schools, despite lack of staff, can reach out and effect parental participation by providing easy to use, inexpensive materials that do not require massive government funding. One needs to understand, to revisit, to subscribe to and to act upon the premise that - THE PARENT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER A CHILD WILL EVER HAVE. That statement is indicative of a new problem facing public schools. That of the changing family structure from two-parent to single-parent.

The July 15, 1985 edition of Newsweek cited some startling statistics. According to the article by 1990, five years from the date of this report, one in eight households with children will be headed by a single parent. The concept of the all-American family is being redefined.

A variety of social upheavals contribute to the redefining of the all-American family. Some of them are: 1) divorce (although the divorce rate appears to be leveling off during this decade); 2) increasing numbers of minority children in urban public school systems as a result of white flight; 3) latch-key children; 4) the children of working parents whose needs are being met, although inadequately, by public school systems; and 5) children of teenaged parents.

Parents in situations such as these are no less the most important teacher their child or children will ever have. The task for schools is to encourage and invite parents to do the very best they can to teach their children to enjoy school, to learn to read, to learn to think.

DISCUSSION OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Admittedly the available research revealing implications of parental involvement relative to academic achievement for school-age children is scarce. Yet the studies of Ira Gordon, Barbara Goodson, Robert D. Hess and Dorothy Rich indicate, in the words of Deborah Burnett Strother, assistant editor of Practical Applications of Research, PAR, a newsletter published by Phi Delta Kappa's Center on Evaluation, Development and Research, "Our contributors agree that schools and parents can make a difference."

Ira Gordon cites evidence of success in data collected by a consortium of "early intervenors" that reported children from families who participated in the preschool years in parent impact model programs are still doing better in school than comparison or control children as long as ten years after the programs had ended. Gordon's studies indicate that despite the meager evidence of efficacy, home visits are the most important factor in influencing academic achievement. The conclusion drawn here from that deduction is that home-school contact does affect academic achievement. Gordon's conclusions: parent impact models are generally positive when they are carefully planned, structured, have an educational focus, and include parents working at home with their children as a major delivery system, are pertinent to the anticipated outcome of this study which is intended to support the value and effectiveness of parent support to education. Heuristically, the

design and implementation of parent-school instructional programs must accomodate: 1) careful planning; delineation of student population and control groups; accomodation of attrition rate among student; specificity in describing comparisons groups of parents and students; and 2) a honest and straight forward realization that time is a crucial element. Results do not show up in six weeks, a semester, one year or early elementary cycles - to document comprehensive support to parental involvement, a program must allow for attrition, demographics, and the vagaries of school systems.

From Gordon's, Parent Impact model, the assumption that the behavior of parents and other family members influence the child's learning is made. A goal to improve the family's capabilities to provide in the home the type of learning that develops readiness for learning is established.

Fourteen studies of school age parent-impact programs are listed by Gordon in Partners: Parents and Schools. Of that fourteen, five of the studies revealed home teaching activities as the most effective program. Three indicated insufficient data to draw conclusions. The other two showed positive results. The remaining nine studies showed the following: seven positive, one negative and one mixed results. These studies involved working primarily in the school rather than in the home.

As was mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, the need to provide additional support to public schools systems facing severe shortages in funds is urgent. Attention to utilizing the potential of family support must be brought to the forefront. Dorothy Rich recounts Jesse Jackson's PUSH for excellence program which requires that students, notably minority students, and their parents sign agreements with schools that homework will be done--with the television sets turned off. Rich suggests still another step, a step which builds on the abilities of parents and uses the family environment no matter how meager or impoverished.

A stated goal of Gordon's parent-impact model is to change the agency (i.e. the school) and make it responsive to the family. The goal of Dorothy Rich's families as educators of their own children has illustrated that family involvement can raise the achievement of children.

A goal of the Benton Harbor Area Schools is to provide equitable education to all of its students. Having received research that indicates that parental involvement had a positive impact on academic achievement, program planners developed the home-school program described in this study.

This study will reflect the effect of a first grade home teaching delivery system three years later as students enter the later (fourth grade) elementary grades. There may be school districts that seek successful programs of

this type. William Raspberry wrote, in the Washington Post, February 13, 1978, issue that "The biggest factor in the success of an educational program, is not the content of the program but how the program comes into being. If it is developed cooperatively by the people who will implement it; if it is done under the leadership of a strong, respected administrator and if it has the active support of parents--then it is likely to work."

Whether there is an increase in academic achievement and/or an increase in parent response to public school system, the involvement of parents in the education of their own children, to the extent that the parents teach their own children at home is an area worthy of exploration.

As the needs of the schools increase so does the need for able, fully functioning adults increase to meet the demands of society. Research shows that where parents are involved in education, a greater degree of success in learning is demonstrated by students.

It is recognized that some school systems, by virtue of their location in depressed, poverty impacted locations, will find the task of involving parents more difficult than in more stable, affluent, middle-class areas. Still need to involve parents remains even in the more stable communities.

For the not so timid, for those who would seize the opportunity to add another dimension to education, the involvement of parents holds great promise.

What educators do with the information they know about what their students bring to school can do much to make schools more effective. It is now becoming evident that how schools accommodate the learning that children bring to schools greatly affects the success or lack of success made by children. It is promised that parents will learn how to relate more effectively to educational systems. It is hoped that the children will benefit from the involvement of their parents in their education.

It is important that research in education be linked to the real world of practice. We have begun to research what takes place in school. Further and equally important steps should be taken. It would follow then, that teachers and administrators in the schools and citizens and parents in the community should share their respective ideas regarding the role of the schools. A partnership is described here. That partnership, as a first step, can result in help for teachers, fulfillment of the aspirations of parents for their children and a stronger more literate and intelligent populace in our nation. The acceptance of accountability for the education of millions of students in America by public school systems can also result from partnerships of this nature.

A second step, that of teacher commitment to parent involvement, can be taken with the inclusion, in teacher training, of research of the effect of parent involvement in the instructional process. In "Tomorrow's Teachers," a

report of the Holmes group, competent teachers are described as those who possess deep understanding of children and how children react to the world around them. The world surrounding children includes their parents.

SUMMARY

Nearly forty references to home-school, parent-school interaction were mentioned in this chapter. Most of the literature included here describes studies conducted in large, urban areas. The thousands of smaller quasi-urban areas in our nation, those similar to Benton Harbor, Michigan; East Chicago, Indiana; Muskegon Heights, Michigan; Harvey, Illinois; Inkster, Michigan for example, are in great need of practical ways to improve academic instruction.

Information about successful techniques, data about racial, educational, and family demographics has been summarized and research describing outcome and results has been published. While it has been noted that this information has not always been disseminated as widely as possible, it can also be noted that public school systems have generally failed to call attention to successful and positive results that have occurred through the effort of educators; teachers and administrators and parents. Through their efforts, over the years, public school systems have reduced widespread illiteracy. The Michigan Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development reported in a

January, 1984 position paper that over 90% of youth aged five to seventeen are enrolled in school. Other positive and productive facts are evident throughout the paper; yet Michigan public school systems, along with thousands across the United States, are subject to criticism and declining public support.

A serious implication exists in the need to delineate the problems of the public school systems before offering solutions to the criticisms. At all costs, the inclusion of parents must take place. To accomplish this inclusion some steps, proactive for many school districts, can be taken.

Further research and study could include input from classroom teachers. The John Hopkins University report states that it is important that teachers learn more about the reactions and experiences of parents relative to parent involvement. Additional research of teacher attitudes, willingness to involve parents at school in the instructive program, and teacher efforts to involve parents in learning activities at home can be undertaken.

Three midwest states public school districts, East Lansing, Michigan;[1] Grand Rapids, Michigan[2] and South Bend, Indiana[3] implemented Project HELP on a pilot basis.

[1]East Lansing Public Schools, The Home-Study Packet Pilot, February, 1981.
[2]Grand Rapids, Michigan, The Parent Involvement Program (PIP), Midwest Teacher Corp. Project, 1978-79.
[3]South Bend Indiana, Title I Department, South Bend Community School Corporation, 1981-82.

The cost-effectiveness study that is appended to this report adds to the body of existing knowledge inasmuch as the need to identify economical, low-cost methods of bolstering academic achievement in public school systems throughout the nation is part of the charge of the federal government.

The studies cited here offer a variety of ways of meeting the needs evident in many of the nations' minority dominated school districts. In 1978, Michigan State University hosted a Midwest Teacher Corps Conference. Project HELP was presented to well over two hundred participants who represented districts throughout the Midwest. The conference is referred to in Creating Effective Schools, Brookover, Beamer, Efthim, Hathaway, Lezotte, Miller, Passaloacqua, Tornatzky (1982). The value of parental involvement continues to command an impressive place in educational research.

The report of the Holmes Group acknowledges the behaviors of minority culture children. The importance of competent teachers for the growing number of educationally at-risk children is also acknowledged in the report. Teacher training institutions are called upon to respond to the needs of at-risk children and their more advantaged peers through an improved teacher preparation system. Competent teachers, according to the Holmes Group, will function in a role that includes strengthening home-school relationships. Recognition of home-school relations by this prestigious group of educators brings even greater emphasis to the need to include, in teacher training methods, the involvement of parents.

CHAPTER III

STUDY DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

OVERVIEW

The study design, descriptive in nature, includes analysis, review and observation of a specific sample of students from a population of low socio-economic, minority first grade students.

An analysis of the socio-economic status (SES) of both groups determined low socio-economic status for the majority (over 59%) of the students involved in the 1977-78 school year, the first year of the study.

As a result of the analysis, answers to the following questions were sought:

(1) Will students identified as low SES and as Title I, score as high or higher at second and third grade as a result of participation in Project HELP as low SES, non-Title I students who did not participate in Project HELP?

(2) Will the Michigan Education Assessment Program scores at fourth and seventh grade of low SES, Title I students who participated in Project HELP as first graders rank as high or higher than low SES non-Title I students who did not participate in Project HELP as first graders?

Specific objectives outlined in the statement of purpose of the study were:

(1) to compare the reading scores of first-grade students who participated in Project HELP with the reading scores of first-grade students who did not participate in Project HELP;

(2) to compare the reading scores of second-grade students who participated in Project HELP as first graders with the reading scores of students who did not participate in Project HELP as first graders;

(3) to compare the reading scores of third-grade students who participated in Project HELP as first graders with the reading scores of students who did not participate in Project HELP as first graders;

(4) to compare the reading scores in the fourth and seventh grade of students who participated in Project HELP as first graders with the reading scores, in the fourth and seventh grades, of students who did not participate in Project HELP as first graders.

These objectives are reflected in the six hypotheses stated in Chapter I.

POPULATION

The population from which the sample for this study was drawn consisted of 908 first-grade students in the Benton Harbor Area Schools. The district recorded a 74.4 minority (Black) student population in September, 1977. Students attending identified Title I buildings numbered 461 at the first-grade level. The students attended six buildings: Bard, Boynton, Calvin Britain, Henry C. Morton, Seely McCord and Sterne Brunson. The method of classifying these schools as Title I was approved by the Michigan Department of Education. The method included (A.F.D.C.) Aid to Families with Dependent Children identification (low SES), below average test scores and family application for free or reduced lunch.

While no implications for analysis of racial-ethnic minority and non-minority achievement levels were determined as a result of the study, Table 3.1 is submitted to reflect the racial-ethnic enrollment of the Benton Harbor Area Schools in 1977-78.

TABLE 3.1

BENTON HARBOR AREA SCHOOLS
Racial-Ethnic Census - September 30, 1977

Students

Name of School	Fourth Friday Count	Am. I	B	A	L	White and all other	Percentage		
							B	W	Other
*Bard	453	5	448				98.9		1.1
*Boynton	463	3	419		2	39	90.5	8.4	1.1
*Calvin Britain	459		453		1	5	98.7	1.1	.2
*Columbus	340		338			2	99.4	.6	
Fairplain East	180		58		1	121	32.2	67.2	.6
Fairplain Northeast	209		141	2	1	65	67.5	31.1	1.4
Fairplain Northwest	196	8	48		7	133	24.5	67.8	7.7
Fairplain West	192	2	62	2		126	32.3	65.6	2.1
*Henry Morton	439		439				100.0		
Hull	562	2	263		1	296	46.8	52.7	.5
Johnson	136	1	36			99	26.5	72.8	.7
Lafayette	168	3	98	3		64	58.3	38.1	3.6
Martindale	195	11	29		8	147	14.9	75.4	9.7
Martin Luther King	453	4	446			3	98.4	.7	.9
Millburg	83			5		78		94.0	6.0
North Shore	106	1	60	3		42	56.6	39.6	3.8
Pearl	113		18		10	85	15.9	75.2	8.9
*Seely McCord	556		543			13	97.7	2.3	
Sodus	40	1	3			36	7.5	90.	2.5
Sorter	275	13	17		1	244	6.2	88.7	5.1
Spinks Corners	32					32		100.0	
*Sterne Brunson	684		654		5	25	95.6	3.7	.7
Stump	86		43			43	50.0	50.0	
Benton Harbor 7/8	623	1	609			13	97.7	2.1	.2
Fairplain 7/8	604	3	395	2	3	201	65.4	33.3	1.3
**Benton Harbor High	2,356	2	1,801	1	6	546	75.4	23.2	.4
Alternative Education	34		34				100.0		
School Age Mothers	55		54			1	98.2	1.8	
TOTALS.....	10,092	60	7,509	18	46	2,459	74.4	24.4	1.2

(Am. I. = American Indian; B = Black; A. = Asian; L. = Latino; W. = White)

* Includes Preschool Students (334 total)
** Included 3 part time students in head count--which equals only 1 F.T.E.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

The sample was taken from the first-grade population.

The names and test scores of students used in the study were obtained from the records and files of the Office of Evaluation in the Benton Harbor Area Schools (BHAS). During the summer of 1983, a Youth Employment Training Program student searched the files for the records of first-grade students who attended Title I buildings in the Benton Harbor Area Schools. Records for 461 students were located. From that group, only those students whose records contained a 1977 pretest score, a 1978 posttest score, a 1978 pretest score and a 1979 posttest score were selected for the study. This selection yielded a group of 184 subjects, N=184. From the group of 184 students for whom pretest and posttest scores were recorded and for whom 1979-80 (third grade) pretest and posttest scores were recorded, a sample of 52 students was identified.

Two groups were identified within the sample. A control group, N=23, was made up of students who did not participate in the Project HELP home-learning program. The treatment group, N=29, was made up of students who participated in Project HELP.

In both groups, Project HELP and non-Project HELP, there were students who failed to obtain at least 75% or more of the reading objectives on the spring (1976) Kindergarten Objective Referenced Test. These students were identified as Title I.

The number of completed home-learning activities was secured from the records and files of the School-Community Relations office at the department of State and Federal Programs.

The class records of ten home-learning program Project HELP teachers, and seven teachers who did not participate in Project HELP were used to compile the summary of activities completed. These class records document completion of activities by parents with their child.

Project HELP students were identified as first-grade students who took home, on a systematic basis, one activity a week. Following completion of the activity within a three day period with either a parent or care giver, the students returned a form, signed by the person (in most instances a parent) who completed the activity with the child. The return of the form was noted by the classroom teacher. The signed form was then filed as part of the program record.

SUBJECTS

Of the 461 first-grade students who attended Title I buildings in 1977-78, 52, or 5.8%, had complete scores. This number represents a convenience sample of the population. The sample was drawn from those buildings having the highest percentages of low SES, underachieving students.

The investigator identified four characteristics of subjects in the sample: (1) SES; (2) academic achievement; (3) level of Project HELP participation; and (4) Title I identification.

Table 3.2 reflects the socioeconomic status, sex, race, and number of Project HELP activities completed.

Table 3.2

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, SEX, RACE AND NUMBER OF PROJECT HELP ACTIVITIES COMPLETED

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Total first grade population:	908	
Total attending Chapter I buildings	461	
Non-low SES.....	372	41 %
Low SES.....	536	59 %
Size of Sample:	52	5.8%
Size of Control Group (C):		
Non-Project HELP participants..	23	44.3%
Size of Treatment Group (T):		
Project HELP participants.....	29	55.8%
Subjects in C, identified as Title I...	10	19.3%
Subjects in T, identified as Title I...	16	30.8%
Subjects completing 12 Project HELP activities.....	21	40.4%
Subjects completing 6 or more Project HELP activities.....	30	57.7%
Subjects completing 5 or less Project HELP activities.....	38	73.1%
Subjects completing 0 Project HELP activities.....	10	19.3%
Race of sample population:		
Black.....	51	98 %
White.....	0	
Other.....	1	2 %
Sex of sample population:		
Males		
Non-Project HELP.....	12	23.1%
Project HELP.....	12	23.1%
Female		
Non-Project HELP.....	11	21.1%
Project HELP.....	17	32.7%

INSTRUMENTS

The results of the 1977-78 first grade objective referenced tests, second-grade objective referenced tests, 1979-80 third grade and 1980-81 fourth grade California Achievement Tests and the fourth and seventh grade MEAP reading tests were used in this study.

The objective referenced tests were constructed by first grade classroom teachers in the Benton Harbor Area Schools. This became a standard practice in the Benton Harbor Area schools in June, 1972 following the Michigan Department of Education edict to local school districts that kindergarten and first-grade scores from standardized tests would no longer be accepted. Districts had two options; purchase commercial objective referenced tests or develop tests locally. The Benton Habor Area Schools opted to develop local tests reflecting the districts' curriculum. The district director of evaluation, coordinator of reading and sixteen kindergarten and first-grade teachers developed, with assistance from Michigan Department of Education consultants, objective referenced tests for use in kindergarten and first grade. The Michigan Department of Education approved the locally developed Objective Referenced Tests which were used from 1972 through 1978.

The tests were designed to measure the minimum basic concepts and skills in reading (and mathematics) mastered by each child during the school year.

In May, 1978 in grades three, six and nine, a 1977 edition of the California Achievement Test (CAT) was administered. This was done to validate the content of the district's locally developed Objective Referenced Tests by comparing it to the CAT, a nationally standardized test.

In the following school year, 1978-1979, the CAT was administered to all grades 1-12 to comply with new federal and state requirement for Title I evaluation. Normal curve equivalent scores based on the results of norm referenced tests were mandated by the federal government--hence the return to the use of nationally normed tests.

PROCEDURES

The 1977 pretest and the 1978 posttest reading scores were recorded for both Project HELP and non-Project HELP students. These scores were secured from computerized printouts generated by the Berrien County Intermediate School District (BCISD). Identification numbers were assigned for each student in the study.

The data used in this study consist of reading test scores, pre and post for three years; first, second, third and fourth grade reading scores and taken from the fourth- and seventh-grade MEAP, and the number of Project HELP activities completed by participating students.

In the Project HELP program, parents completed a simple fifteen to twenty minute activity with their first-grade child once a week. The activity was printed on one side of a single 8 1/2" by 11" sheet of paper. Easy-to-follow instructions were provided to the parent. The activities were designed to reinforce reading, in most cases a reading readiness skill that had already been introduced in the classroom by the child's teacher. Each student in a Project HELP classroom took a Project HELP activity (Exhibit 3.1) home on a weekly basis. The parent (or care-giver) completed an equally simple feedback (key report) form and sent it back to school with the child. (See Exhibit 3.2)

ACTIVITY NO.1

Name of Activity: The Grocery Bag

Why Do It: To help your child develop an awareness of things that go together.

Materials:
(1) Items from the kitchen, bathroom, or living room.
(2) A large bag.

How To Do It:

(1) You select four (4) items, three that go together and one that does not belong in the group.
Example: spoon, fork, knife, and a potholder.

(2) Put them in a large bag. Your child should not see you do this.

(3) Have your child reach in the bag, take each object out one at a time and tell you its name.

(4) Then have your child tell you the object that does not belong in the group.
Example: the potholder because you can't eat with it. You may use three bathroom objects and one from the kitchen. Or, choose clothing items such as a shoe, shirt, and a belt and put in an ashtray as the item that does not belong.

Time: Continue the activity for 5 to 15 minutes.

Evaluation: When your child can name the objects and tell you which object does not belong, the activity is successful.

• Please . . . . When you and your child have done the activity, sign the attached sheet and send it back to school.

Exhibit 3.1

_____

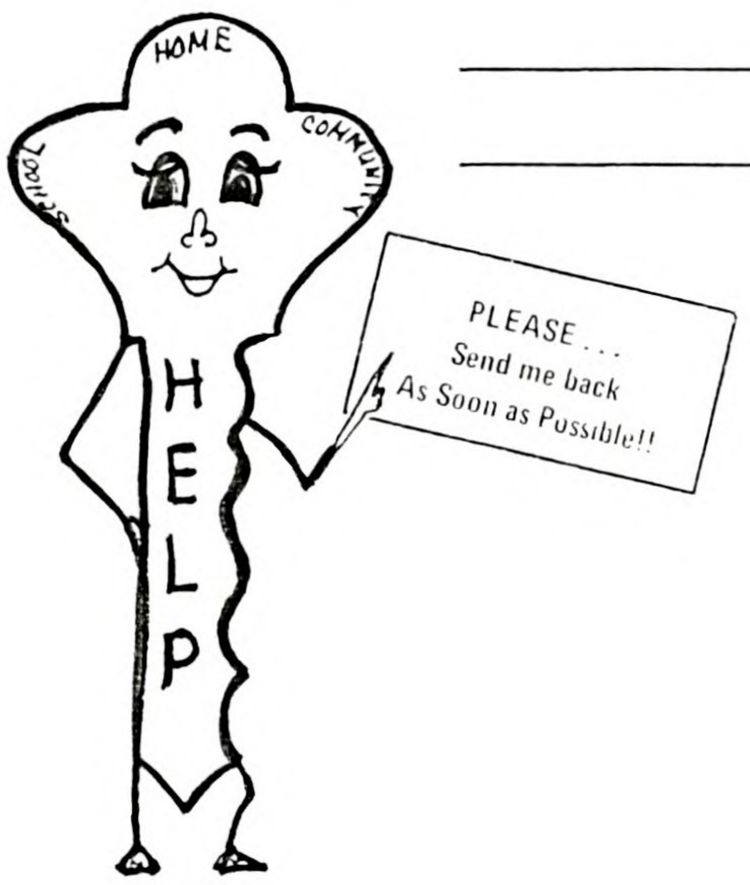
Child's Name

Project HELP Activity No. _____

PROJECT HELP KEY REPORT

1. Did someone help your child do this activity? We hope so. Yes ☐ No ☐
2. Was this activity fun? Yes ☐ No ☐
3. **Was this activity helpful?** **Yes ☐ No ☐**

Any comments? _____



_____

_____

_____

Helper's Name

_____

Relationship to Child

Would you like to talk to your child's teacher about this activity?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Exhibit 3.2

The classroom teacher recorded the names of every student in the class. This record, Project HELP activity Return Tally, is shown in Exhibit 3.3. This information was also analyzed in the study to determine what influence the amount of time spent by a parent, as indicated in the return of the key report to the teacher, had on student achievement in reading.

The study spans six years. During this time the population fluctuated due to movement by students in and out of the district. For that reason only those children for whom test data were available in first, second, third, fourth and seventh grade were included in the study.

Table 3.3 shows the distribution of tests administered in Benton Harbor Area Schools during the period 1971-82. The original design of the local testing program was recommended by a committee of teachers, counselors and administrators and adopted by the District's Board of Education in the Spring of 1971. Many changes took place in this testing program over the past eleven years to accomodate a variety of internal and external needs and requirements.

The most persistent needs within the school system were to bridge the gap between testing and instruction and to document the status and growth of the students' academic achievement.

Exhibit 3.3

PROJECT HELP – ACTIVITY RETURN TALLY

NAME OF STUDENT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	TOTAL

Office of School Community Relations, Benton Harbor Area Schools

TABLE 3.3

DISTRIBUTION OF TESTS ADMINISTERED IN BENTON HARBOR AREA SCHOOLS BY GRADE
DURING 1971 - 1982

	PRE	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1971-72	LIPS	TOBE	TOBE	CAT	CAT SFTAA*	CAT MEAP°	CAT SFTAA*	CAT	CAT SFTAA* MEAP°	CAT	CAT SFTAA*		CAT SFTAA*	
1972-73	ORT	TOBE* ORT	ORT	CAT	CAT SFTAA*	CAT MEAP°	CAT SFTAA*	CAT	CAT SFTAA* MEAP°	CAT	CAT SFTAA*		CAT SFTAA*	
1973-74	ORT	TOBE* ORT	ORT	ORT	ORT	CAT MEAP*	CAT	CAT	CAT MEAP* COG.AT°	CAT COG.AT°	CAT		CAT	
1974-75	ORT	TOBE* ORT	ORT	ORT	ORT	CAT MEAP*	CAT	CAT ORT	CAT	CAT	CAT+ ORT			
1975-76	ORT	TOBE* ORT	ORT	ORT	ORT	CAT MEAP*	CAT	CAT	CAT MEAP*	CAT	CAT ORT			CAT
1976-77	ORT	TOBE* ORT	ORT	ORT	ORT	CAT MEAP*	CAT	CAT	CAT MEAP*	CAT	CAT ORT			SRA†
1977-78	ORT	TOBE* ORT	ORT	ORT	ORT CAT77†	ORT MEAP*	ORT	ORT CAT77†	CAT MEAP*	CAT	CAT77† ORT SRA*	MEAP*		
1978-79	ORT	TOBE* ORT	ORT CAT77†	ORT CAT77†	ORT CAT77†	ORT CAT77† MEAP*	ORT CAT77†	ORT CAT77†	CAT77 MEAP*	CAT77	CAT77† ORT	CAT77† MEAP*	CAT77†	CAT77†
1979-80 1980-82	ORT	TOBE(GC) TOBE2(L) ORT	CAT77	CAT77†	CAT77†	CAT77† MEAP*	CAT77†	CAT77†	CAT77† MEAP*	CAT77†	CAT77† ORT	CAT77† MEAP*	CAT77†	CAT77†

*These tests were given in September only
†These tests were given in May only
°These tests were given in January only

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests (MEAP) are administered to evaluate academic achievement in the basic skills, reading and math, throughout the state of Michigan. Standardized tests are administered only in the fourth, seventh, and tenth grades. The tests are revised on a yearly basis--each year a new group of fourth-, seventh- and tenth-grade students are administered the tests. Comparisons of academic achievement for these groups occur then when each group reaches the subsequent grade level.

In this study, a comparison of the growth of those students who took the MEAP in 1980 as fourth graders and again in 1983 as seventh graders was made.

The design of the study and the procedures described were the basis for the hypotheses which follows:

STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESES

NULL HYPOTHESIS (1): There is no difference in reading achievement of first-grade students who participated in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of first-grade students who did not participate in a home-learning program as measured on a locally developed Objective Referenced Test approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (2): There is no difference in reading achievement of second-grade students who participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of second-grade students who did not participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program as measured on a locally developed Objective Referenced Test approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (3): There is no difference in reading achievement at the third-grade level of students who participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement at the third-grade level of students who did not participate as first-grade students in a home-learning program as measured on the California Achievement Test.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (4): There is no difference in reading achievement in the fourth-grade level of students who participated as first graders in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of fourth-grade students who did not participate in a home-learning program as measured on the California Achievement Test (C.A.T.)

NULL HYPOTHESIS (5): There is no difference in reading achievement in the fourth grade of students who participated as first graders in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of fourth-grade students who did not participate as first-grade students in a home-learning program as measured on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (6): There is no difference in reading achievement in the seventh grade of students who participated as first graders in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of the seventh-grade students who did not participate as first-grade students in a home-learning program as measured on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test.

Throughout the six years of the study, the sample remained equivalent in size, racial makeup, SES and Title I status. Pretest and posttest data were gathered and reported for the same sample.

TREATMENT OF DATA

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the six hypotheses under consideration.

The variables identified in the hypotheses were: pretest reading scores for first grade, second grade, third grade, and fourth grade; posttest reading scores for first grade, second grade, third grade, and fourth grade; Michigan Education Assessment Programs reading scores for fourth grade and seventh grade.

The number of Project HELP activities completed by students in Project HELP classrooms was recorded.

An analysis of the number of Project HELP students and the achievement scores of the students who participated in the program was made.

The students who were identified as the treatment group (T) were those who participated in Project HELP.

The students who were identified as the control group (C) were those who did not participate in Project HELP.

Pretest scores for all students were operationally treated for computer assignment. The above variables, as input for ANOVA include pretest scores, posttest scores, (first-, second-, third-, fourth-grade, fourth-grade reading and seventh-grade reading), activity grouping; participant, nonparticipant and minimum and maximum activity limits.

SUMMARY

The purpose of using pretest and posttest reading scores of first-grade students was to report results on validated testing instruments. In addition to that data, the following variables, socio-economic status of subjects; race, sex and academic performance were determined in participating and nonparticipating groups.

The sample represented 5.8% of the total first-grade population. Six of the school district's elementary buildings were included in the study.

The instruments used for testing academic performance in reading were approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

Privacy was ensured by assigning identification numbers to subjects in the sample. Once this was done, names were no longer used.

The data were analyzed by one-way analysis of variance.

In this chapter the research design, procedures and methodology of the study, description of population, characteristics of subjects, data collection procedures and treatment of the data were presented.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data extracted from the Objected Referenced Test (O.R.T.) and the California Achievement Test (C.A.T.) reading scores from the fourth and seventh grade Michigan Education Assessment Program (M.E.A.P) tests and Project HELP program records (for the T group) were used to analyze the six hypotheses presented in Chapter III. In this chapter a report of the data used to test the hypotheses is presented. Included are presentations of: (1) the average group means of the T group and C group from 1977-78 through 1979-80 for pretest and posttest performance, (2) presentation of f-value, probability and significance level, (3) average group means, pretest and posttest on the fourth-and seventh-grade MEAP and a summary of these findings.

ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESES

The analysis was determined by use of BMDP--One-Way Analysis of Variance.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (1): There is no difference in reading achievement of first-grade students who participated in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of first-grade students who did not participate in a home-learning program as measured on a locally developed Objective Referenced Test approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

The results of the analysis of variance are shown in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE IN 1977-78
First Grade, N=52

	Pretest				Posttest			
	N	Mean	F Value	Probability	N	Mean	F Value	Probability
C	23	32.9	1.0	.31	23	88.5	.17	.68
T	29	27.7			29	87.1		

These results indicate that there is no significant difference in the average group mean reading scores of first-grade students who participated in the home-learning program, Project HELP, and the average group mean reading scores of first-grade students who did not participate in

the home-learning program, Project HELP. An F-probability of .68 with 1 degree of freedom was not found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence on the first-grade posttest. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (2): There is no difference in reading achievement of second-grade students who participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of second-grade students who did not participate in a home-learning program as measured on a locally developed Objective Referenced Test approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

The results of the analysis of variance are shown in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE IN 1978-79
Second Grade, N=52

	Pretest				Posttest			
	N	Mean	F Value	Probability	N	Mean	F Value	Probability
C	23	25.4	.11	.74	23	84.8	.02	.88
T	29	23.8			29	84.3		

These results indicate that there is no significant difference in the average group mean reading scores of second-grade students who participated as first graders in the home-learning program, Project HELP, and the average group mean reading scores of second-grade students who did not participate in Project HELP. An F-probability of .88 with 1 degree of freedom was not found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence on the second-grade posttest. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (3): There is no difference in reading achievement of third-grade students who participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of third-grade students who did not participate in a home-learning program as measured on a locally developed Objective Referenced Test approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

TABLE 4.3

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE IN 1979-80
Third Grade, N=52
CALIFORNIA ACHIEVEMENT TEST reported in Grade Equivalent Units (G.E.U.)

	Pretest				Posttest			
	N	Mean	F Value	Probability	N	Mean	F Value	Probability
C	23	2.2	.04	.85	23	3.1	.0006	.98
T	29	2.3			29	3.1		

These results indicate that there is no significant difference in the average group mean reading scores of third-grade students who participated as first graders in the home-learning program, Project HELP, and the average group mean reading scores of third-grade students who did not participate in Project HELP. An F-probability of .98 with 1 degree of freedom was not found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence on the third-grade posttest. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (4): There is no difference in reading achievement of fourth-grade students who participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of fourth-grade students who did not participate in a home-learning program as measured on the California Achievement Test.

The results of the analysis of variance are shown in Table 4.4.

TABLE 4.4

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE IN 1980-81
Fourth Grade, N=52
CALIFORNIA ACHIEVEMENT TEST reported in Grade Equivalent Units (G.E.U.)

	Pretest				Posttest			
	N	Mean	F Value	Probability	N	Mean	F Value	Probability
C	23	3.1	.01	.0006	23	4.1	.71	.40
T	29	3.1			29	4.5		

These results indicate that there is no significant difference in the average group mean reading scores of fourth-grade students who participated as first graders in the home-learning program, Project HELP, and the average group mean reading scores of fourth-grade students who did not participate in Project HELP. An F-probability of .40 with 1 degree of freedom was not found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence on the fourth-grade posttest. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (5): There is no difference in reading achievement of fourth-grade students who participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of fourth-grade students who did not participate as first graders in a home-learning program as measured on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test.

The results of the analysis of variance are shown in Table 4.5.

TABLE 4.5

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE IN 1980
Fourth Grade, N=52
MICHIGAN EDUCATION ASSESSMENT PROGRAM TEST

	Reading			
	N	Mean	F Value	Probability
C	23	15.1	3.4	.07
T	29	11.4		

These results indicate that there is no significant difference in the average group mean reading scores of fourth-grade students who participated in Project HELP as first graders and the average group mean reading scores of fourth-grade students who did not participate in Project HELP as first graders. An F-probability of 3.4 with 1 degree of freedom was not found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

NULL HYPOTHESIS (6): There is no difference in reading achievement of seventh-grade students who participated as first-grade students in a home-learning program and the reading achievement of seventh-grade students who did not participate as first graders in a home-learning program as measured on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test.

TABLE 4.6

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE IN 1983
Seventh Grade, N=52
MICHIGAN EDUCATION ASSESSMENT PROGRAM TEST

	Reading			
	N	Mean	F Value	Probability
C	23	2.2	3.8	.06
T	29	5.5		

These results indicate that there is no significant difference in the average group mean reading scores of seventh-grade students who participated in Project HELP as first graders and the average group mean reading scores of seventh-grade students who did not participate in Project HELP as first graders. An F-probability of .06 with 1 degree of freedom was not found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence on the seventh-grade MEAP. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

SUMMARY

In Chapter IV an analysis of data from test scores and Project HELP participation was presented. The conclusions drawn from the analysis are that:

1. There is no significant difference in the average group mean reading scores at any of the grade levels recorded by students who participated in a home-learning program as first graders and the average group mean reading scores of students who did not participate in a home-learning program as first graders.

2. The average group mean reading scores of students who participated in the home-learning program and the average group mean reading scores of students who did not participate in the home-learning program were identical (3.1, T group and C group) on the third-grade posttest and on the fourth-grade pretest (3.1, T group and C group) as measured on the norm referenced California Achievement Test.

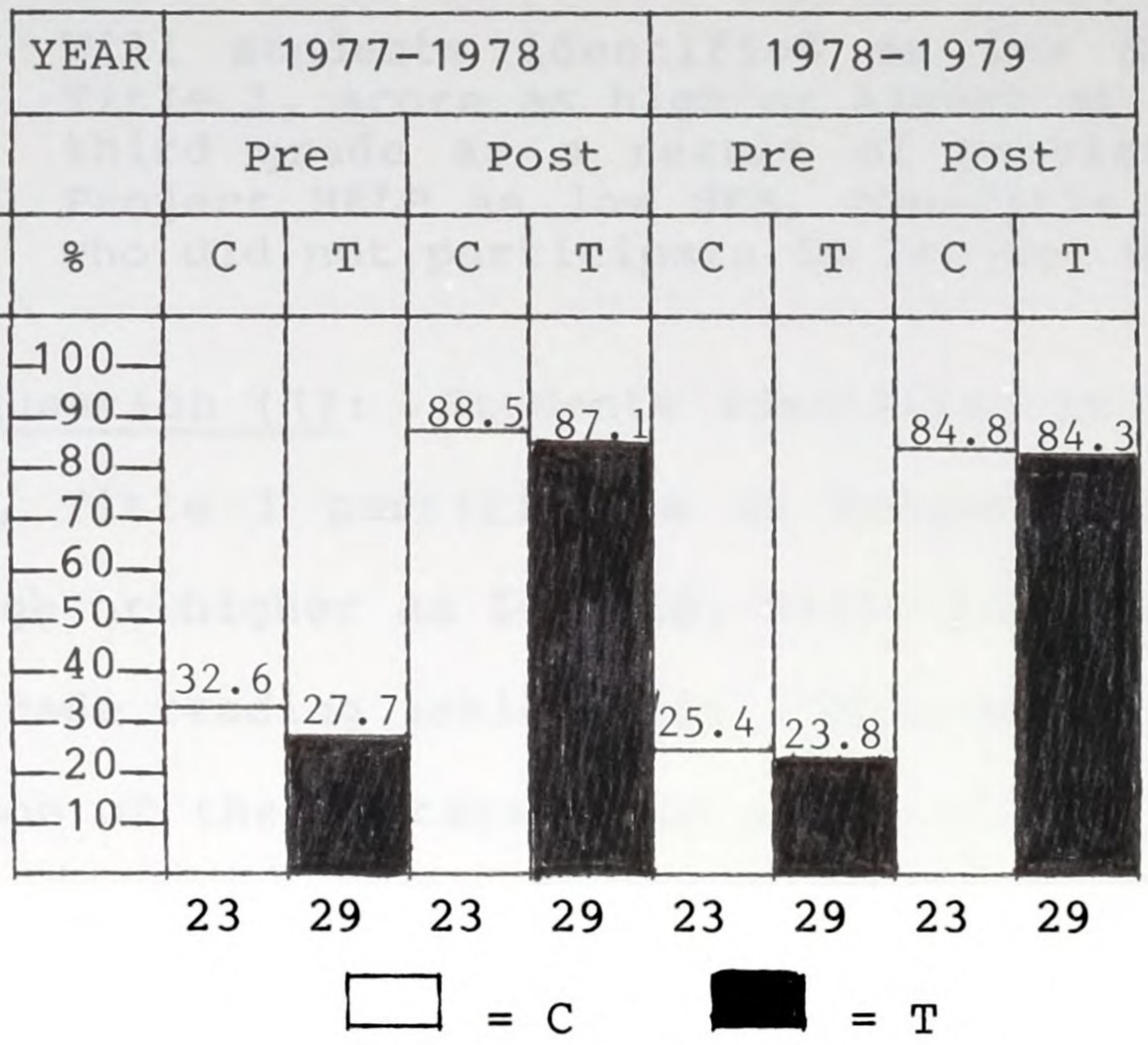
A composite chart of the average group means, pretest and posttest is presented in Table 4.7.

TABLE 4.7

COMPOSITE CHART OF PRETTEST AND POSTTEST AVERAGE GROUP MEANS FOR CONTROL GROUP AND TREATMENT GROUP

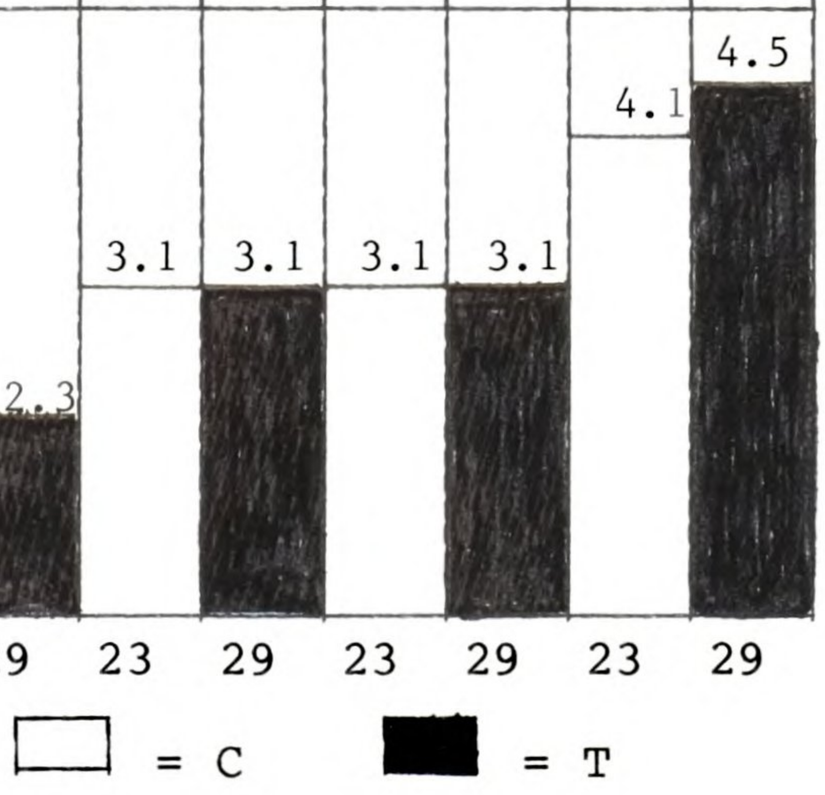
O.R.T. RESULTS

	YEAR	1977-1978				1978-1979			
		Pre		Post		Pre		Post	
N=52	%	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T



C.A.T. RESULTS

	YEAR	1979-1980				1980-1981			
		Pre		Post		Pre		Post	
N=52	GRADE	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T



From analysis of results of the data the answers to questions 1 and 2 presented in Chapter 3 were determined.

Question 1: Will students identified as low SES and as Title I, score as high or higher at second and third grade as a result of participation in Project HELP as low SES, non-Title I students who did not participate in Project HELP?

Answer to question (1): Students identified in this study as low SES, Title I participants in Project HELP did not score as high or higher as low SES, Title I nonparticipants in second grade reading achievement. This answer was based on comparison of the average group means of both groups on the Benton Harbor Area Schools Objective Referenced posttest.

Students identified in this study as low SES, Title I participants in Project HELP had an average goup mean equal to the average group mean of low SES, Title I nonparticipants in third grade reading achievement.

This answer was based on comparison of the average group means of both groups on the California Achievement Test posttest.

Question 2: Will the Michigan Education Assessment Program scores at fourth and seventh grade of low SES, Title I students who participated in Project HELP as first graders rank as high or higher than low SES non-Title I students who did not participate in Project HELP as first graders?

Answer to question (2): The average group mean score computed on the fourth grade 1980-81 MEAP for students who participated in 1977-78 as first graders in Project HELP was not as high or higer than the average group mean score of students who did not participated in 1977-78 as first graders in Project HELP.

The average group mean score computed on the seventh grade 1983-84 MEAP for students who participated in 1977-78 as first graders in Project HELP was higher than the average group mean score of students who did not participate as first graders in 1977-78 in Project HELP.

These findings indicate that there is no significant difference in average group mean reading scores of students who participated as first graders in a home-learning program and the average group mean reading scores of students who did not participate as first graders in a home-learning program.

The data revealed an academic increase, with the exception of second grade, on the part of students who participated as first graders in the home-learning program. In the pretest scores a higher level of academic achievement for these students was recorded. In appendices C and D the Average Group Means of the Control and Treatment Group on the pretests and on the posttests are displayed.

These findings did not reveal a statistically significant difference in academic achievement at the .05 level of confidence for the two groups, control and treatment, in this study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a summary of the purposes of this study will be reviewed. Conclusions will be presented. Recommendations for future research will be offered.

SUMMARY

The statistical analysis of the data used in this study did not reveal a difference, at the .05 level of confidence, in academic achievement (in reading) of students who participated in Project HELP and that of students who did not participate in Project HELP. Analysis of the scores attained on the objective referenced tests reflected an increase in gain by Project HELP students in the second grade. The amount of gain achieved by Project HELP students was smaller than that achieved by non-Project HELP students. In the third grade, the amount of gain was identical for both groups. In the fourth grade, the Project HELP group surpassed the non-Project HELP group in amount of gain achieved.

The results of this study contibute to existing knowledge of early childhood education. The intent of the study was to explore the impact, on student achievement, of parental involvement.

SUMMARY OF STUDY RESULTS

The results analyzed in this study show that:

1. When achievement was compared on locally developed, Michigan Department of Education approved, objective referenced tests (first and second grade), students who participated in Project HELP failed to score as high or higher than nonparticipating students on the O.R.T. posttest.

2. When achievement was compared on the nationally normed third grade California Achievement Test, students who participated in Project HELP achieved, on the posttest, the same average group mean as students who did not participate in Project HELP.

3. When achievement was compared on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test, in the fourth grade, students who participated in Project HELP failed to achieve, on the posttest, an equal or higher average group mean as compared to nonparticipants.

4. When achievement was compared on the nationally normed fourth grade California Achievement Test, students who participated in Project HELP achieved, on the posttest, a higher average group mean than nonparticipants.

5. When achievement was compared on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test, in the seventh grade, students who participated in Project HELP achieved, on the post-test, a higher average group mean than nonparticipants.

The objective referenced sets of items contained in the MEAP measure items comprising each objective which are affective in nature. The MEAP Handbook cautions researchers to consider use of MEAP results as an opportunity to generate parental interest in their children's educational progress. This is one use for the MEAP. Appendix E reflects an overview and assessed skill areas of the MEAP.

CONCLUSION

In this study, an objective analysis of the effect of parental involvement did not reflect a significant difference in academic achievement on the part of participating students. The methods used in the parent involvement model under study did reflect positive effects in program evaluation. The results were used to give feedback to parents of the children, to determine program effectiveness, to make program decisions and to justify continued use of the program.

Evidence of rapport between teachers and parents was noted. Little effort was required from teachers to implement the program. Parental comments were generally supportive of the program. Negative comments were few. In addition, an increase in the number of parents who participated in the program took place.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations, based on interpretation of the data are offered:

1. That replication by other districts include a lengthened period of intervention. A greater amount of time could be considered for parent instruction at home. Perhaps as much as forty-five minutes to an hour rather than the fifteen to twenty minutes described in the study might be used.

2. That methods to encourage more parents to participate be developed.

3. That the parent intervention method continue, on a systematic basis, in grades following the treatment period.

4. That parents be surveyed to determine if they believe their efforts to help their children at home were effective.

5. That the students who participated in the home-learning program be surveyed to determine if they have positive feelings about the program.

6. That the incidence of preschool participation as part of further longitudinal assessement be included in further studies.

7. That a study of the number of former Project HELP students who become involved in the courts, as opposed to those who do not, be made.

Certainly continued analysis and examination of the cost of compensatory instruction and the resulting inability of local school districts to provide much needed compensatory instruction to all students who demonstrate low academic achievement levels should take place.

Local public school districts are urged to become more proactive and self-determining in their efforts to shape the educational experiences offered to students. In this study, a yearly increase in the average group mean scores of the treatment, Project HELP, group occurred at the third- and fourth-grade level. These findings were shared with parents, teachers and administrators. This process evaluation, coupled with the findings in this study, was of assistance to the Benton Harbor Area Schools in the design of remedial instruction for under achieving students.

Three districts replicated Project HELP. Those sites, East Lansing, Michigan; Grand Rapids, Michigan and South Bend, Indiana provided the results of the program to the Benton Harbor Area Schools. A variety of results were

recorded. Differences in design contributed to inconclusive findings. Throughout the summaries from the sites, the positive response of parents to this type of parent involvement was evident.

As additional data are collected, the educational community, teachers, administrators, students and parents, will be able to use that research to design and implement comprehensive, effective instructional programs that address the need to eliminate the "at risk" of school failure for millions of children in public school systems in our nation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FAMILY INCOME CRITERIA

Michigan Department of Education
School Management Service
Food & Nutrition Program
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909

FAMILY INCOME CRITERIA

1977-78

Pursuant to Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1758) and Section 4(e) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended 42 U.S.C. 1773(e), the income poverty guidelines for determining eligiblity for free and reduced price meals in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Commodity only schools during Fiscal Year 1978 are described below.

Section 3 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 as amended (43 U.S.C. 1772), requires that children who qualify for free lunches under these guidelines shall also be eligible for an additional 1/2 pint of free milk in those schools participating in the Special Milk Program.

INCOME POVERTY GUIDELINES, FISCAL YEAR 1977-78

Family Size	"A" Free Meals and Milk	"B" Reduced Price Meals
One.....	$ 3,930	$ 3,931 - 6,120
Two.....	5,160	5,161 - 8,050
Three...	6,390	6,391 - 9,970
Four....	7,610	7,611 - 11,880
Five....	8,740	8,741 - 13,630
Six.....	9,860	9,861 - 15,380
Seven...	10,890	10,891 - 16,980
Eight...	11,910	11,911 - 18,580
Nine....	12,840	12,841 - 20,030
Ten.....	13,760	13,761 - 21,470
Eleven..	14,680	14,681 - 22,890
Twelve..	15,590	15,591 - 24,310
Each additional family member	$910	$1,420

APPENDIX B

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF TITLE I PULL-OUT INSTRUCTION IN THE BENTON HARBOR AREA SCHOOLS

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF TITLE I PULL-OUT INSTRUCTION IN THE BENTON HARBOR AREA SCHOOLS

PREPARED BY:

GLADYS E.BURKS
DIRECTOR, STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS
BENTON HARBOR AREA SCHOOLS

PROJECT HELP WAS DEVELOPED IN CONJUCTION WITH
THE HOME AND SCHOOL INSTITUTE, TRINITY COLLEGE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

In the 1974-75 school year, 422 children were identified as Title I students in grades one through six. Of this number, 25 were first graders. Remedial instruction on a pull-out basis cost approximately $328 per student which includes materials, supplemental text and workbooks, and equipment. Nine remedial reading teachers provided instruction for seven and one-half months of the school year. Teaching salaries for the group totaled $124,616 for the 1974-75 school year.

Title I students at the first grade level achieved a gain of 48%(average pretest - 25% of objectives attained; average posttest - 73% of objectives attained.)

In the 1975-76 school year, 389 students were identified as Title I participants. Of this number, nine were first graders. Remedial reading teachers' salaries totaled $130,500. The cost per pupil for instruction was approximately $400 including materials and equipment.

Title I students at the first grade level achieved a 42% academic gain in reading.

In the 1976-77 school year, 429 children were identified as Title I students. There were 87 identified Title I first graders who participated (unless in control groups) in Project HELP. The cost of pull-out instruction for the 342 Title I students, grades two through six, averaged approximately $565 per student, including supplemental materials. Eleven remedial reading teachers whose salaries amounted to $188,519 for the first year provided instruction to these 342 Title I students.

It may be noted that in 1976-77 two things occurred: Two additional Title I teachers (remedial reading) were added, yet the number of students served was less than the year before due to the design of the remedial reading program. Class size was limited to no more than six students, thereby lessening the number of **eligible** students (those who have the lowest test scores) who actually received remedial instruction. Project HELP activities were sent home with **all** eligible students. The cost for Project HELP program implementation follows:

Paper for printing recipes for 12 weeks.....		$ 55.36
Staff cost to deliver recipes.....		90.00
Staff time to duplicate recipes and collate sheets..		32.64
Follow-up to home (staff mileage):		
Inservice information.....	$ 10.00	
Transportation to inservice sessions.....	15.00	
Delivery of activites and home assistance..	25.00	
		50.00
Folders.....		18.48
Zip-lock bags.....		17.00
Yarn.....		N/C
Certificates.....		6.00
Frames for certificates.....		91.20
Trophies.....		60.00
Total		$420.68

This amount results in a cost of $4.83 per student (Project HELP) as opposed to the cost of $563 (Title I) for pull-out remedial instruction. It should be noted that the time spent by the regular classroom teacher in implementing HELP is minimal. Time is spent in handing out the "recipes" to students as they leave school, checking the feedback sheet as the recipes are returned, summarizing feedback information on a tally sheet, occasionally calling a Home Service Worker to determine why recipes are not returned and explaining activities to those parents who seek information. It is estimated that no more than one hour per week for twelve weeks was spent by the ten Project HELP teachers, which resulted in 120 hours or 20 six-hour days. First grade teachers' salaries for that number of days averaged $714 daily, resulting in an expenditure of $1,416 spent on Project HELP activities. The total for Project HELP in 1976-77 was approximately $21.13 per student.

Title I students at the first grade level demonstrated a 53% gain without pull-out instruction.

Project HELP Inservices To and During Program Implementation:

Consultant services (Home-School Institute).....		$ 3,375.00
Substitutes for classroom teachers.....		510.00
Inservice for parents:	Transportation.....	15.00
	Five Luncheon Meetings...	280.00

As indicated in the **Report on Academic Achievement in the HELP Program** and its control groups in 1976-77, there were no statistically significant differences at the .05 or.01 level. The cost, however, is far less than typical remedial reading under pull-out instruction; and the academic gain, while not significantly higher, was not less than other years (1974-75 or 1975-76).

In the 1976-77 school year, 442 first graders, including 87 identified Title I first graders, participated in Project HELP. Costs for this group averaged $4.31 per child.

SUMMARY

1. In previous years, it was not possible to provide Title I remedial reading instruction for all educationally deprived students. The design of the Title I program, one teacher to no more than eight students (in 1972-73 aides were provided) is a far more expensive program than Project HELP. Project HELP ensures that **all** eligible students receive supplemental reading instruction, not just 5-6 to 7-8 students per class.

2. Project HELP also eliminates the need for students to miss other classes or work because they are removed to work with the remedial reading teacher.

3. The cost of remedial reading teacher salaries continues to rise while the class size remains constant, thus the **cost per student** continues to escalate.

4. A recent study completed by the [1]National Institute of Education shows that Title I students in the first grade made better progress in reading and math when they stayed in their classrooms than when they were pulled out for special instruction. Project HELP combines teaching **in class** with reinforcement **at home** in a systematic manner. Parents and children have come to look forward to the recipes and enjoy doing the activities. What cannot be measured is the rapport that builds between the child and the parent. It is also not possible to asses the spin-off that results in later years because this type of parent-child-school-home interaction was initiated during the child's early school years.

5. First grade students in the Benton Harbor Area Schools are given an opportunity to participate without being segregated for remediation. There is some indication that many first graders are immature rather than in need of remediation.

[1]The Effects of Services on Student Development
National Institute of Education, Washington D.C. 20208

6. Project HELP incorporates parental **assistance** in teaching children. The eighth annual (1976) Gallup poll indicated that 75% of the public favored the idea that the public schools should offer courses to parents on how to help their children in school, and 51% said they would be willing to pay additional taxes to support such a program. Project HELP provides that parent training.

7. Project HELP provides a method of involving parents, when required by federal law, in the planning of supplemental programs. Project HELP combines teacher expertise and parental experience in an instructional **activity which includes reading objectives, support** from the home to those reading objectives and low cost program implementation.

8. Project HELP can provide continuity in instruction. Where the same grades across the district are participating, the family and the child have consistent activities with which to work. Districts with high pupil mobility may benefit from utilizing this type of activity.

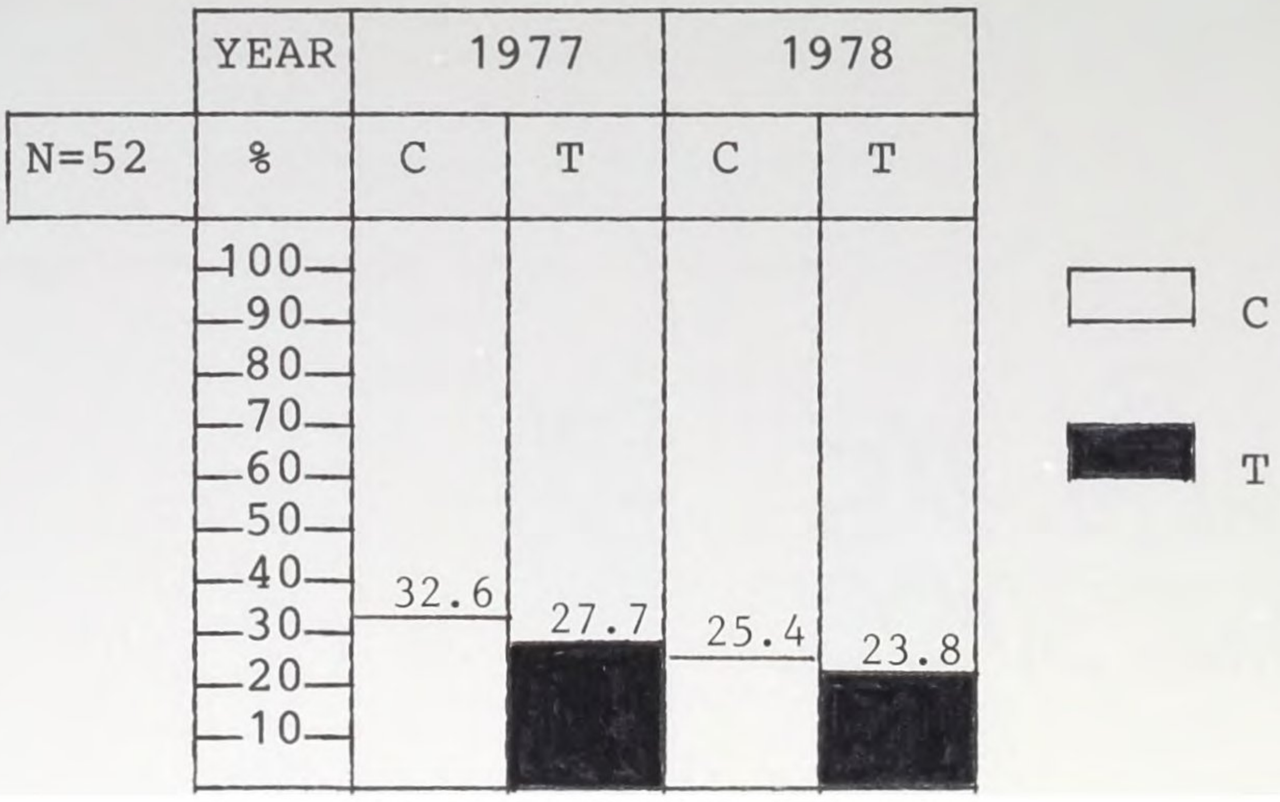
May, 1978

APPENDIX C

AVERAGE GROUP MEANS OF CONTROL AND TREATMENT GROUPS ON THE PRETEST

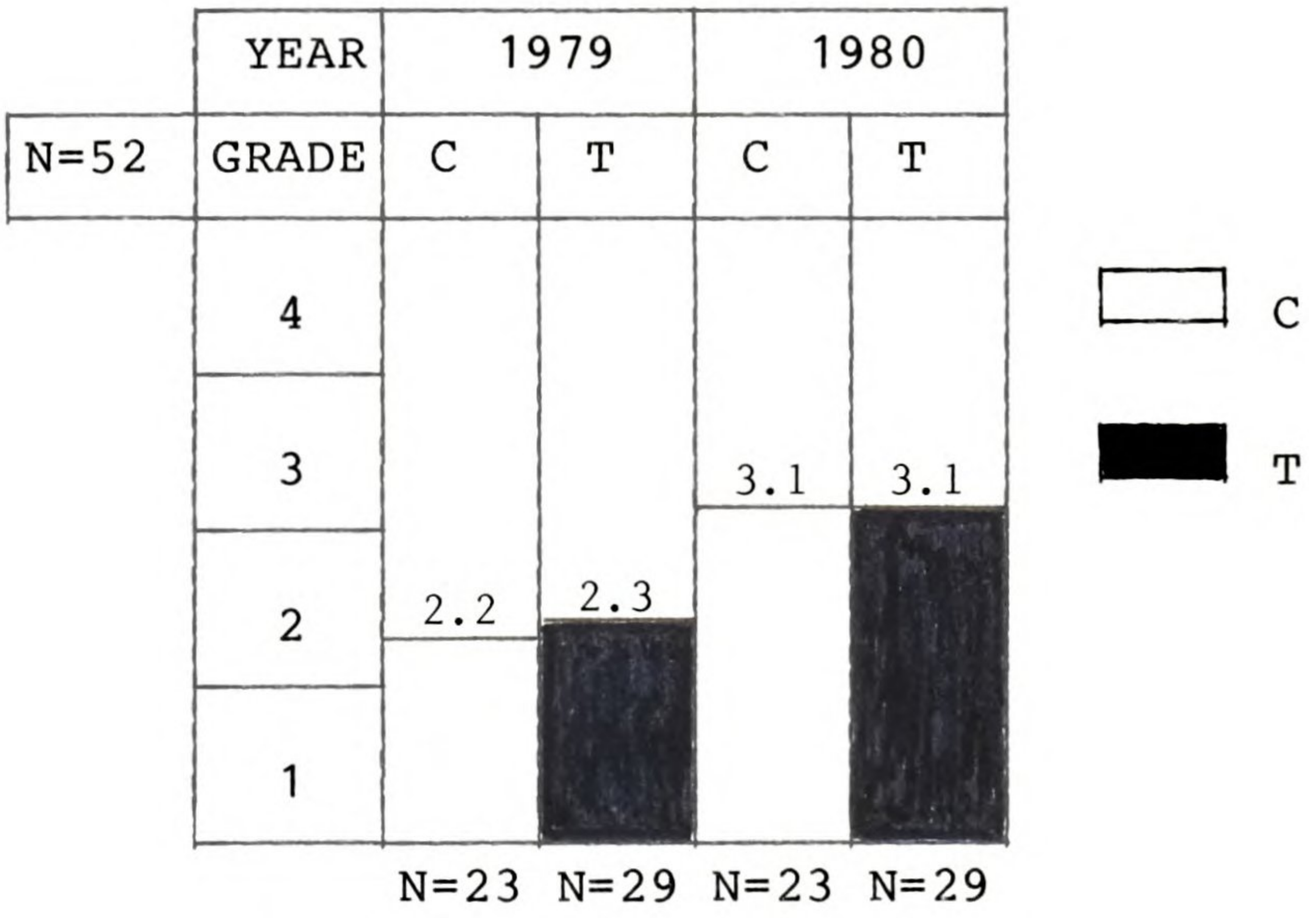
AVERAGE GROUP MEANS ON THE PRETEST
FOR
PROJECT HELP, T AND CONTROL, C GROUPS

O.R.T. PRETEST RESULTS



Both groups C and T achieved less than 33 %, the percentage generally accepted as an appropriate level for students on the locally developed Objective Referenced Test. Student characteristics, low SES and limited opportunity to acquire readiness skills (for first grade) and basic skills (for second grade) may have caused the low scores reflected above.

C.A.T. PRETEST RESULTS



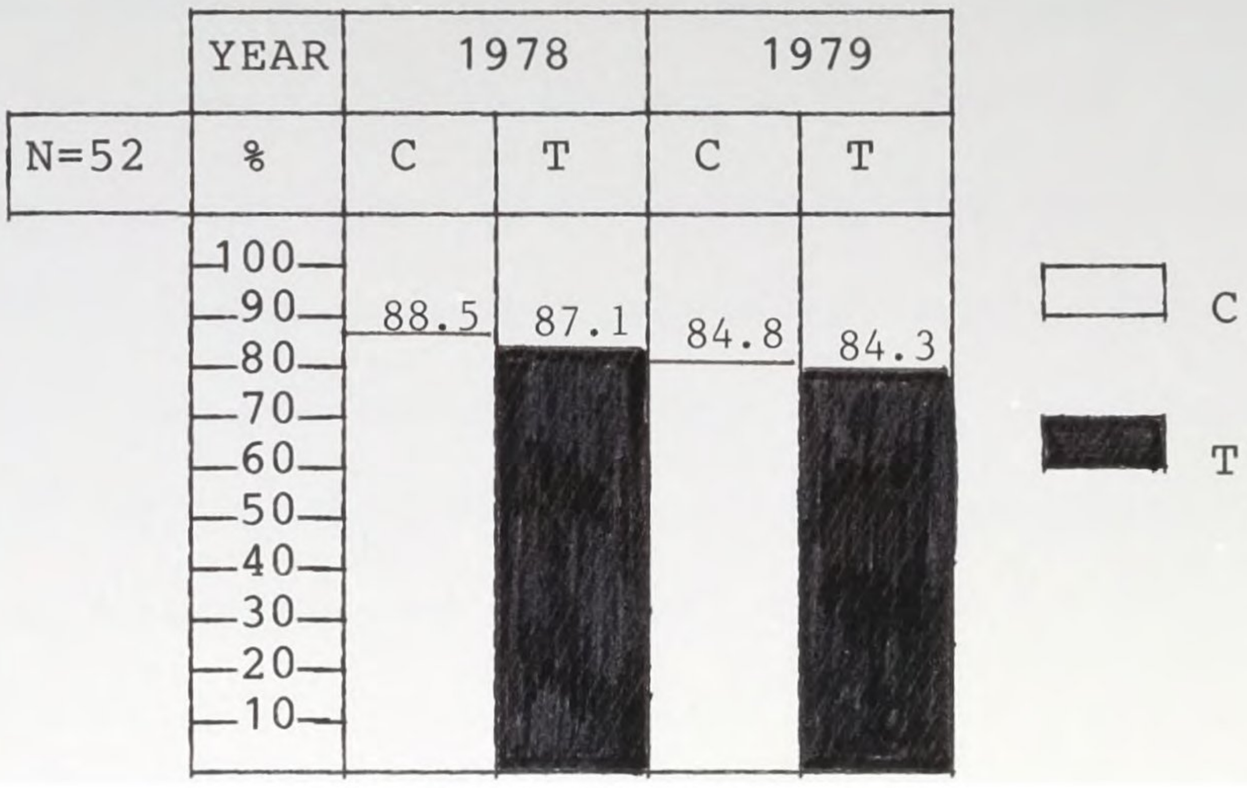
Both groups C and T demonstrated average group means within .1, on the pretest, on each other in the third grade. In the fourth grade, the average group mean for C and T were identical on the pretest.

APPENDIX D

AVERAGE GROUP MEANS OF CONTROL AND TREATMENT GROUPS ON THE POSTTEST

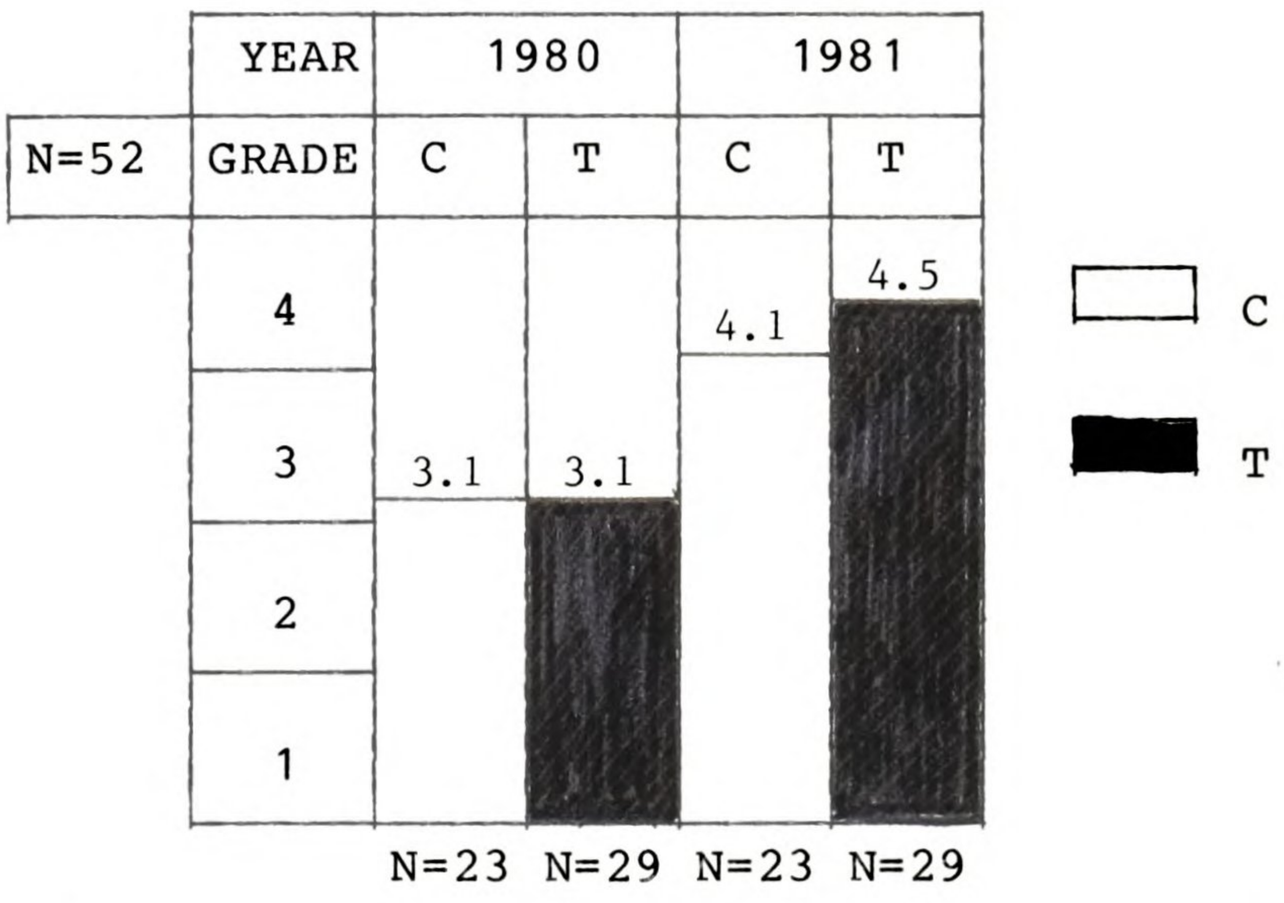
AVERAGE GROUP MEANS ON THE POSTTEST
FOR
PROJECT HELP, T AND CONTROL, C GROUPS

O.R.T. POSTTEST RESULTS



Both groups achieved, at a lower rate on the posttest in the second grade, when compared to the first grade posttest as measured on the Objective Referenced Test.

C.A.T. POSTTEST RESULTS



In the third grade (1980) the treatment group achieved an average group mean on the California Achievement Test identical to that of the control group. In the fourth grade (1981) the treatment group achieved an average group mean on the California Achievement Test exceeding that of the control group.

APPENDIX E

OVERVIEW OF THE MEAP AND ASSESSED SKILLS AREA

AN OVERVIEW

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) is a statewide testing program in reading and mathematics (with other subject areas tested on a sampling basis). MEAP was initiated by the State Board of Education, supported by the Governor and funded by the Legislature.

The MEAP tests are administered every fall to all fourth, seventh, and tenth graders. They provide information on what our students are learning and doing compared with what we want them to know and do.

BACKGROUND

The first four years of the assessment program (1969-1973) used standardized norm-referenced tests designed to rank students from highest to lowest in each of four subject areas (vocabulary, reading comprehension, English usage, and arithmetic). The information provided by these tests did not adequately serve the purpose of MEAP to provide information on the status and progress of Michigan basic skills education. An alternative method of assessing student achievement was needed.

In the fall of 1971, referent groups were formed to develop specific performance objectives in the basic skills areas. The groups were composed of local, state, and higher education curriculum specialists and teachers from throughout Michigan. Groups submitted draft objectives for statewide review by grade level commissions and the Elementary and Secondary Education Council. The final objectives were approved and adopted by the State Board of Education.

Objective referenced tests were developed by Michigan educators to measure specified basic skills attainment.

When the minimal performance objectives were developed in 1973, no empirical evidence on the objectives was available and Department staff agreed that a periodic review and revision would be needed. Revision of the objectives was undertaken in 1976 with the assistance of the Michigan Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM) and the Michigan Reading Association (MRA). As the sets of skills were reviewed, it became apparent that certain new areas of emphasis (for example, metric measurement) needed to be added and other areas (for example, the difference between inferential and literal comprehension) needed to be clarified. The revised objectives were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1980. The revised sets of objectives represent an extension of the original set based on the experience of using them in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program. The need for revised tests was the direct result of the adoption of the revised objectives.

TEST DESCRIPTION

The current assessment tests are objective-referenced sets of items measuring selected minimum performance objective[1] in the subject areas of reading and mathematics.

[1] Because of testing time limitations, not all of the minimal performance objectives for reading or mathematics are included in the annual eductional assessment. All of the minimal performance objectives for grades one through nine may be found in the Minimal Performance Objectives for Communication Skills and Minimal Performance Objectives for Mathematics.

Each objective is measured by a set of three items. Objective attainment is answering correctly at least two of the three items measuring each objective. The untimed tests allow students to work at their own pace.

The tests were written by Michigan educators and field tested twice on a statewide sample of students. Following each tryout, the tests were reviewed and refined. The revised tests were approved by the State Board of Eduction and administered on a statewide basis in 1980-81.

Both MCTM and MRA helped supervise the test development process and participated in the test review and revision processes, including a review of the 1980-81 statewide tests and results. The 1980-81 test results provided a new baseline to which the 1981-82 and future results can be compared.

Results, as in the past, are reported both in terms of percentage of students attaining each objective and in terms of percent of students failing in each category of achievement.

Shown below are the number of objectives and test items used in the **reading** tests:

COGNITIVE SKILLS (Skill Areas I-V)

Grade	Number of Objectives	Number of Test Items
4	25	75
7	23	69
10	24	72

POSITIVE RESPONSES TO READING (Skill Area VI)

Number of Objectives	Number of Test Items
4	12
4	12
4	12

RELATED ACTIVITIES

Number of Test Items
3
3
3

The positive response test items are used to determine the extent to which students read on their own, talk about what they read, or request additional reading materials. The related activities do not measure any specific objectives but are used to determine the amount of time students spend doing homework, watching television, and reading just for fun.

MEAP: THE SKILL AREAS ASSESSED

	GRADE FOUR		GRADE SEVEN	
	Skill Area	# of Obj.	Skill Area	# of Obj.
READING TEST	Vocabulary Meaning	6	Vocabulary Meaning	5
	Literal Comprehension	5	Literal Comprehension	5
	Inferential Comprehension	9	Inferential Comprehension	7
	Critical Reading Skills	1	Critical Reading Skills	2
	Related Study Skills	4	Related Study Skills	4
	Sub-Total	25	Sub-Total	23
	Positive Response/ Reading*	4	Positive Response/ Reading*	4

* Attainments on the Reading Positive Response objectives and the Mathematics correlated objectives are not included in the Proportion Report.

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