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A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PTA AS IT FUNCTIONS IN
THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF A MIDWESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT,
AS PERCEIVED BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND
PTA PRESIDENTS IN THAT DISTRICT

presented by

David L. Henderson

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Teacher Education


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AS PERCEIVED BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND
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By

David L. Henderson

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ABSTRACT

A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PTA AS IT FUNCTIONS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF A MIDWESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT, AS PERCEIVED BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND PTA PRESIDENTS IN THAT DISTRICT

By

David L. Henderson

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) in the Midwestern School District, which was the focus of this study. Many educators and community leaders believe the quality of education increases when parents/nonparents participate in developing appropriate programs to meet students' needs and expectations. In 1982-83, the superintendent of the Midwestern School District mandated that elementary schools in the district develop PTAs to allow for more parent participation. This writer studied parental participation in the PTAs that were developed.

The study population included the 33 elementary schools within the Midwestern School District. The researcher designed a survey instrument to gather information from the principals and PTA presidents of these 33 schools.

A t-test was used to analyze the data collected in the study. The major findings were as follows:

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1. A statistically significant difference was found between high-socioeconomic-status (high-SES) schools and low-socioeconomic-status (low-SES) schools in terms of parental involvement in the PTA. More parents in high-SES than in low-SES schools were highly involved (> 50% attendance) in PTA meetings.

2. No statistically significant difference was found between "neighborhood" schools and "bused" schools in terms of parent involvement in the PTA.

3. A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals did not rate the PTA as the most important communication link between the school and the home. School bulletins sent home with children and parent-teacher conferences were rated as the most important communication links, followed by the PTA.

4. Less than a majority of PTA presidents and elementary principals (42.4%) believed that the PTA participated effectively in the planning phase of school operations.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made recommendations for strengthening the PTA in the Midwestern School District and suggested possible topics for further research.

**To my loving wife, Brenda, without whose help this
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

In a democratic society, parental involvement in the functions of educational institutions is highly desirable and should be encouraged. As public education institutions have become increasingly complex, enhancing parental participation has become a more difficult undertaking. For parents who are busy with occupational, family, and recreational pursuits, it is often difficult to find time to participate in activities that do not demand immediate attention.

For many decades in the history of American public education, parental participation in the schools was minimal. In recent years, educators have sensed the need for and the desirability of involving parents in the educational process. Growth of school systems, resulting, in part, from the migration of people to the cities, as well as consolidation of school districts, has made it difficult to involve parents in school operations. Organizations such as the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) were formed and encouraged parental participation in school affairs.

Background of the Problem

An almost universal tenet of education today is that cooperation between the school and parents is essential to providing quality education for children. Expressing his concern in this area, Pittenger (1972) wrote:

Public education must go beyond a system which is largely the preserve of professionals operating under the legal authority of a citizen school board. A nine citizen board whether members are elected or appointed, partisan, non-partisan or bi-partisan, can never exhaust a community's interest in its public schools. (p. 2)

Parents are continuing to express concern about their children's educational environment. Community members not only are expecting more from their schools, but, in some instances, are demanding more. Many principals, too, are recognizing that parents are a vast reservoir of rich educational resources. The PTA is an invaluable resource for bringing the community and the schools into a reasonable working relationship.

The PTA is the primary agency designed to bridge the communication gap between school and home. Focusing on school-home problems has proven successful for the PTA in many cases because of its wide scope of operations at the city, state, and national levels. A local PTA has strength in numbers, and its resources are distributed over a wide area. In the past, PTAs have been instrumental in influencing legislation favorable to public school operations.

Today, PTAs are seeking to involve parents in overall planning and decision making so they have a sense of control over their

children's education. In many cases, parents are invited to attend school PTA meetings and are informed about school policy. Elementary principals and PTA presidents are encouraged to include parents in decision making and are required to do so when receiving certain state and federal funds. How to tap parental resources, organize parents for action, and involve parents in vital educational processes are problems that many school districts are wrestling with today. Like those districts, the Midwestern School District, which was the focus of this study, is facing similar problems.

In the 1982-83 school year, the Midwestern School District mandated that PTAs be started in the elementary and secondary schools to support the philosophy of greater parental participation in the schools. This study was designed to analyze the elementary principals' and PTA presidents' perceptions about various aspects of the PTA, five years after its implementation. Strengths and weaknesses of the PTA were examined, to determine where changes and adjustments might be made to improve its structure and/or implementation. The findings of such a study should be helpful to the PTA and to others who are interested in its operation.

Purposes of the Study

The writer had three major purposes in conducting this study: (a) to investigate the extent of parental participation in PTAs in the Midwestern School District and to determine how those PTAs functioned; (b) to identify strengths and weaknesses in the

structure and/or implementation of the PTAs, using a survey of Midwestern School District elementary school principals and PTA presidents; and (c) based on the findings of the survey, to make recommendations for strengthening the PTA and school relationships.

The writer was especially concerned with parent involvement/participation because such involvement was mandated by the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) of 1981, Chapter I and Article 3 of the Michigan State School Aid Act. The state-funded Article 3 program is designed to provide help to low-achieving students in the areas of reading and mathematics. All 33 elementary schools in the Midwestern School District received Article 3 monies. The federally funded counterpart of Article 3, Chapter I, operated only in the 18 elementary schools with the highest concentrations of students from low-income families. Tied closely to federal and state funding is a mandate for parental participation in decisions regarding planning and setting priorities. To continue to qualify for these funds, schools must present documentation of parental participation.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the collection of data for this study:

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant difference between high-socioeconomic-status (high-SES) schools and low-socioeconomic-status (low-SES) schools in terms of parent involvement in the PTA.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant difference between "neighborhood" schools and "bused" schools in terms of parent involvement in the PTA.

Hypothesis 3: A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals will rate the PTA as the most important communication link between the school and the home.

Hypothesis 4: A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals will believe that the PTA participates effectively in the planning phase of school operations.

Hypothesis 5: A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals will believe that the PTA participates effectively in making final decisions regarding school issues, represents parents in the needs-assessment process, and usually finds satisfactory solutions to school/neighborhood problems.

Need for the Research

In a democratic society, public apathy toward education is most undesirable. Schools need to be responsible, either directly or indirectly, to the parents. Parental apathy may lead to excesses and abuses of power, which might have disastrous or even tragic results. At present, there seems to be a call for more parental input into the functioning and operation of the schools.

During the last decade, public schools have made an increased effort to involve parents in school affairs. Because the PTA is a primary vehicle for such involvement, the findings of this study should be beneficial for a number of reasons.

1. The findings might prove helpful to school districts contemplating the establishment or revision of PTAs.

2. District, state, and federal funding is tied to parental involvement in the schools.

3. The PTAs in the Midwestern School District should benefit as the associations' strengths and weaknesses are identified and ways to upgrade them are recommended. The Midwestern School District

mandated the establishment of PTAs in its schools five years ago. Some of these schools have had PTAs longer than five years. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide a basis for making decisions related to operational and structural revisions to enhance parental involvement in the PTAs.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study had several possible limitations. First, many individuals who join the PTA during membership drives or at other times of the year have no intention of participating in the organization and are not well informed about school issues. Thus, not all segments of the school population had similar expectations for participation or involvement in the PTA.

Another possible limitation is that the study findings were based on respondents' perceptions, which are necessarily subjective. Also, the two survey groups--PTA presidents and elementary school principals--might have perceived similar situations in different ways because of the differing natures of their roles.

Although the parents who were interviewed were assured that their responses would remain confidential, they might have been apprehensive about possible repercussions from the principals of their children's schools and "tempered" their answers accordingly.

Finally, although the researcher made every effort to maintain objectivity, some bias might be inherent in the reporting of findings because he is the principal of one of the elementary schools in the Midwestern School District.

The research was delimited in two ways. First, only the 33 elementary schools in the Midwestern School District were included in the study. PTAs in the secondary schools were not considered. Second, the perceptions of PTA presidents and elementary school principals in the district were sought; teachers were not included in this study.

Generalizability

Because school district populations differ in terms of racial composition, educational background, income, and types of occupations, the findings of this study may be generalized only to those districts whose populations are similar to that of the Midwestern School District. Also, the superintendent of the Midwestern School District is very supportive of the PTAs' functioning in the district. Districts with less supportive superintendents might have totally different experiences in terms of participation in and functioning of the PTAs.

Although the neighborhoods surrounding each school vary, the methods used by some schools to foster parent involvement should be applicable to other school situations.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this dissertation.

Cross-section. Representatives from all segments of the neighborhood (e.g., racial, economic, occupational, and social).

Decentralization. The diffusion and sharing of power once held by the central school administration with teachers, principals, and parents.

Decision making. The choosing of resources, with or without parental input.

General population. All of the Midwestern School District's 33 elementary principals and the public in their attendance areas.

Goals and key areas of focus. The format used by the superintendent to indicate the goal area for parental participation, followed by a list of specific areas of focus.

Neighborhood. The attendance area of a given school (used interchangeably with the community).

Pressure group. A group of individuals or an organization that presents demands or attempts in any way to influence policy formation or implementation.

School community. The attendance area of an individual school.

Strategy. A plan of action (used interchangeably with method).

Overview

Chapter I contained the background of the problem, purposes of the study, the research hypotheses, the need for the research, limitations and delimitations of the study, generalizability of the findings, and definitions of key terms. In Chapter II, literature pertinent to the study is reviewed. The review covers selected societal changes that have occurred during the last few decades and

that are directly related to this study, studies of the PTA, and research on voluntary association membership.

Chapter III contains a description of the establishment and functioning of the PTA in the Midwestern School District, as well as the methodology used in this research. Included in the methodology section are descriptions of the population and sample, the research hypotheses, development of the survey instrument, and data-collection and data-analysis procedures. The results of the statistical analyses that were used to test the hypotheses, using responses to the survey instrument, are discussed in Chapter IV. Results of interviews with selected principals and parents are also discussed. Chapter V contains a summary of the study, conclusions based on the study findings and informal interviews with school personnel, recommendations for strengthening the PTAs in the Midwestern School District, suggestions for further study, and reflections.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of related literature underscores the need for this study and shows its importance to the field of education. The literature review is divided into three major sections. The first pertains to changes that have taken place in society during the last few decades. Because of the broad scope of this topic, only a few societal changes that have a direct bearing on the topic under consideration are discussed. Second, studies of the PTA are reviewed to help understand the rationale for a study of this type. Voluntary association membership is the topic of the third section. Included in this section are a discussion of types of participation, the relationship of socio-demographic characteristics to parental participation, attempts to increase parental participation in the process of school planning and decision making, a review of literature on parent involvement, and the PTA as a school-oriented pressure group.

Changing Social Conditions

In the past several decades, vast changes have occurred in American society. Technological developments affecting business and industry, coupled with scientific advances in the communication and

transportation fields, have had a far-reaching influence on social conditions in America. The social changes brought about at least in part by these developments have greatly affected institutions in the United States, particularly the schools. Addressing this phenomenon, Kliebard (1970) stated:

American schools, once the most placid of institutions, have been torn by internal strife and subjected to continuing attack. Civil rights struggles, rising expectations, spreading affluence, automobile ownership by the young, and the pervasiveness of television and other distractions crowd out school as a focus of teen-age interest. (p. 203)

One social change that is having a major effect on school systems is the dramatic rise in the crime rate. From small villages to large metropolitan areas, vandalism and crime are affecting citizens in all walks of life and are causing major concern for institutions such as schools. Kiernan (1975) contended that:

Violence and vandalism have moved, in just one decade, from being an occasional problem in the life of educators to a position of oppressive and ever-present dominance. Each year hundreds of thousands of students are assaulted and the property damage exceeds one half billion dollars. (p. 1)

In an article he wrote for a Chicago newspaper, Kiernan stated that it would be surprising to find even one elementary school in that city that had not been affected to some degree by drugs. Concerned people in many areas of the United States are trying to determine the cause of this escalation in violence and lack of respect for human life and property. Kiernan suggested various reasons for the increase in crime:

. . . breakdown of family control, glamorization of violence on television, drugs, street crime, anonymity of schools and neighborhoods, contempt for the value of personal and public

property, lethargic courts, emphasis on students' rights, teacher apathy and parental indifference. (p. 1)

Della-Dora and House (1974) approached the subject of the breakdown of school authority from a different angle. They contended that the Supreme Court's historic decision in Brown v. Board of Education laid the groundwork for the massive resistance movements of the 1960s. The authors went on to claim that much of the violence and disruption in schools and society during the 1970s was caused by those who wanted a larger share of the power and decision making. In recent years, groups who heretofore have been silent, namely, blacks, Hispanics, women, students, and teachers, have begun to speak out (Della-Dora & House, 1974).

Vast changes in school structure and policy have come about because of the influences of these groups. Teachers have become highly organized and, in some cases, extremely militant; at times, they have engaged in illegal strikes. In attempting to account for teachers' change from passivity to militancy, Della-Dora and House (1974) contended that the rise in teacher power was a response to deteriorating conditions in schools and society.

As one of the many groups concerned about the urban crisis, the National Education Association (1969) appointed a task force to study the situation. This study group was headed by Irvamae Applegate, Dean of the School of Education at St. Cloud State College, St. Cloud, Minnesota. The main purpose of the study was to survey the schools and their problems as they functioned within the urban setting. The motivation behind the project was a desire to

determine the reasons for crime, vandalism, and attacks made on schools by various individuals and groups. One recommendation the task force made, based on the study findings, was that school staffs, students, and parents should participate in defining the goals and objectives of schools and review programs that had been established to accomplish those goals (National Education Association, 1969). The task force believed that if more segments of the community became involved in school operations, some of the pressures on schools would be minimized or even eliminated altogether. The task force also recommended that:

. . . persons within each community who are not involved in the formal educational process but who have special skills, such as mothers, businessmen, industrialists, retired people, electricians, plumbers and others should be included in the on-going educational program. (p. 27)

Kliebard (1970) expressed the philosophy of many educators and laymen regarding the need for schools to be responsive to their communities and to include community members in the schools:

Schools which are responsive to the needs, aspirations and cultural style of the communities they serve stand a greater chance of harnessing the energies of professionals, students, parents and community residents in building a more viable urban social institution. (p. 311)

Television is another force that is engendering far-reaching changes in society and whose influence, both positive and negative, has not yet been adequately measured. There is a growing concern among educators, clergy, and members of other civic groups about the possible negative effects of television viewing on the minds of children and young people.

Rosenblatt and Cunningham (1975) studied 64 families in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to determine the effects of television viewing. They focused mainly on the relationship between family tension and the amount of time a family spent watching television. Major findings that are related to the present study are as follows:

1. In the average American home, the television set was turned on from six to seven hours each day.

2. There was a positive correlation between the amount of time spent watching television and family tension.

3. The amount of television viewing seemed to be a valid indicator of family tension.

Many educators are concerned about the physical and mental condition of children when they come to school. Watching late-night television programs affects a child's sleeping habits and sometimes renders him/her ineffective as a learner.

With regard to the amount of time children spend viewing television, Elaine Stienkemeyer (1985), National PTA President, stated:

Research has found differences between children who are light viewers of TV (one hour or less per day) and heavy viewers (four or more hours per day). Heavy viewers tend to put less effort into school work, have poorer reading skills, don't play as well with friends and have fewer hobbies and activities. (p. 3)

Another change that has greatly affected social institutions, including the schools, is the increasing number of women who are joining the work force. Some reasons for this development are changing values, the current emphasis on individual rights, rising

inflation, the desire for self-fulfillment through pursuing a career, and necessity caused by divorce or death of a spouse (Gattegno, 1969).

Stienkemeyer (1985) stated that women represent 65% of the labor force and that three-fourths of these women are employed because they have no support or must help to sustain their families. Oakes (1987) stated that 25 million children nationwide have mothers who work outside the home for some portion of the day. If current trends continue, 50 million children will have working mothers by 1995.

Many schools are facing unique situations brought about by the increasing numbers of mothers who are now working outside the home. Children of working mothers sometimes come to school early and meet their friends on the school playground, creating a need for supervision. Also, because of work schedules, some mothers are not available for parent-teacher conferences. Many educators are seeking ways to accommodate children and mothers who find themselves in these types of situations.

School boards and educators are searching for solutions to problems resulting from changes in the nature of the population. The mobility of America's population has presented problems for schools. Other subtle changes are taking place, as well, that have far-reaching implications for those involved in school operations. "In 1930 less than 6 percent of the population of the United States was over age 65; 10 percent now is and the figure is going up" (Hostrop, 1973, p. 96). As the birth rate continues to decline and

the percentage of older people rises, the implications for schools are clear. Already, school districts faced with declining enrollments are searching for solutions to the problem of having too many tenured staff members.

Another issue closely related to the increased percentage of older people in society is the attitude of many senior citizens toward school millages. As the number of retirees continues to increase, many people in government and education are concerned that requests for school millages will not pass. In recent years, requests for millage increases for school financing often have been defeated; this has occurred in wealthy, middle-income, and poor communities. Hostrop (1973) explained:

We have failed to realize that now we have a larger population of older persons on fixed incomes. More and more of these senior citizens, when confronted with a vote on an increase in property tax on their home, realize that they are voting for a reduction in their standard of living. (p. 96)

In society today, the extent and rapidity of change is almost overwhelming. Social institutions are constantly feeling the pressures exerted on them by individuals and groups. Hostrop (1973) captured this feeling when he wrote:

So many changes have been taking place in education and society recently that it is not possible to portray comprehensively what these changes are, or what their effect will be upon the participants in the system, much less to identify, with precision, the implications for the future. (p. 94)

Studies of the PTA

McPhee (1949) created a profile of PTA officers in Salt Lake City according to Symond's psychological drives, and Burgard (1940)

investigated characteristics of PTA officers in Pennsylvania in relation to the efficiency of the organization. Neither of these investigators went beyond this select group of parents as officers because the parent component was not their major concern.

Butterworth (1928) investigated the activities, objectives, and organization of 797 local PTAs in nine states but gave percentages only for membership and attendance. He described nonparental membership, percentage of homes with at least one member on the PTA roster, reasons members dropped out as reported by local officers, and methods found useful in arousing and retaining parents' interest in the PTA. Butterworth recommended that it would be worthwhile for each state to secure data concerning the probable factors that influence attendance at PTA meetings. Holbeck (1934) reinforced Butterworth's work but focused on the relationships between the PTA and school administrators.

Only one study was found in which the PTA was examined from the parent's perspective. Jeffries (1965) described his personal experiences as a parent and as an educator with the PTA. He humorously recounted the typical back-to-school nights so often hosted by PTAs in the early fall, and then went on to consider larger philosophical questions concerning the nature of schools and teaching and the practice-art of education itself.

Two studies are considered classics by current PTA administrators, both of which were produced by the organization itself (National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1944; Overstreet

& Overstreet, 1949). Both described the philosophy, background, and structure of the organization, but neither included information about the characteristics of families involved with the PTA. Overstreet and Overstreet, however, did detail the development of the PTA's effort to increase parental involvement with the schools and the organization's call for activity on behalf of parental education.

Other studies regarding the PTA have focused on (a) the relationship between school superintendents and principals and their local PTAs (Batton, 1980; Farley, 1957; Holbeck, 1934; Mason, 1928; Sleight, 1969; Splawn, 1966; Swenson, 1968); (b) activities and goals of the local PTA (Butterworth, 1928; Grebner, 1955; Laderer, 1955; Mills, 1956); (c) the history of the PTA and ideas behind it (Mason, 1928); (d) the historical development of the PTA in particular states (Cangemi, 1965; Miller, 1954); (e) perceptions of the PTA by parents, teachers, and administrators in six schools in Chula Vista, California (Royce, 1975); (f) the influence of the PTA on school policy (Safer, 1972; Sanders, 1973); (g) the PTA and educational problems as perceived by parents and teachers (Howe, 1959); and (h) border maintenance (or "turf protection") of the PTA as compared to similar organizations in Miami, Florida (Garner, 1977).

Batton (1980) asked elementary school principals to rank what they perceived to be the actual and desired activities of the local PTAs in attaining the objectives of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. The highest-ranked actual and desired activities

were: (a) include parents from all social groups, (b) assist in parent volunteer programs, (c) assist teachers in special activities, (d) plan informational meetings, (e) purchase materials and equipment, (f) assist in planning open houses, (g) sponsor "Meet the Teacher" programs, and (h) provide guest speakers. Two activities were included in the ten highest-ranked but were not listed in the ten highest-ranked activities that were actually being conducted. They were: (a) conduct fund-raising projects and (b) conduct programs of home study.

Suomala (1982) investigated the role of the PTA/PTSA in Minnesota school districts by surveying a stratified random sample of elementary school principals and PTA/PTSA presidents. Findings relating to size and location of school districts were as follows: (a) metropolitan PTA units tended to have the largest budgets, (b) both large and metropolitan schools tended to have newsletters, (c) principals in large school districts tended to communicate more often with PTA presidents than did those in small districts, and (d) extracurricular activities tended to be mentioned more frequently in large school districts than in small ones.

Herstek (1985) focused on the formation of a group of parents of handicapped children in three local school districts in western New York state. The group identified themselves as a Special Education Parent Teachers Association. Herstek concluded that these parents banded together as a result of their frustrated efforts to ensure proper placement and/or programs for their handicapped

children. Parents also had experienced the same general lack of sensitivity on the part of administrators, teachers, other parents, and students regarding the nature of specific handicaps.

In a paper presented at the National Association of Social Workers, McGann and Strauss (1986) described a PTA program designed to support children experiencing parental separation and divorce. The purpose of this school-based intervention program was to educate significant adults about the expected responses of children to their parents' separation and divorce. This program consisted of teacher workshops, PTA-sponsored presentations, classroom meetings, and structured groups for children of divorce. Although in-school discussion groups for children of divorce are not unusual, such programs, although useful, seem inadequate if they are conducted in isolation from the rest of the child's environment.

Occasionally, sociological studies with other foci have touched briefly on the PTA and its functions. An example is a study by Gittell (1980). In considering the nature and functions of voluntary organizations, she indicated that the PTAs in Los Angeles and Atlanta communicated with decision makers and played an important part in maintaining information flow, as compared to other citizen groups in those cities. Gittell recognized the PTA as a traditional form of citizen involvement, which is in keeping with the PTA's stated purpose.

The PTA membership was investigated in the 1969 Gallup Poll as part of a larger consideration of attitudes toward education (Gallup, 1969). A modified national probability sample of 1,505

adults was questioned in February 1969. Gallup concluded from his research that 52% of the parents with children in school said they belonged to the PTA or a similar organization; fewer than half of this group said they attended meetings regularly. In the 1969 Gallup Poll, 36% of parents of children in public schools acknowledged attending a PTA meeting. Reasons given for not attending more often or for not joining included the lack of someone to care for children in the home, conflicts with other commitments, the belief that not much is accomplished at PTA meetings and that they are a waste of time, and similar statements. In his summary, Gallup highlighted the need for greater cooperation between parents and school "if the school is to meet its responsibility for the education of the youth of the land" (p. 6). The PTA has been striving for precisely this cooperation.

To summarize, researchers have focused on the history of the PTA, influence of the PTA on school policy, and the relationship between the PTA and school personnel. However, factors that influence parental involvement in PTAs in the Midwestern School District, according to perceptions of elementary school principals and presidents of PTAs in that district, have not been investigated.

Studies of Voluntary Association Membership

The PTA is, by nature, a voluntary association in that parents and others from the community may elect to join and leave the organization at will (Amis & Stern, 1974). The literature on voluntary association membership was reviewed to gain insight into

general trends in membership and participation in organizations. The information on voluntary association membership may be useful in understanding the factors that influence parental participation in the PTA.

Types of Participation

Fundamental differences exist in the dynamics of membership and participation in voluntary associations. Participation may assume membership, whereas membership cannot assume participation. Houghland's (1979) findings suggested the importance of differentiating among levels of participation (i.e., active participation versus membership in name only). He hypothesized that "active participants may be more discriminating about organizational activities than are members in general" (p. 90). Houghland and Christensen (1982) considered three types of participation in their investigation of organizational experience and values: (a) nonmember (respondent reported belonging to none of the types of organizations considered), (b) member in name only (respondent indicated membership but not participation), and (c) active (respondent reported active participation). Whereas most researchers have assessed the number of memberships in voluntary associations, the concern with differentiating among levels of participation was an important consideration for the present study.

Another framework that has been identified and used to differentiate between types or levels of participation is Brager and Sprechert's (1973) four categories: executive (i.e., is a board

member), active (i.e., has first-hand knowledge of programs), occasional (i.e., responds to telephone calls for support), and supportive (i.e., is able to discuss the organization but otherwise takes no action on behalf of the organization). Orr (1982) discussed this framework in her research on volunteers as advocates. Salem (1978) used a combination of hours per month devoted to organizational affairs and attendance at meetings to categorize activity levels as: active (six hours per month and attended most meetings), moderately active (four to five hours per month and attended meetings), and inactive (three hours or less per month and attended less than half the meetings).

The Relationship of Socio-Demographic Characteristics to Parental Participation

Several socio-demographic characteristics have been investigated in terms of their relationship to participation in voluntary organizations. These characteristics have included socioeconomic status with its component factors of education, income, and occupation.

Socioeconomic status, or social-class level, has been defined in a number of ways. Most notably, it has been measured by income, occupation, and/or education. Socioeconomic status has consistently been found to be positively related to voluntary association membership (Axelrod, 1956; Babchuk & Booth, 1969; Edwards & White, 1980; Freeman, Novak, & Reader, 1957; Hausknecht, 1962; Komarovsky, 1946; Lazerwitz, 1962; Scott, 1957; Tomeh, 1967; Wright & Hyman,

1958). Hyman and Wright (1971) hypothesized that "social status perhaps works its influence through altering the routine pressures upon the individual, and thereby facilitates or constrains his entry and activity in voluntary associations" (p. 202). The researchers found, though, that situational factors experienced as a part of daily life (such as hours of paid work, time spent commuting to work, and available spare time) did not have a major or significant effect on voluntary association membership.

Because income, education, and occupation are strongly related to each other, considerations of these variables, individually, generally corroborate findings concerning socioeconomic status. Persons in higher-status occupations are more likely than those in lower-status occupations to belong to voluntary associations (Hyman & Wright, 1971).

Houghland (1979) found, however, that income appeared to be positively related to participation up to a certain level of income. In this investigation of ten categories of voluntary associations, persons with middle incomes had the highest membership and participation levels. Houghland hypothesized that "after a certain income level is reached . . . organizations are apparently not perceived as useful for further status attainment" (p. 90).

Higher levels of education may contribute to voluntary association membership and participation by developing interpersonal and communication skills, which generally accompany educational experience. Salem (1978) found these skills to be positively related to activity levels of members of organizations but also

noted that "although these qualities are more frequently found among the college educated, they do not necessarily follow from that education" (p. 25) and may be related more to previous experience in organizations.

Research regarding the PTA has tended to support the existence of a direct relationship between socioeconomic status and participation. Sanders (1973) found the PTA to be a significant organization in middle-socioeconomic areas around Los Angeles, but not in low-socioeconomic areas. Farley (1957) found a direct relationship between income and interest in the PTA in Kentucky, and Mills (1956) found that income and education were significantly related to participation in the PTA in Chicago.

Research regarding ethnicity and voluntary association membership has yielded conflicting results. Wright and Hyman (1958) found that membership was more characteristic of whites than blacks, but Babchuk and Thomas (1962) found that blacks tended to belong to far more voluntary associations than did whites. However, there were major differences in the methodology and samples of these two studies.

Hausknecht (1962) found that, in general, blacks were not as well represented in voluntary organizations as were whites--with the notable exception of civic and service organizations. Approximately the same percentage of each race claimed membership in these community-based associations. As regards the PTA (which Hausknecht viewed as a civic and service organization), it is important to

recognize that although some PTAs might have had integrated memberships, there was a separate PTA for each racial group between 1926 and 1970. Thus, Hausknecht's findings may indicate that each racial group had similar concerns and interests, even if they were pursued separately. More recent research pertaining to ethnicity and voluntary association membership was not discovered.

No research was found on the relationship of geographical location to either membership or participation in voluntary associations. Give differences in weather, terrain, and population density across the United States, geographic region would seem to be an influential variable in terms of participation. Racial balance also differs geographically and may influence attendance patterns in voluntary organizations. This is another topic that has not yet been investigated.

School Planning and Decision Making

Historically, the American public has had an interest in education and in the development of the public school system. Specifically, most parents have been concerned with their children's educational progress. However, until recently, parental participation has been limited. Interested and willing parents have worked on committees, provided transportation for field trips, brought refreshments for school socials, and assisted in whatever ways the teacher requested. Currently, however, there is a trend toward involving parents in the educational process itself. They

are being encouraged and invited to participate, not only in an advisory capacity, but in planning projects and decision making.

Stanwick (1975) studied people's attitudes toward increased citizen participation in school operations. Her findings were as follows:

1. More than 78% of the respondents predicted an increase in participation. Only 15% predicted a decrease, and 7% were uncertain about the future level of activity.

2. About 69% of the 1,489 respondents to opinion questions believed there was too little citizen participation in schools; less than 2% believed there was too much.

3. Although the actual percentage was not given, a high percentage of the respondents believed that increased citizen participation would have positive results in terms of improved pupil achievement in basic skills, increased community support for schools, higher teacher morale, better teacher performance, and innovations in curriculum and teaching.

From Stanwick's findings, it is evident that citizen participation is not only desirable, but is considered to be highly important in the productive operation of public schools.

Some educators have expressed concern that many citizens are not well enough informed about the wide range of school problems to plan important programs and to make crucial decisions relating to them. Undoubtedly this assertion is true in some cases; consequently, school districts conduct workshops and have developed communication systems to supply parents and teachers with the vital

information they need to make wise and informed decisions. Even with these measures, people sometimes make faulty decisions. In a paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, Moore (1975) suggested: "Greater decision-making authority is being transferred to local schools and the evidence regarding the success of more localized school decision making seems to far outweigh any reports of its failure" (p. 9).

A problem that sometimes arises with citizen participation is that it can degenerate to the rubber-stamp variety. In some instances, citizen groups have been asked to participate in a project, only to find that the planning phase was already under way and that some important decisions had unofficially been made. The need to obtain community endorsement for a project that is funded by federal or state grants is one reason for this situation. According to educators who are making sincere efforts to involve citizens in every phase of a project, it is vitally important to secure input and feedback at every step in the process.

Jongeward (1975) expressed this concern when he advised school personnel who are attempting to involve parents to be certain the school-community group assists with the planning phase, helps install the new program, participates in the monitoring task, and, after a few months, also helps in assessing the progress it has made. He advised that school personnel "try to involve the entire community, students, staff, custodians, secretaries, bus drivers, and other community people so all voices can be heard" (p. 8).

As America has grown, so have the size and complexity of most of its social, political, and educational institutions. Individuals often feel isolated or helpless when it comes to effecting any degree of change in these institutions. Nonetheless, their daily lives are being greatly influenced by those institutions. Many educators have contended that, by involving citizens in all phases of school operations, from planning to final evaluation, the feeling of isolation lessens as citizens realize their voices can be heard and that their judgment is important. In addressing this concern, Moore (1975) declared:

Localizing greater decision-making power in the local school unit provides an effective means for coping with problems presented by organizational structures which transcends the scale at which human beings can deal with them. (p. 18)

In summarizing the literature on planning and decision making, it seems certain that the trend toward citizen participation will continue, if for no other reason than that such participation is necessary to meet state and federal requirements for funding. Funding requirements, however, are not the only reason schools will continue to welcome participation. Citizens, too, will continue to demand some type of accountability, which, it is hoped, will lead to increased participation in all phases of school operations, including planning and decision making. Educators who were skeptical about and felt threatened by citizen involvement have begun to realize that parents often make invaluable contributions in every aspect of school life.

Parental Involvement

In the aftermath of the elementary school curriculum revolution of the 1960s and the exhaustive studies of the learning and teaching processes, parents are now beginning to become actively involved with their children's schools. Unlike the passive and submissive parents of the 1940s and 1950s, the parents of the 1970s have had access to the books of Goodman, Holt, Green and Ryan, Hentoff, Hendon, and Kozol, as well as research by Brunner and Piaget. Not only did these writers share keen insights into the teaching process in the total home-school environment, but they also touched those within the educational system itself (Goetz, 1974).

Wakefield (1984) found that the Salt Lake City (Utah) School District successfully involved the public in school improvement through cooperation with the local PTA. Four main beliefs fostered the school district's collaboration with the PTA: (a) the PTA can provide valuable human resources to public schools, (b) the PTA can participate in the decision-making process, (c) the PTA can make a difference in quality education, and (d) the PTA can positively influence the lives of children. These beliefs allowed the PTA groups within the district to develop innovative school-improvement programs at the elementary school level.

In PTA Today, Granowsky (1984) discussed changing attitudes of educators toward parents' involvement in their children's education, citing examples in the field of reading. Until a decade ago, parents were warned against teaching their children how to read and were told that they should let the teachers teach reading. In the

last decade, however, there has been a complete reversal in this attitude, as witnessed by the following actions: (a) the International Reading Association formed the Parents and Reading Committee to highlight effective ways for parents to help their children learn to read; (b) the Louisiana State Education Agency distributed calendars to parents of elementary school children, outlining reading skills required for each grade level and ways parents could help their children develop these skills; (c) several large-city school districts have developed parent support programs, such as Dallas's Partners in Reading and Houston's Fail Safe Program; and (d) in a five-school survey conducted by World Book-Childcraft in 1983, 100% of the parents and 100% of the teachers strongly agreed that parents should help their children learn to read.

During the past four decades, school personnel and the families they serve have advanced through various phases of parental involvement in the schools. These phases are briefly described in the following paragraphs.

The 1950s. Parents were not encouraged to participate in the decision-making process. The only visible communications between the home and the school were the traditional PTA open houses and fund raisers. In essence, parents were allowed to engage in particular roles in the schools, but decision making was left to the professionals.

The 1960s. Plagued by criticism, school personnel were more inclined to open the school doors to parents, but the prevailing message was, "Come in and see us!"

The 1970s. Parents and school personnel were on the brink of establishing an educational partnership. Not only were parents coming into the schools, by invitation or invasion, but some districts were establishing home-school programs building on the strengths of both teachers and parents. The new message was, "If you're coming in, you're going to help!"

The 1980s. The role that parents seek, whether primarily as support givers or as participants in decision making, often determines how welcome schools make these parents feel. This current phase, which may eventually epitomize effective home-school relations, has its share of unique problems that will require new solutions. School personnel and parents will have to deal with (a) home-school communications; (b) the role of parents in the school; (c) parental relationships with school personnel; (d) the home, the school, and the child; and (e) parents as human resources in the classroom (Goetz, 1974).

The PTA as a Pressure Group

Since the early 1900s, the most widely recognized school-oriented pressure group has been the PTA. Overstreet and Overstreet (1972) described the formation of this mother's group:

In 1897, before the first national convention of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers was held, one of the founders, Alice Birney said, "If only 50 mothers come, I shall be satisfied. Yes, even if only 25 are there." (p. 10)

From this meager beginning, the PTA spread across America as the single link between the schools and the families they served. The objectives of the National Council of Parents and Teachers were:

1. To promote the welfare of children and youths in home, school, church, and community.
2. To raise the standards of home life.
3. To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youths.
4. To bring into closer relationship the home and the school, so that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child.
5. To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for every child the greatest advantages in physical, mental, social, and physical education.

During the 1940s and 1950s, membership in the PTA continued to increase; it crested during the 1960s. Characterizing the PTA as the meeting place for parents and teachers, Bartky (1965) wrote:

The National Congress of Parents and Teachers is a huge organization with more than 40,000 locals and over 11,000,000 members. This organization had a unique beginning, developing out of groups of mothers who supported the kindergarten movement. (p. 286)

Until the 1970s, the PTA was primarily a parent-teacher social organization that supported schools as they were. Although the National Parent-Teacher, the monthly magazine of the PTA, contained articles about the development and growth of children, the nature of educational programs, and ways to improve the effectiveness of local

organizations, the magazine avoided any language that might make school personnel feel threatened.

As a support organization, the PTA is not a change agent in the schools. Disgruntled about the role of the PTA in most schools, Mok (1965) stated:

Too often PTA programs have been conceived along lines similar to the program of young women's clubs: primarily as entertainment, secondarily as an uplifting face and incidentally as educational stuff in the broadest sense of the term. A rousing talk on the mating habits of the tsetse fly is educational, but educational to whom and for what?

Is such a liaison intended as a token of harmony? If such is the case, then social teas, entertaining lectures and free-floating group association hours are defensible. If, on the other hand, the goals of such a liaison are more effective communications, cooperative framing of an effective school philosophy, curriculum evaluations, discussions of classroom teaching methods and ways parents can help children learn at home, improvement of teaching, testing, reporting and conferencing, then the social teas and expert lectures on virtue must be eliminated. (p. 130)

Faced with a rapidly declining membership, the PTA has attempted to regroup and become a prime moving force in education. It may well be that the effort to attain this new image has come too late. Saxe (1975) noted, "If anything, the move to a more aggressive role is a bit tardy for the P.T.A., which has lost more than 3 million members since 1963" (p. 60).

Manya Ungar (1987), President of the National PTA, explained that:

Existing PTAs need to find ways to listen to them [parents], then offer suggestions, support and help. Many parents are intimidated by the schools and organizations like ours, so the PTA must actively reach out to them.

Many parents don't feel a sense of control over their children's education. . . . Once they deliver their children to the kindergarten door, either they're happy to let someone else take over or they're unaware or afraid to ask questions. If

they have a problem, they either avoid it--or worse--let it fester, which leads to antagonism. They don't know how to work within the system or influence the decisions. (p. 3)

The National PTA stated, "As National President, Manya [Ungar] would like to focus on several areas that she finds especially important. A main focus is 'at-risk' children" (Ungar, 1987, p. 3). Ungar amplified on this focus:

I don't mean just inner-city poor children, although we certainly need to reach out to help them. But I'm also concerned about other children--for instance, those who aren't immunized properly, or those who--because of where they live, such as in rural areas--don't receive a comprehensive education, or those whose parents aren't able to obtain the kinds of services and attention their children need. (p. 3)

Summary

This chapter contained a review of literature related to the study. The first section pertained to societal changes that have occurred during the last few decades, which have a direct bearing on the topic under consideration. Studies of the PTA were reviewed next. Voluntary association membership was the focus of the third section. The discussion concerned various aspects of voluntary participation and parental involvement, as well as the PTA as a school-oriented pressure group.

CHAPTER III

THE PTA IN THE MIDWESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter contains two major sections. The first is a description of the establishment and functioning of the PTA in the Midwestern School District. The second major section contains an explanation of the methodology used in conducting this study. Included are descriptions of the population and sample, the research hypotheses, development of the survey instrument, and data-collection and data-analysis procedures.

The PTA in the Midwestern School District

Introduction

Major features of the PTA are discussed in this section to acquaint the reader with those features and to assist in understanding the basic philosophy of the PTA and the role it has played in the Midwestern School District. The information for this description was gathered from several sources, including the National PTA Handbook, the Midwestern School District's Goal Statements and Areas of Focus, and the District's Final Evaluation Report for Categorical Programs. Interviews with the superintendent and evaluation personnel of the district and the elementary school

principals and PTA presidents also supplied valuable information. Local PTA officers, past and present, and the current state PTA president also provided useful data.

History of the PTA

In the American educational system, parents often have played a passive, "come, see and listen" role. As public education developed and was made mandatory throughout the United States, parents' interest in their children's education also increased, but the role of the parent remained basically that of an observer rather than a participant. This is not to say that citizens played no part in the formal education of their children; they did, but their efforts were somewhat limited.

Until recently, teachers, too, played a lesser role in the total educational program beyond the confines of the individual classroom or school. The administrative hierarchy, along with the local school board operating within guidelines set by the federal government and the state board of education, was responsible for making policies and decisions that guided the everyday operation of the local school system. Teachers were invited to serve on various committees, but their involvement in the wide range of school operations was limited. Even though participation under these conditions was minimal, it was a move in a new direction. Whether or not teachers were prepared for it, they were being given an opportunity to participate on a wider scale in the planning and decision-making phases of school operations.

Realizing the need to participate to some degree in school affairs, citizens established the organization commonly known as the Parent-Teachers Association or the PTA. The PTA is a broadly based organization whose structure not only embraces the local community but extends to the state and national levels, as well. Over the years, the PTA has had a great influence on education. Through coordinated organizational efforts, it has effected changes in childhood legislation, safety and health programs, school finance, and home-school relationships, to name just a few.

Five years ago, the Midwestern School District recognized a need to establish PTAs in the local elementary and secondary schools. The PTAs' primary focus was to oversee parental participation in the local schools.

Structure of the PTA

The sizes of PTAs vary considerably, depending on many factors such as size of school, level of interest, and range and magnitude of issues being considered. When a particular PTA becomes so large that individual participation is hampered, it is recommended that members break into small discussion groups. Input from all members is greatly desired and freely encouraged.

More important than size, however, is representation. The Midwestern School District recommends and encourages the recruitment of members from all sectors of the community. Although, theoretically, any person living in the school attendance area can become a member of the PTA, during membership drives consideration

is given to balancing the membership according to such factors as ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, educational level, and occupation. Much emphasis is placed on representation. Securing neighborhood representatives' input and consensus on many issues is considered to be of prime importance. It is believed that, to function as a viable organization in schools, the PTA must represent the entire neighborhood as closely as possible.

PTA membership comprises principals, teachers, parents, and any other persons willing to purchase a membership. New members are secured by active recruitment and appointments, as well as by people asking to join. Each PTA decides on when and how often it will meet and elects its own officers. People are notified of meetings by means of letters, telephone calls, memos sent home with students, and personal invitations.

Functions of the PTA

In keeping with PTA objectives, the Midwestern School District PTAs have been active participants in sundry activities related to the school and community. The following discussion, although by no means exhaustive, covers some of these major endeavors.

Planning. In an evaluation report on the Article III program in the Midwestern School District, the following statement is made: "Parent input at the building level is solicited through the PTA. Ideally, the parents are involved in setting goals, planning, monitoring and evaluating programs" (Midwestern School District, 1988, p. 19). Planning, of course, covers a wide range of problems

and issues. The following is a brief discussion of the general areas in which the PTA has significant input into the planning process.

1. Curriculum. Many educators used to believe that citizens could assist the schools only in limited areas and that the real planning and implementing of curriculum matters should be left to professional educators. This philosophy may have had some merit in the past, but most educators no longer subscribe to it.

School staffs are finding that many persons in their PTAs possess talents and expertise that can be used to enrich the school program. The Midwestern School District holds the views and ideas of the school constituents in high regard. To provide a background for planning, PTAs have found that parents often need to be informed about curriculum matters. Sometimes teachers and administrators, too, lack specific information. When this occurs, a workshop may be planned and a specialist invited to speak to the group. As ideas are shared, participants gain a deeper insight into the problems and are better prepared to plan and make decisions.

The importance of parental participation in curriculum planning cannot be overemphasized. For the last two decades, many items have been added to elementary school programs, but few deletions have been made. In many instances, the school day is so filled with required programs that there is little time for electives and special projects. Hence, the PTA has needed to play an increasingly important role in assisting with planning curricula and setting curriculum priorities.

2. Budgeting and fund raising. One of the major concerns among citizens today is the burden of increasing taxation and how their tax dollars are being spent. People have expressed this concern in many ways, including voting negatively on school millage requests.

The Midwestern School District has adopted and implemented the administrative plan of building autonomy. This means that, in most instances, monies from state-aid allotments, local school taxes, county taxes, and federally and state funded special projects are allocated to each building on a per-pupil basis. A staff committee, along with the principal, oversees the building project. It is believed that, by using this system for setting budget priorities, the staff has more of a voice in determining how the monies are being spent. PTA input and feedback are solicited when the long-range budget is being planned. "As we project our needs, programs, budget and facility uses for the next five years, such planning at each school must involve the building Steering Committee which may contain teachers and PTA members" (Midwestern School District, 1985-86).

3. Use of school facilities. The day is rapidly disappearing when school buildings are used only during school hours and occasionally for a community social function. Community leaders and educators realize it is not economically sound or wise to let school buildings stand idle during hours when they could be used beyond the normal school day. In the Midwestern School District there is a

trend toward more neighborhood use of the school building; this has given rise to scheduling and supervision problems. Various groups schedule recreational, sports, educational, and religious activities after school, during the evening, on Saturdays, and even on Sundays. Citizens of all ages are viewing the school as a center of community activity. This trend in the Midwestern School District has resulted in an almost continuous use of some school buildings by the community. A close monitoring of the entire program has become necessary, in order to accommodate as much of the neighborhood as possible. An employee in the school rental office of the Midwestern School District commented to the researcher on this problem:

As greater involvement in the total school program becomes prevalent, so will the demand for facilities. We witnessed the extension of community school coordinators on an area or school basis for the further development of programs for students, adults, and families. Because of funding, this position was eliminated. Perhaps we may want to reconsider community school coordinators, as we continue the philosophy that the school exists for community use.

Although the PTA is not responsible for planning and scheduling all after-school and weekend activities, it has provided much assistance and support in this area.

Decision making. As decentralization of schools took place within the Midwestern School District, it became necessary to restructure the decision-making process. Previously, decision making had been primarily an administrative function. With the diffusion and sharing of control, community members had to make an organized effort to exercise this new power constructively and productively. Regarding this problem, Candoli (1973) wrote, "We

must develop a mechanism for direct participation of the community in order to have appropriate information on which to base programmatic decisions" (p. 1).

Several school groups resisted community participation in decision making. Some believed that professional educators could make important curriculum, program, and budgeting decisions much more efficiently and quickly than community members. Others contended that to make intelligent decisions concerning educational matters required some degree of training and that most persons outside the field of education lacked the expertise necessary to make such decisions. The National PTA Handbook (1987) states, "Teachers and community members need to be furnished some vital facts concerning their school" (p. 1). This statement indicates the National PTA's awareness of the need to disseminate relevant information to community members so that intelligent decisions can be made.

Consequently, the Midwestern School District established PTAs that would bring both parents and nonparents into the decision-making area. In commenting on this action in the Midwestern School District's (1985-86) Goal Statement and Areas of Focus report, one writer stated, "The PTA process provides a forum for parents' expression at the local school level, and decisions within a school are to be made on a consensus basis" (p. 8).

In informal discussions with PTA leaders and individual members, the researcher noticed that the prevailing attitude seemed to be that schools would benefit as parents shared the

responsibility for decision making. Thus, an integral part of the Midwestern School District's philosophy of education, which is built into the PTAs, is the concept of shared responsibility for decision making.

Coupled with this philosophy is the belief that each local school PTA has vast human resources that, if tapped, can enrich the school program. To draw on these resources would necessitate a level of cooperation that, in most cases, previously did not exist. Bringing about this kind of cooperation would involve an investigation of resources and a comprehensive planning program, often leading to making critical decisions. The responsibility for these decisions would now be shared by administrators, teachers, and interested citizens.

Needs assessment. For decades, parents were informed by school administrators and staff about the needs of their children; parents had little to say, however, about the nature of these needs. This is not meant to imply that parents never voiced their opinions in school matters. Many parents did make substantial contributions in other ways, but little effort was made to include them in a continuous and systematic appraisal of school needs.

In the mid-1970s, recognizing that high priority must be given to involving representatives from the total community in assessing school needs, the Midwestern School District began to search for a model that would provide for this kind of involvement. After reviewing and studying needs assessment models from several school

systems, it was decided that a new model should be planned and constructed by Midwestern School people that would fit the community as closely as possible.

In keeping with this goal and operating within the guidelines of the Midwestern School District Board of Education, PTAs from several schools were asked to investigate the problem. The outcome of these study groups was the needs assessment model described in the following pages. The recommendations of these committees were edited and summarized in a bulletin entitled Needs Assessment: Midwestern Model (Midwestern School District, 1975b). The preface of this bulletin states, "The needs assessment program you read about here can truly be called a Midwestern Needs Assessment as the entire procedure was devised, constructed, reviewed, and revised by Midwestern personnel" (p. iii).

What is needs assessment? Needs assessment has been defined in various ways, but most of these definitions complement one another. In their handbook, the Flint (Michigan) Community Schools (1975) defined needs assessment as "a method of looking at your community, comparing what you learn about it with what you want the community to be and then making decisions for future action based on this comparison" (p. 6).

The Midwestern School District (1975b) model defines needs assessment in a somewhat different, though not unrelated, manner:

Needs assessment is a child-oriented systematic approach to educational planning that allows teachers, parents and administrators to select which objectives are sufficiently important so as to be included in their school plans. (p. 1)

The primary function of the Midwestern model is to involve parents, teachers, administrators, and other interested citizens in identifying problem areas and educational needs that exist in the school program. It has been found that arriving at consensus regarding school problems and needs is not easy. Suggestions are often conflicting, and resolving these conflicts is a delicate operation. Notwithstanding, the Midwestern School District firmly believes that the educational process will be greatly enhanced as citizens become involved in determining needs and setting priorities regarding school operations.

The Midwestern School District's Needs Assessment Model. Midwestern's needs assessment model is not complex. In developing the model, care was taken to build in flexibility so that it would be adaptable to different schools and neighborhoods. The components of the model are as follows:

1. Develop needs assessment interest groups: parents, teachers, administrators, students.
2. A presentation is made to the needs assessment group of all pertinent information regarding the status of the ongoing school program.
3. Each group ranks and orders goals to determine priorities.
4. On a checklist, needs assessment group members determine the current status of the school program in relation to each of the competencies. This determines the school needs.

5. Teachers and administrators then determine an educational action plan based on the status of existing programs in relation to goals for those programs.

6. Each building develops school and classroom strategies to accomplish the educational action plan.

7. Each teacher develops a classroom plan for the year to determine supplies, materials, and resources necessary. These classroom plans should not be confused with lesson plans. Rather, they should state briefly how the teacher anticipates handling the school needs within her/his classroom.

8. All suggestions in Steps 5 and 6 are submitted to the PTA for information.

9. Copies of school and classroom plans are sent to the Midwestern Planning Department for approval.

The Midwestern School District believes that the needs assessment model has greatly facilitated school planning and operations in all phases of the school endeavor. Persons of diverse backgrounds, many of them with extensive experience in their fields, worked together to develop this needs assessment program. Although the model has some common principles that would meet the requirements of all schools in the Midwestern district, it has enough flexibility to be adaptable to unique school situations. Undoubtedly, this model has some shortcomings that will be identified and alleviated, especially as the school district gains more experience in using it. The district does, however, believe that the model has the following advantages:

1. It offers a unified approach to handling schoolwide planning. By using a needs assessment model, teachers and staff members are made aware of the needs that are most important to the school community as a whole and work together to address those needs.

2. It encourages communication between and among teachers. With all teachers working together on certain needs, communication in the form of sharing materials, ideas, and resources is greatly enhanced.

3. It encourages increased community involvement and awareness. Needs assessment encourages all segments of the school community to become involved in determining the priorities of their school.

4. It allows for more efficient budgeting. Once the school needs are identified, budget allocations can be established to reduce these needs; therefore, a more structured and educationally justified budget can be prepared. The resulting budget will reflect expenditures consistent with the needs of the school.

This needs assessment program has been operating in the Midwestern schools for more than 12 years. Many of those who participate in the needs assessment believe it is of considerable value in producing information that is helpful to staff members in planning school programs.

Evaluation. Evaluation is an important function of the PTA and comprises three primary activities. First, the PTA constantly monitors its own operations. The agenda for each meeting is

carefully examined with the view of dealing with items according to priority. Attendance records are also examined to determine what portion of the total school population is represented.

Second, the PTA plays an important role in helping the school evaluate its total operations. Workshops are held to acquaint parents with different aspects of the school program so that they will be better qualified to make intelligent observations and recommendations. Parental interest, cooperation, and input relating to any phase of school operations is not only highly valued by the Midwestern School District; it is encouraged. School district and PTA personnel believe that schools become much better learning centers for children when parents participate in all areas of school life. The PTA, therefore, stands ready to assist the school in evaluating programs, materials, budgets, strategies, and any other item the school may be considering.

Third, the PTA helps schools study and evaluate programs or problems of mutual concern to the schools and the community. The philosophy of the Midwestern Schools is that the school and parents do not function independently or in isolation, but are closely related; therefore, school projects are of great concern to the school because those projects do influence the effectiveness with which the school serves children.

Defining issues. Communities sometimes find it difficult to define an issue or to determine its severity. When an undesirable situation occurs, a decision must be made as to whether it is a temporary condition or one that could develop into a serious school

problem. Many difficulties are resolved without a need for special community action, whereas some persist and become increasingly aggravating. It is not uncommon for schools to receive calls from concerned citizens relating to problematic incidents. When such a situation occurs, the PTA can be of great assistance in defining the issue, as well as in seeking and recommending a solution.

One such incident happened recently in a suburban neighborhood in the Midwestern District, which may serve to illustrate the PTA's role in defining issues. The school district superintendent announced that he was moving an elementary school principal from one school to another to "promote his professional growth and to give him wider work experience." However, after the principal's transfer was announced, the school's PTA mobilized in protest; it organized a letter-writing and telephone campaign to keep their principal. PTA members thought their principal should not be transferred because he had been at the school only two years, and they liked the tone and direction he had set for the school.

In elementary schools in particular, the PTA believes it is crucial that principals not be transferred every two years. If principals are moved every two years, a typical elementary school student would have four principals between kindergarten and sixth grade. There is little hope of the principal's getting to know the children, let alone the parents, before changing schools. As a result of the PTA's action in this instance, the superintendent reconsidered his decision and let the principal remain at the

elementary school for at least another year. In this case, both sides won.

Developing a school discipline code. Schools across the nation have been plagued with numerous discipline problems; such problems are occurring with greater frequency than ever before and often defy solution. Principals, teachers, and community leaders have searched for disciplinary procedures that are fair to all concerned and that will also make the schools safe for all students.

The recent court emphasis on individual rights has had far-reaching implications in the area of school discipline. All too often there appears to be a conflict among students' rights, parents' rights, and teachers' rights. In many instances, this conflict has left the school in the unenviable position of attempting to function in a situation where some important roles are not clearly defined.

PTAs have been called upon to help schools define roles and establish a discipline code that is workable and fair. Working within the guidelines set by the board of education and state laws, PTAs in the Midwestern School District have assisted individual schools in developing practical and just discipline codes. If alterations in the present codes are required, the PTAs undoubtedly will be called on to assist with the study and revision process.

Specially funded projects. With increasing frequency, federal and state governments are mandating parental participation in the planning and decision-making phases of specially funded educational projects. Chapter I and Article III are examples of a project

requiring community input. The final evaluation report submitted by the evaluation office of the Midwestern Schools contains the following statement:

The role of the PTA needs to be strengthened via more recruitment of a cross-section of community members. This has been a concern of principals, Advisory Committee members, and Health Education and Welfare officers. In-service for PTA members is also recommended, since in order to give adequate input, parents must understand budgeting, test score interpretation, and evaluation criteria. (Midwestern School District, 1975a, p. 12)

To have its individual categorical budget approved, each school is required to file a sign-off form, which indicates to categorical authorities that citizens did participate in the planning phase of budgeting for the project. Each school in the Midwestern District that received Article III funding for special programs did have a parent-involvement component, and each school did provide documentation as to the PTA's review of the budget.

The Article III program of the State Compensatory Education Act also mandates parental input as a criterion for continued funding. Article III can be defined as a multiyear performance contract between the school district and the Michigan Department of Education, through which the district can earn dollars per pupil for student growth in reading and math. Individual schools within a district can elect to participate in this program if they meet the requirements.

The degree and type of parental participation/involvement in this program varied considerably among schools in the district. In many instances, parents and senior citizen volunteers involved in

tutoring pupils in math and reading and made substantial contributions. In other cases, citizen input was minimal and appeared to be designed to meet state requirements rather than actually to contribute to the effectiveness of the program.

Summary. In summarizing this discussion of functions of the PTA, it is important to mention that each PTA is tailored to meet the needs of an individual school. Although PTAs have some commonalities in structure and function, flexibility is the key descriptor. Some activities of individual PTAs in the Midwestern School District are as follows:

1. Helped plan school budgets.
2. Worked with senior citizens.
3. Arranged to help patrol the school area.
4. Organized hobby projects for Friday evenings--carpentry shop, knitting, basketball, and so on--taught by parents and teachers.
5. Visited the district's Academic Interest Center.
6. Produced a Christmas recipe book for members of the PTA.
7. Helped make decisions on departmental study.
8. Assisted with the Bucket Brigade--a group of volunteer tutors.
9. Assisted with a school-site study.
10. Helped find resource people for Multiethnic Awareness.
11. Helped prepare the community newsletter.
12. Was involved in the community-school evening program.

13. Scheduled discussion sessions on school safety.
14. Worked on the school discipline code.
15. Met with school board members.
16. Assisted with reading concerns.

Rationale for the Midwestern School District PTA

The events and conditions that gave rise to the development of the PTA in the Midwestern School District, as well as similar organizations in school districts across the nation, are discussed in this section. The discussion is intended to be illustrative, rather than exhaustive. Some of these conditions were touched on in the review of related literature.

Societal demand for involvement. In the last two decades, Americans have become disenchanted with many of their social institutions. This feeling of disenchantment expressed by individuals and groups has taken many forms, ranging from passive withdrawal from society to destructive rioting in the streets. The complexity and size of many institutions such as government, industry, business, education, and even religion have created a feeling of remoteness in many people. As these institutions intimately affected the lives of citizens, many people began to feel helpless in exercising control over their own destinies.

For a while, a smoldering discontent was discernible in various groups throughout the country. Out of this fermentation came several types of attacks on established institutions, civil disobedience being one of them. Civil rights marches challenging

segregated public facilities became a common and almost daily occurrence. At the other extreme, militant groups demanded that many changes be made. Resisting military service was another way of expressing dissatisfaction with the government, which to resisters symbolized an external authority exerting control over their lives. The 1960s were especially traumatic as pressure was being applied to many different segments of American society. These demands for change often were conflicting and sometimes impossible to implement.

As dissatisfaction with public institutions continued, the focus of many individuals and groups turned toward the public schools, which often became the scapegoats of public resentment. Nationwide, many phases of school operations came under attack. The curriculum was judged to be archaic, the orientation was middle class, minority and poor children were neglected, hiring procedures favored whites, and the distribution of monies was unequal. Schools that, before this attack, had been relatively calm and their operations routine were not prepared to deal effectively with these problems. Confrontations and clashes of ideologies were frequent; these clashes often created problems with new dimensions for many school boards and educators. A careful and objective evaluation of these conditions undoubtedly would reveal both positive and negative aspects. Regardless, some real problems had arisen that demanded the immediate attention of community and educational leaders.

Reactions by school leaders varied tremendously, from stubborn defensiveness to objective evaluation. Forward-looking men and women sensed that the winds of change were beginning to blow. No longer would people be satisfied with dictatorial policies of large institutions. Now they were asking for a voice in deciding critical issues. Some educators began to recognize and acknowledge the need to involve citizens more intimately in the educational process. Some even contended that, if parents were more involved in the schools, they would be more likely to support the schools in constructive ways.

The PTA. The PTA has been functioning in American public schools for many decades and has made important contributions. The association has been responsible for developing and implementing many worthwhile programs at the local level, while influencing legislation beneficial to schools at the state and national levels.

Many school districts are searching for strong citizens' organizations capable of assisting them in a variety of ways. The PTA as it exists structurally--that is, local, state, and national in scope--is such an organization. "The PTA functions as a broadly based organization affiliated in both program and purpose with a structure that is community-wide, state and national in scope" (National PTA, 1987, p. 3). That is, the PTA deals with a range of local to national concerns.

The PTA has been sufficiently flexible to operate effectively in most situations; the potentiality for broad change seems certain. Major revisions and adjustments in the PTA's structure, goals, and

mode of operation have not been needed for the association to become effective in meeting current school-neighborhood needs. Consequently, when crisis situations have arisen in schools, some educators and community leaders have begun to realize that the PTA can provide a great deal of assistance. On occasion, PTAs have appointed special committees to deal with specific local problem, and these efforts have been successful.

The PTA's operations traditionally have been in areas that would attract persons from all segments of the neighborhood. Membership drives and calls for participation have frequently fallen short of the desired goal. All too often, just a few interested parents have formed the core of the organization; others attended meetings only when an event of particular interest was on the program. The Midwestern Schools have found that people usually attend meetings when events of interest are to be presented and when school needs and their solutions are to be discussed.

Schools today require an organization that can focus primarily on issues affecting their immediate vicinity. However, no school exists in isolation; there is a relatedness among them. Also, schools have many common needs and should seek ways to cooperate in finding solutions. Often, however, individual schools have a unique combination of characteristics that give rise to specific needs. It is here that an organization such as the PTA can serve its school by focusing attention on these needs with the intention of finding solutions to them.

The PTA might have taken actions that would meet the demands for new kinds of involvement voiced by communities across the nation. Local PTA groups might have organized new committees and commissioned them with the responsibility of meeting these particular needs. As mentioned before, the PTA as an organization has the flexibility to function in this capacity. It also is designed to limit its focus for extended periods to local situations.

Decentralization of schools. Before schools were decentralized, most planning, decision-making, and evaluation responsibilities rested in the hands of central-office administrators. The superintendent and his staff made most of the strategic decisions; bulletins and directives were sent to teachers and other staff members, explaining the decisions. As decentralization became policy, the need for a viable school-community organization, created and designed to function in a planning, decision-making, and evaluation capacity, was becoming evident.

Under the traditional, highly centralized educational system, information usually flowed one way. Decisions made at the top began their downward flow and filtered through various individuals and groups until all were informed. These decisions would eventually reach teachers, custodial personnel, and/or other staff members who were to implement them. Sometimes, to give the situation a semblance of democracy, committees were appointed to discuss and make recommendations, but most major decisions were made at the top.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, many of the discussions in college classes on school administration centered on the advantages and disadvantages of democratic versus autocratic school administration. In the 1970s, however, the situation called for a constant and smoother flow of information in a more cyclic fashion. It was highly important that PTAs be given relevant information so they could evaluate and offer suggestions before decisions were made or consensus reached.

Unique characteristics of individual school neighborhoods.

Although America's population has tended to be mobile, people who moved often established their new residences among persons of similar ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The complexion of these neighborhoods changed very little through the years. Recently, however, conditions have greatly altered. Federal legislation and court interpretations have laid the groundwork for extensive changes in many aspects of community life.

First, the courts ordered the desegregation of public facilities. In many areas of the country, this mandate had a traumatic effect. It brought together persons of diverse backgrounds into situations that before had rarely existed. This small beginning burgeoned into gigantic civil rights marches whose influence is still being felt. The desegregation of public facilities created new problems and needs for neighborhoods; consequently, new methods were sought to cope with those problems.

Second, court-ordered desegregation of public schools became the law of the land, even though total compliance has not yet been achieved in many parts of the country. As black, white, and Chicano children climbed on buses and rode to schools outside their own neighborhoods, many problems were created that required immediate attention. Tempers flared, emotions were aroused, and people became incensed about the situation. Schools sought ways to handle the unique set of problems that heretofore had not been encountered. Parents of all children were deeply concerned about the turn of events and wondered what could be done to alleviate the situation.

Concerned community leaders and educators came to realize that it would take a cooperative effort to find solutions to these problems. No longer could decisions be made by one or two persons acting unilaterally. The opinions of all people whose lives were being affected would need to be considered. This called for a new type of cooperative participation, a kind that would make it possible for every person involved to discuss, plan, decide, and evaluate the problems and to arrive at consensus regarding actions to take.

Third, open-housing laws resulted in changes in neighborhoods, which also created new problems that communities had to face. These laws enabled low-income people of any culture or race to secure housing in areas previously closed to them because they lacked sufficient income.

As people began to take advantage of the opportunities these new laws afforded them, the complexion of neighborhoods began to

change. Many neighborhoods experienced an influx of people of diverse backgrounds, ethnic origins, and socioeconomic levels. These individuals, unique in themselves, brought to their new communities problems and needs that, when added to those already present, created a new combination of challenges for the community.

Educators in many cases were unprepared to meet these challenges. Not only were school staffs unprepared to deal with these new problems, but the curriculum and school programs often were not geared to meet the needs of these unique groups of students.

Need for better school and neighborhood communication. As communities and schools began to experience the effects of these changes, it became evident to leaders and educators that, to meet the challenges, a different approach would be necessary; an approach that would involve all segments of the neighborhood seemed essential. Many communities found that organizations that had served in a satisfactory manner until that time were unable to meet the demands of these new conditions. School districts in all parts of the country began to seek measures to cope with these problems. Research projects, pilot programs, and various kinds of experimentation led to the development of many different models of parental involvement, each of which was designed to meet local needs.

Summary

This discussion of the rationale for mandating the PTA was intended to help the reader gain a clearer understanding of the need for such an organization, as well as its function in the Midwestern School District. Many educators and leaders believe that as people from different backgrounds move into a neighborhood they bring not only new needs and problems, but also the talents, expertise, and resources that, if harnessed and used, will enable them to find workable solutions to those problems.

Methodology of the Study

The research methodology and procedures are explained in this section. The population and sample are described, construction of the survey instrument is discussed, the hypotheses are stated, and the data-collection methods and data-analysis procedures are delineated.

The Population

The population for this study included all 33 elementary schools in the Midwestern School District. Five years ago, the district mandated that each of these schools establish a PTA whose members would include parents, community persons, the principal, and teachers. In some Midwestern schools, the PTAs have been operating for a long time; in others, PTAs have been functioning for about five years.

Theoretically, any adult can become a member of a PTA. The only requirement is that the person purchase a membership in the

association. When the PTAs were first established, there was little busing of children from their neighborhood schools; therefore, most parents had little difficulty attending PTA meetings. Now that the Midwestern schools have adopted and implemented busing, parents of bused children sometimes must travel farther to their children's schools for a meeting. Some parents belong to more than one PTA, particularly if they have children in the elementary, middle, and senior high schools.

The Study Sample

PTA presidents and principals of the 33 elementary schools in the Midwestern School District were included in the study sample ($N = 66$). An important factor regarding the sample was that a similar proportion of principals and PTA presidents be represented in the sample as they would be in a given PTA. Because of the design of the organization, the researcher decided to survey the PTA president and principal from each school.

A minor problem in selecting each building for the sample was to secure the cooperation of the principals and PTA presidents, whose participation would be voluntary. The researcher sent each potential participant a letter, explaining the purpose of the study and requesting that they complete the survey instrument (see Appendix A). Participants were assured that their responses would remain completely confidential. PTA presidents and elementary principals from all 33 schools agreed to participate.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the statistical analysis of the data gathered for this study:

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant difference between high-socioeconomic-status (high-SES) schools and low-socioeconomic-status (low-SES) schools in terms of parent involvement in the PTA.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant difference between "neighborhood" schools and "bused" schools in terms of parent involvement in the PTA.

Hypothesis 3: A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals will rate the PTA as the most important communication link between the school and the home.

Hypothesis 4: A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals will believe that the PTA participates effectively in the planning phase of school operations.

Hypothesis 5: A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals will believe that the PTA participates effectively in making final decisions regarding school issues, represents parents in the needs-assessment process, and usually finds satisfactory solutions to school/neighborhood problems.

Development of the Survey Instrument

The researcher constructed a survey instrument with which to gather information vital to the study. Seven principals, three university professors, and two evaluation service personnel reviewed the initial draft of the survey. After conferring with some of these individuals and others who are knowledgeable about testing, the researcher revised the instrument. When the revision was completed, evaluation services personnel and the writer's dissertation advisor again reviewed the instrument. Two forms of the instrument were prepared, one for PTA presidents and the other

for principals. (See Appendix B for the final versions of the instruments.)

The first part of each questionnaire was designed to elicit general information about the school and the PTA. The remainder of the survey contained questions concerning the respondents' perceptions about the PTA. Selected questions were designed to yield information with which to answer the five hypotheses that had been formulated for this investigation.

Data Collection

Two methods were used to gather data for the study. A questionnaire was used in surveying PTA presidents and principals from the 33 elementary schools in the Midwestern School District. In addition, personal interviews were conducted with principals and parents from high-SES and low-SES schools.

The questionnaire. The survey was administered to the 33 elementary school principals and their PTA presidents. Most of the questionnaires were distributed at a meeting of the Midwestern District's elementary principals; others were sent by courier service or U.S. mail, and some were hand carried to the schools. After waiting several days for responses, the researcher telephoned people who had not returned their surveys. This follow-up resulted in a total return of 100%.

The interviews. The researcher conducted interviews with principals and parents from high-SES schools and low-SES schools-- five principals and three parents from each group (N = 16). These

interviews were conducted to amplify the data collected through the questionnaire and to seek parents' ideas regarding the PTA.

Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of respondents. During the interview, a conversational approach was used to make the respondent feel more comfortable about volunteering information. Some information was recorded during the interviews; the researcher made additional notes immediately after the interviews. All respondents were assured that their comments would be kept strictly confidential.

Data-Analysis Procedures

The chi-square procedure was used in analyzing the data for Hypotheses 1 and 2. The .01 alpha level was established as the criterion for significance. Frequencies and condscriptive statistics were used in analyzing the data for Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5.

Summary

This chapter began with a description of the establishment and functioning of the PTA in the Midwestern School District. This discussion was followed by an explanation of the methodology used in conducting the study. Included were descriptions of the population and sample, the research hypotheses, development of the survey instrument, and data-collection and data-analysis procedures. The results of the hypothesis tests and of the interviews are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The results of the data analyses conducted for this research are presented in this chapter. In the following pages, each hypothesis is restated, followed by a discussion of the findings for that hypothesis. In the second part of the chapter, results of the interviews are presented.

Results of the Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant difference between high-socioeconomic-status (high-SES) schools and low-socioeconomic-status (low-SES) schools in terms of parent involvement in the PTA.

Principals and PTA presidents were asked to indicate the percentage of parents, on the average, who attended and/or participated in PTA meetings (Item 11). For analysis purposes, the response options were collapsed into two major categories: below 50% and above 50%. Midwestern School District data on Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) rates of individual schools in the district were used to classify elementary schools in the study as high-SES (mean < 23.8) or low-SES (mean > 23.8). Means indicate percentage of families in the school who qualify for AFDC.

As shown in Table 1, more parents in high-SES than in low-SES schools were highly involved (> 50% attendance) in PTA meetings. This difference was statistically significant at the .01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 1.--Parental involvement in PTAs in high-SES and low-SES schools.

	< 50% Attendance		> 50% Attendance	
	N	%	N	%
Low-SES schools	33	50.77	1	1.54
High-SES schools	25	38.46	6	9.23
Total	58	89.23	7	10.77

Chi-square value = 9.702 df = 1

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant difference between "neighborhood" schools and "bused" schools in terms of parent involvement in the PTA.

In addition to responses to Item 11 on the questionnaires, concerning degree of parent involvement, the researcher used principals' responses to Item 10 in the survey, regarding the percentage of students who were bused to school, in analyzing the data for this hypothesis. Table 2 shows the results of this analysis.

As shown in Table 2, no statistically significant difference was found between "bused" and "neighborhood" schools in terms of

degree of parental involvement. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not rejected.

Table 2.--Parental involvement in PTAs in "bused" schools and "neighborhood" schools.

	< 50% Attendance		> 50% Attendance	
	N	%	N	%
Bused schools	36	55.38	4	6.15
Neighborhood schools	22	33.85	3	4.62
Total	58	89.23	7	10.77

Chi-square value = .1870 df = 1

Hypothesis 3: A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals will rate the PTA as the most important communication link between the school and the home.

Item 25 on the principals' questionnaire and Item 21 on the PTA presidents' questionnaire asked respondents to rank specific communication links between the school and the home from 1 (most important) to 8 (least important). Response choices were: the school district newsletter, school bulletins sent home with children, the PTA, the school newsletter, parent-teacher conferences, the parent-teacher organization (PTO), informal student conversation about school and home, and "other."

Respondents ranked the three most important communication links between school and home as follows: school bulletins sent home with

children (mean = 2.467), parent-teacher conferences (mean = 2.949), and the PTA (mean = 3.922), in that order (see Table 3). Because a majority of respondents did not rank the PTA as the most important communication link between the school and the home, Hypothesis 3 was rejected.

Table 3.--Principals' and PTA presidents' ratings of the most important communication links between the school and the home.

Type of Communication	Rating	Number	Percent
<u>School Bulletins Sent</u>	1	16	24.1
<u>Home With Children</u>	2	21	31.8
(Mean = 2.467)	3	10	15.2
<u>Parent-Teacher</u>	1	12	18.2
<u>Conferences</u>	2	11	16.7
(Mean = 2.949)	3	15	22.7
<u>Parent-Teacher</u>	1	3	4.5
<u>Association</u>	2	6	9.1
(Mean = 3.922)	3	11	16.7

Hypothesis 4: A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals will believe that the PTA participates effectively in the planning phase of school operations.

Item 20 on the principals' questionnaire and Item 16 on the PTA presidents' questionnaire asked respondents how they would rate PTA participation in the planning phase of school operations (from 1 = good to 7 = poor). As shown in Table 4, less than a majority of respondents (42.4%) gave the PTA's participation in the planning

phase a "good" rating (responses 1 through 3). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was rejected.

Table 4.--Respondents' perceptions concerning the PTA's effectiveness in the planning phase of school operations.

Rating	Number	Percent
1	7	10.6
2	8	12.1
3	13	19.7

Hypothesis 5: A majority of PTA presidents and elementary school principals will believe that the PTA participates effectively in making final decisions regarding school issues, represents parents in the needs-assessment process, and usually finds satisfactory solutions to school/neighborhood problems.

The responses to Items 21, 22, and 23 on the principals' questionnaire (Items 17-19 on the PTA presidents' questionnaire) were used in addressing this hypothesis. Participants answered these questions on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (good/agree) to 7 (poor/disagree). Table 5 shows the number and percentage of responses of 1, 2, and 3, indicating respondents' perceptions that the PTA was effective in that particular area.

Table 5.--Respondents' perceptions concerning the PTA's effectiveness in making final decisions, representing parents in assessing school needs, and arriving at satisfactory solutions to school/neighborhood problems.

Function	Rating	Number	Percent
<u>Making Final Decisions</u>	1	10	15.2
	2	18	27.3
	3	17	25.8
<u>Representing Parents in Assessing Needs</u>	1	9	13.6
	2	16	24.2
	3	14	21.2
<u>Arriving at Satisfactory Solutions to Problems</u>	1	14	21.2
	2	19	28.8
	3	10	15.2

Item 21 (17) asked: "As your PTA discusses issues, how would you rate its participation in making final decisions?" Forty-five (68.3%) of the respondents rated the PTA's participation in making final decisions as "good" (ratings 1-3). Item 22 (18) asked: "Would you agree that your PTA effectively represents parents in assessing the needs of your school?" Thirty-nine (59%) of the respondents rated the PTA's representation of parents in assessing school needs as effective (ratings 1-3). Item 23 (19) stated: "When school/neighborhood problems are referred to your PTA for consideration, satisfactory solutions are usually arrived at." Forty-three (65.2%) of the respondents agreed that the PTA usually arrived at satisfactory solutions to school/neighborhood problems (ratings 1-3). Because a majority of respondents perceived that the

PTA was effective in the three areas under consideration, Hypothesis 5 was not rejected.

Interview Results

This section contains the responses to interviews conducted with principals and parents from high-SES and low-SES schools. Five principals and three parents from each type of school participated in the interviews.

The first interview question centered on the role of the PTA. It was expected that some respondents would perceive the PTA as having genuine importance, whereas others would view the association as a facade to make parents believe they were participating. In this open-ended question, respondents were asked to explain how they interpreted the role of the school's PTA. They were also asked if they perceived the role as having genuine importance (see Table 6).

Table 6.--Interviewees' perceptions of the role of the school PTA.

	Parents	Principals	Total
<u>Role</u>			
Funds/service	3 (Low-SES)	10 (Both)	13
Consultation	2 (High-SES)	0	2
Both	1 (High-SES)	0	1
<u>Genuine Role?</u>			
Facade	6 (Both)	10 (Both)	16
	0	0	

Thirteen respondents (85%) saw the PTA's role as one of raising funds and providing service to the school. All ten of the principals (100%) perceived the role as one of fund raising and providing service. Two respondents said the PTA's role was to serve as an advisory body to the school. One respondent saw the role as a combination of funds/service and consultation. This discrepancy in responses demonstrates that respondents did not clearly perceive the role of the PTA.

All 16 respondents (100%) perceived the PTA as having a genuine role to play. None saw the association as merely a facade created to make parents believe they were participating. The interviewees perceived the Midwestern School District as making a sincere effort to permit parents to play an active role in the educational system.

The third interview question was asked to determine respondents' perceptions of who makes the final decision on spending funds. All of the respondents (100%) perceived that the final decision on spending funds was made by the PTA board (see Table 7). This is understandable because the PTA board is broad based and includes teachers, parents, and the principal.

Table 7.--Interviewees' perceptions of who makes the final decision on spending funds.

Who Makes Decision?	Parents	Principals	Total
PTA board	6	10	16
PTA members	0	0	0
Parents, teachers	0	0	0
Principal	0	0	0

Question 4 was asked to elicit respondents' perceptions regarding parental participation in the PTA. As shown in Table 8, 12 respondents (75%) perceived the PTA as having a high proportion of high-SES or professional parents, whereas 4 (25%) perceived the PTA as reflecting the entire attendance area. The respondents thought this situation was to be expected because high-SES parents are, in general, more interested in school affairs than are low-SES parents. The statistical data for Hypothesis 1 supported their perceptions.

Table 8.--Interviewees' perceptions of parental participation in the PTA.

Participation	Parents	Principals	Total
Reflects high-SES or professional parents	3 (Low-SES)	9 (High-SES)	12
Reflects entire school attendance area	3 (High-SES)	1 (Low-SES)	4
Does not reflect the school attendance area	0	0	0

Finally, respondents were asked their perceptions of the percentage of parents who attend PTA meetings. As shown in Table 9, 8 respondents (50%) said that 10% or less of the parents who were eligible to attend PTA meetings did so. This demonstrates that, contrary to expectations, participation in the PTA was not broad based. Reasons for participation centered on interest of parents,

ability and capability of the parents, and confidence level of the parents. Distance from the school and whether children were bused or attended their neighborhood school tended not to be a factor influencing attendance, as stated in the findings for Hypothesis 2.

Table 9.--Interviewees' perceptions of the percentage of parents who attend PTA meetings.

% of Parents at PTA Meetings	Parents	Principals	Total
10% or less	3 (Low-SES)	5 (Low-SES)	8
11%-20%	3 (High-SES)	2 (High-SES)	5
21%-50%	0	3 (High-SES)	3
More than 50%	0	0	0

Summary

This chapter contained the results of the statistical analyses that were performed to test the hypotheses, as well as responses to interviews conducted with principals and parents concerning the PTA. Conclusions drawn from these findings are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE PTA, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, AND REFLECTIONS

Introduction

Chapter V contains a brief summary of the study, a discussion and interpretation of the conclusions, recommendations for strengthening the PTA in the Midwestern School District, suggestions for further research, and reflections on the study.

Summary

The purposes of this study were (a) to investigate the extent of parental participation in PTAs in the Midwestern School District and to determine how those PTAs functioned; (b) to identify strengths and weaknesses in the structure and/or implementation of the PTAs; and (c) based on the findings of the survey, to make recommendations for strengthening the PTA and school relationships.

The population comprised the 33 elementary schools in the Midwestern School District; the principals and PTA presidents from those schools constituted the study sample. The principals and PTA presidents completed a questionnaire, which was designed to gather information critical to the study. Five hypotheses were formulated for the study. The conclusions, based on the findings for each hypothesis, are discussed in the following section.

Conclusions

The major conclusions regarding each hypothesis, as well as possible reasons for the results, are presented in this section. Some of the interpretations of findings are based on insights gained through informal discussions with principals of elementary schools in the Midwestern School Districts.

1. Parental involvement in high-SES schools was found to be significantly greater than parental involvement in low-SES schools. Parents in high-SES schools tend to be more involved because of their educational background and their ability to work more effectively within the school setting. High-SES schools tend to be more open and more accepting of these parents. Parents from high-SES schools generally express interest in school goals and are concerned about education for the good of all students.

Low-SES parents tend not to feel at ease in the school setting. They do not know what is expected of them or what they are supposed to do there. They are not sure they know or can articulate what they want for their children. Some low-SES parents sense a climate of uncertainty or mistrust and react by being afraid to express themselves openly or by simply staying away.

Some low-SES parents keenly perceive their lack of formal education. They feel inferior and do not want to show their ignorance. Some are afraid of the responsibility of participation, whereas others are indifferent. Still others are prevented from participating by their jobs or because they do not have a babysitter.

Low-SES parents tend to be interested in the school primarily as it relates to their child. In general, these people appear at a meeting if it provides an opportunity to discuss an issue that is important to their youngster.

2. No significant difference was found between "neighborhood" schools and "bused" schools in terms of parent involvement. Principals in the Midwestern School District thought this was because a concerted effort is made to alleviate any discrepancy between the two types of schools. In the Midwestern School District, bus transportation is provided for parents whose children are bused out of their neighborhoods so the parents can be involved in their children's schools. Parents are allowed to ride the bus with their children to school, to accompany them on field trips, and to volunteer in their classrooms. Also, bused schools provide special transportation to encourage more parental participation in PTA meetings. Parents who are concerned about their children tend to be involved, whether their youngsters attend a "neighborhood" or a "bused" school.

3. Respondents did not rate the PTA as the most important communication link between the school and the home. School bulletins sent home with students and parent-teacher conferences were considered the most important communication media, whereas the PTA ranked third. If respondents interpreted the word "most" to mean frequency of contact, then it would be hard for the PTA to achieve this objective because most PTAs meet once a month or less.

If dealing with high-priority issues is the intended meaning of "most," then the PTA can more realistically achieve the objective. At present, the PTA is a communication link, but its relative importance as viewed by respondents in this investigation is questionable.

4. A majority of PTA presidents and principals did not perceive the PTA as highly effective in the planning phase of school operations. The importance of this finding should not be underestimated. In many cases, parents are invited to participate in school programs after the initial planning has been done; thus, they might be involved, to some extent, in problem solving and decision making but would have had only limited participation in influencing decisions concerning school operations.

5. Participants said the PTA does represent the school and the home in seeking solutions to school issues. Also, the PTA was seen as representing parents in the needs-assessment process and as usually finding satisfactory solutions to school/neighborhood problems. Perhaps the last perception was partly due to the dramatic results that sometimes occur when solutions to school problems are found. Often special PTA meetings are called when a critical difficulty arises that demands immediate attention. People tend to remember such situations.

Recommendations for Strengthening the PTA

Upgrading and strengthening the weak areas of the PTAs in the Midwestern School District would undoubtedly result in more

effective and productive operation by the individual PTAs. Following is a list of recommendations that might help strengthen the PTAs in the district.

1. Each PTA should develop a program designed to involve all elements of the neighborhood. It is imperative that a cross-section of the community be represented in the PTAs.

2. Attending a meeting is not sufficient; a deliberate effort should be made to encourage input from everyone present. When people attend a meeting and do not become involved in the proceedings, they often fail to return.

3. It is important that the PTA become involved initially in programs. Usually, higher levels of interest and participation can be maintained when people assist with a project from the beginning and continue on through the final phase.

4. Every individual, regardless of social, educational, ethnic, or occupational background, should be made to sense his/her importance to the PTA. Even though some of the individual's proposals may not be adopted, the person should be made to realize that his/her contributions are important and that he/she is accepted and valued by the group.

5. PTA meetings should be carefully planned so that items relating to expressed needs are on the agenda. People consider it a waste of time to attend meetings that have little or no purpose. When this occurs, they usually stop attending meetings and supporting the organization.

6. PTA meetings should be held regularly, and parents should be informed of meeting times well in advance. It might be beneficial to publish a schedule of meetings for the entire school year. Shortly before each meeting, another announcement should be made and a copy of the agenda sent home with students. In addition to the regularly scheduled meetings, special sessions can be called as the occasion demands.

7. Although a PTA has been established in all schools in the Midwestern School District, many people have not become familiar with its operations. The major purpose of the PTA, along with its objectives and mode of operation, should be communicated more widely to parents within the community. Each PTA should develop a plan designed to achieve this goal.

8. A need exists to establish systematic communication among parent groups. It is recommended that school PTAs institute contact with other school committees inside and outside their districts.

9. Because the principal's behavior often determines the effectiveness of the PTA, it is recommended that the Midwestern School District provide in-service sessions for principals, parents, and teachers on the role of the school as part of the community and in parent-school relations.

10. A question exists as to whether it is important to continue to mandate the presence of school PTAs. The practice of inviting parents to work in close cooperation with the school and to serve in an advisory capacity must be established. If this democratic

practice is to continue, the mandate by the Midwestern School District is needed to assure this participation.

11. Parents have identified the lack of continuity in school PTAs from year to year as a problem. Therefore, it is recommended that PTAs hold the election of board members in May. If it seems desirable, one or two posts could be kept open until fall to accommodate parents of children new to the school. In addition, it is recommended that the PTAs adopt a rotating system whereby board members are elected to a two-year term, half of them to be elected each year. This will allow for continuity on the board.

12. Selection of an effective president is critical to the productive operation of PTA meetings. In some cases, it may not be wise for the principal to function as the PTA chairman, even though he/she regularly attends the meetings.

Suggestions for Further Research

The following questions pertaining to the PTA are suggested as areas needing further research.

1. Are the PTA objectives in proper focus, or do they need adjustment?

2. Should the PTA (a) replace the district, state, and federal committees? (b) operate concurrently with the Midwestern School District's Instructional Council, which meets monthly and includes six administrators, six parents, and six teachers? (c) operate as a subcommittee of the Instructional Council?

3. Should the structure of the PTA be altered to allow for (a) changing the constitution and by-laws? (b) election of officers to be changed to appointment of officers?

4. What proportion of minority as compared to majority parents participate in the PTAs?

Reflections

Although the design of this study involved analyzing each hypothesis individually, a global view also has merit. Once parents have established an effective PTA and principals and teachers have accepted their part of the responsibility for making it work, open and honest communication between the home and the school will be engendered. On the next level, that of PTAs and school boards, communication will continue to improve as parents function more effectively and become more confident about their ability to do their job. The growing numbers of former PTA members who are elected to school boards are also helping to improve communications.

The results of this study indicate that, to play its role effectively, the PTA as it now functions in the Midwestern School District must have more broad-based participation from all racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups in the school population. If the specific improvements suggested in the Recommendations section are made, the value of the PTAs to the school district will be enhanced. It is hoped that, as a result of this study, changes will be made that will strengthen the PTA and make it a more effective community operation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH INVOLVING
HUMAN SUBJECTS (UCRIHS)
206 BERKELEY HALL
(517) 353-9738

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1111

November 23, 1988

IRB# 88-458

David L. Henderson

Dear Mr. Henderson:

Subject: "A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PTA AS IT FUNCTIONS
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT AS PERCEIVED BY ITS
ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS AND PTA PRESIDENTS IRB# 88-458"

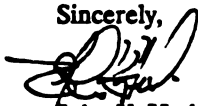
The above project is exempt from full UCRIHS review. I have reviewed the proposed research protocol and find that the rights and welfare of human subjects appear to be protected. You have approval to conduct the research.

You are reminded that UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year. If you plan to continue this project beyond one year, please make provisions for obtaining appropriate UCRIHS approval one month prior to November 23, 1989.

Any changes in procedures involving human subjects must be reviewed by the UCRIHS prior to initiation of the change. UCRIHS must also be notified promptly of any problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects during the course of the work.

Thank you for bringing this project to our attention. If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,



John K. Hudzik, Ph.D.
Chair, UCRIHS

JKH/sar

cc: L. Bader

December 6, 1988

Dear Colleague:

I am completing my doctoral dissertation requirement at Michigan State University. I know this is a busy time for you, but your response is very important to the outcome.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all or not to answer certain questions without penalty. Naturally, it would really help my research if you would answer all questions. By completing the attached survey, you indicate your willingness to participate.

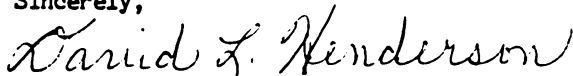
The purpose of my investigation is to get your perceptions as elementary principal about your PTA. In order to better understand how it operates in your school, I am asking you to complete this survey on PTA format, participation, and support of school activities.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and not associated with you in any report or research findings.

In closing, I need your help. First, by returning the survey and, second, by permitting me to contact you should additional information be needed. Please take the time from your busy schedule to complete the questionnaire and return it to me at School.

Your help is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David L. Henderson".

David L. Henderson, Principal

DLH/mlc

attachment

December 6, 1988

Dear PTA President:

With the approval of the School District and the State PTA Office, I am conducting a study of PTAs in the school district.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all or not to answer certain questions without penalty. Naturally, it would really help my research if you would answer all questions. By completing the attached survey, you indicate your willingness to participate.

Would you kindly complete the enclosed survey and return it in the enclosed stamped and addressed envelope. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and not associated with you in any report or research findings.

Your responses are highly valued and will assist me immeasurably in conducting my study. Your help is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David L. Henderson".

David L. Henderson
Principal

State PTA President

DLH/mlc

enclosures 2:
survey/envelope

APPENDIX B

THE SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

PRINCIPAL QUESTIONNAIRE

School Name _____ Principal's Name _____

1. Percentage of students in the school who qualify for free and reduced priced meals:

Below 25% _____ 26-50% _____ 51-75% _____ Above 75% _____

2. What is the ethnic/racial make up of your PTA Board?

_____ % Native American _____ % Hispanic
 _____ % Asian or Pacific Islander _____ % Black
 _____ % White

3. What is the educational background of your PTA Board?

How many have:

_____ No High School _____ Associate Degree
 _____ Two years of High School _____ Bachelor Degree
 _____ High School Graduate _____ Masters Degree
 _____ Associate Degree _____ Doctorate Degree
 _____ Other (please specify) _____

4. Where are your PTA meetings held? (please check all that apply)

_____ Homes of members _____ Public Library
 _____ Community Center _____ Only in school
 _____ Church _____ Other non-school setting (please specify) _____

5. How much money--on an average--does your PTA contribute to your school on a yearly basis? \$ _____

6. What has been the largest amount of money donated by your PTA? \$ _____

7. What percentage of your PTA meeting time is spent on planning and implementation of school activities, such as Reading is Fundamental (R.I.F.), carnivals, bazaars, parent workshops, and community public relations activities?

Below 25% _____ 26 - 50% _____ 51 - 75% _____ Above 75% _____

8. If you have the following programs, how long have they been in your school? (please circle your response)

	<u>1 Year</u>	<u>1-1 1/2 Years</u>	<u>2 Years</u>	<u>2-2 1/2 Years</u>	<u>3 Years</u>	<u>More than 3 Years</u>
R.I.F.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fundraisers	1	2	3	4	5	6
Holiday Walk Thru	1	2	3	4	5	6
Performing Groups	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other (please specify)						
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. If you have the following activities, how were these activities initiated?

	<u>School Initiated</u>	<u>PTA Initiated</u>	<u>Not Applicable</u>
R.I.F.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Fundraisers	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Holiday Walk Thru	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Performing Groups	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Other (please specify)	_____		

10. What percent of your students are bussed?

<u> </u> 0 - 10%	<u> </u> 51 - 60%
<u> </u> 11 - 20%	<u> </u> 61 - 70%
<u> </u> 21 - 30%	<u> </u> 71 - 80%
<u> </u> 31 - 40%	<u> </u> 81 - 90%
<u> </u> 41 - 50%	<u> </u> 91 - 100%

11. How are parents invited to attend your PTA meetings? (please circle your response)

	<u>All of the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
Notes sent home	1	2	3	4
Personal Contact	1	2	3	4
Phone Calls	1	2	3	4
School Newsletter	1	2	3	4
Parent Teacher Conference	1	2	3	4
Other (please specify)	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

12. Please indicate the frequency with which the following pieces of information are presented at your PTA meetings. (please circle your response)

	<u>All of the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
PTA program plans from the local PTA Council	1	2	3	4
PTA budget information	1	2	3	4
PTA fundraising project information	1	2	3	4
Parent inservice offerings by the school district	1	2	3	4
District Board policies information	1	2	3	4
Answers to parental complaints	1	2	3	4
State and National PTA concerns	1	2	3	4
Community Services Information (such as food drives and charitable causes)	1	2	3	4
Others (please specify)				
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

13. How many members are there on your PTA Board? _____

14. How many parents—on an average—attend and/or participate in your regular PTA meetings?

_____ 0 - 10%	_____ 51 - 60%
_____ 11 - 20%	_____ 61 - 70%
_____ 21 - 30%	_____ 71 - 80%
_____ 31 - 40%	_____ 81 - 90%
_____ 41 - 50%	_____ 91 - 100%

15. What special activities do you have to get parents to attend your PTA meetings? (check all that apply)

_____ Classroom performances at PTA meetings (plays and skits)

_____ Community get-togethers (such as fall fests and bazaars)

_____ Special Presenters (such as Central Administrators or Board members)

_____ Other attractions - (please specify)

16. Which of the following statements is the most true about the decision making process of your PTA? (check only one)

_____ The PTA Board, along with the principal and staff, make the PTA decisions.

_____ Only the principal and the staff make PTA decisions.

_____ Only the principal makes the PTA decisions.

_____ Only the staff makes the PTA decisions.

_____ Only the PTA Board makes the PTA decisions.

_____ Other (please specify)

17. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
Our PTA encourages parent participation by creating a climate of warmth and enthusiasm for PTA goals.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA encourages parent participation by reflecting optimism about the role PTA can and should play in the home, school, and community.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA encourages parent participation by pointing out the warm relationships, the satisfaction of cooperative achievements and the feeling of belonging to school.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA parents expect a sense of being welcomed.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA parents expect a well conducted meeting so that new and experienced members both know what is going on.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA expects an opportunity to participate, to ask questions, and to make suggestions.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA parents expect a better understanding of school and how it operates.	SA	A	D	SD
The PTA's role in the school should be to serve as the primary communication link between the school and the home.	SA	A	D	SD
The PTA's role in the school should be to carry out Central Administrative mandates for instructional areas of focus.	SA	A	D	SD
The PTA's role in the school should be to provide parental inservice training.	SA	A	D	SD
The PTA's role in the school should be to supplement the existing board-funded programs that are currently in the school	SA	A	D	SD

18. In my area, the PTA serves as the primary communication link between school and home

Effectively 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffectively

19. A cross section of the school neighborhood is represented on our PTA.

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

20. How would you rate PTA participation in the planning phase of school operations?

Good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Poor

21. As your PTA discusses issues, how would you rate its participation in making final decisions?

Good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Poor

22. Would you agree that your PTA effectively represents parents in assessing the needs of your school?

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

23. When school/neighborhood problems are referred to your PTA for consideration, satisfactory solutions are usually arrived at.

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

24. List some school or community problems for which your PTA has sought solutions.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

25. Listed below are some ways that schools and homes communicate. How would you rate them in order of importance using #1 for the most important and #8 for the least important?

_____	School District Newsletter
_____	School Bulletins sent home with children
_____	Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
_____	School Newsletter
_____	Parent Teacher Conferences
_____	Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
_____	Informal student conversation about school and home
_____	Other _____

26. Listed below are some ways parents could be involved in school decision-making. How would you rate them in order of importance? Use #1 for the most important and #10 for the least important.

_____ Become a teachers aide
_____ Become a member of the PTA
_____ Express views to principal
_____ Volunteer for school committees/activities
_____ Attend Board of Education meetings
_____ Talk to teachers
_____ Talk to central office administrators
_____ Talk to other parents
_____ Other _____

. . .

THANK YOU

PTA QUESTIONNAIRE

School Name: _____ Member Name: _____

1. In your judgment, who directs the day-to-day activities of the PTA?

_____ PTA President _____ PTA members
 _____ Principal _____ Teachers

Comments: _____

2. Where are your PTA meetings held? (please check all that apply)

_____ Homes of members _____ Public Library
 _____ Community Center _____ Only in school
 _____ Church _____ Other non-school setting (please
 specify) _____

3. How much money—on an average—does the PTA contribute to the school on a yearly basis? \$ _____

4. What has been the largest amount of money donated by the PTA? \$ _____

5. What percentage of your PTA meeting time is spent on planning and implementation of school activities, such as Reading is Fundamental (R.I.F.), carnivals, bazaars, parent workshops, and community public relations activities?

Below 25% _____ 26 - 50% _____ 51 - 75% _____ Above 75% _____

6. If you have the following programs, how long have they been in your school?
(please circle your response)

	<u>1</u> <u>Year</u>	<u>1-1 1/2</u> <u>Years</u>	<u>2</u> <u>Years</u>	<u>2-2 1/2</u> <u>Years</u>	<u>3</u> <u>Years</u>	<u>More than</u> <u>3 Years</u>
R.I.F.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fundraisers	1	2	3	4	5	6
Holiday Walk Thru	1	2	3	4	5	6
Performing Groups	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other (please specify)						
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6

7. If you have the following activities, how were these activities initiated?

	<u>School</u> <u>initiated</u>	<u>PTA</u> <u>initiated</u>	<u>Not</u> <u>Applicable</u>
R.I.F.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Fundraisers	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Holiday Walk Thru	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Performing Groups	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Other (please specify)	_____		

8. How are parents invited to attend your PTA meetings? (please circle your response)

	<u>All of the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
Notes sent home	1	2	3	4
Personal Contact	1	2	3	4
Phone Calls	1	2	3	4
School Newsletter	1	2	3	4
Parent Teacher Conference	1	2	3	4
Other (please specify)	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

9. Please indicate the frequency with which the following pieces of information are presented at your PTA meetings. (please circle your response)

	<u>All of the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
PTA program plans from the local PTA Council	1	2	3	4
PTA budget information	1	2	3	4
PTA fundraising project information	1	2	3	4
Parent inservice offerings by the school district	1	2	3	4
District Board policies information	1	2	3	4
Answers to parental complaints	1	2	3	4
State and National PTA concerns	1	2	3	4

9. Continued

Please indicate the frequency with which the following pieces of information are presented at your PTA meetings. (please circle your response)

	<u>All of the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
Community Services Information (such as food drives and charitable causes)	1	2	3	4
Others (please specify)				
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

10. How many members are there on your PTA Board? _____

11. How many parents (on an average) attend and/or participate in your regular PTA meetings?

_____ 0 - 10%	_____ 51 - 60%
_____ 11 - 20%	_____ 61 - 70%
_____ 21 - 30%	_____ 71 - 80%
_____ 31 - 40%	_____ 81 - 90%
_____ 41 - 50%	_____ 91 - 100%

12. Which of the following statements is the most true about the decision making process of your PTA? (check only one)

- _____ The PTA Board, along with the principal and staff, make the PTA decisions.
- _____ Only the principal and the staff make PTA decisions.
- _____ Only the principal makes the PTA decisions.
- _____ Only the staff makes the PTA decisions.
- _____ Only the PTA Board makes the PTA decisions.
- _____ Other (please specify)
- _____
- _____

13. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
Our PTA encourages parent participation by creating a climate of warmth and enthusiasm for PTA goals.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA encourages parent participation by reflecting optimism about the role PTA can and should play in the home, school, and community.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA encourages parent participation by pointing out the warm relationships, the satisfaction of cooperative achievements and the feeling of belonging to school.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA parents expect a sense of being welcomed.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA parents expect a well conducted meeting so that new and experienced members both know what is going on.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA expects an opportunity to participate, to ask questions, and to make suggestions.	SA	A	D	SD
Our PTA parents expect a better understanding of school and how it operates.	SA	A	D	SD
The PTA's role in the school should be to serve as the primary communication link between the school and the home.	SA	A	D	SD
The PTA's role in the school should be to carry out Central Administrative mandates for instructional areas of focus.	SA	A	D	SD

14. In my area, the PTA serves as the primary communication link between school and home.

Effectively 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffectively

15. A cross section of the school neighborhood is represented on our PTA.

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

16. How would you rate PTA participation in the planning phase of school operations?

Good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Poor

17. As your PTA discusses issues, how would you rate its participation in making final decisions?

Good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Poor

18. Would you agree that your PTA effectively represents parents in assessing the needs of your schools?

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

19. When school/neighborhood problems are referred to your PTA for consideration, satisfactory solutions are usually arrived at.

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

20. List some school or community problems for which your PTA has sought solutions.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

21. Listed below are some ways that schools and homes communicate. How would you rate them in order of importance using #1 for the most important and #8 for the least important?

_____	School District Newsletter
_____	School Bulletins sent home with children
_____	Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
_____	School Newsletter
_____	Parent Teacher Conferences
_____	Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
_____	Informal student conversation about school and home
_____	Other _____

22. In the list below, check the activities in which you have been involved with the planning.

☐ School budget
☐ Curriculum concerns
☐ School PTA Newsletter
☐ Work on Discipline Code
☐ After school activities
☐ Volunteer programs
☐ Other _____

23. Listed below are some ways parents could be involved in school decision-making. How would you rate them in order of importance? Use #1 for the most important and #9 for the least important.

☐ Become a teachers aide
☐ Become a member of the PTA
☐ Express views to principal
☐ Volunteer for school committees/activities
☐ Attend Board of Education meetings
☐ Talk to teachers
☐ Talk to central office administrators
☐ Talk to other parents
☐ Other _____

. . .

THANK YOU

Please return to David L. Henderson, Principal

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