

This is to certify that the

dissertation entitled

THE HARMONY IN ACTION PROJECT:
STRENGTHENING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

presented by

Julie Ricks-Doneen

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Education

Douglas R. Campbell

Major professor

Date September 8, 2000

LIBRARY Michigan State University

PLACE IN RETURN BOX to remove this checkout from your record.
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.
MAY BE RECALLED with earlier due date if requested.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
APR 16 2005		
JUL 14 2011		
OCT 14 11		

**THE HARMONY IN ACTION PROJECT:
STRENGTHENING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

By

Julie Ricks-Doneen

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Special Education

2000

ABSTRACT

THE HARMONY IN ACTION PROJECT: STRENGTHENING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

By

Julie Ricks-Doneen

This dissertation study is about a project called Harmony in Action, which involved a group of teachers, other school staff, parents, students, community members and university participants working together in an elementary school to implement activities focused on building a sense of school spirit and collaboration, and on strengthening family and community involvement. The author assumed a participant-observer role as a member of the project group and qualitative research methods to study the processes and issues involved as these different groups of people worked together, and as various kinds of project activities were implemented in this school setting. The author presents a framework of negotiation and management to explain how the group developed shared understandings about project goals, communicated these to others, and managed procedures and resources to carry out project activities in the school.

This elementary school's history as a Professional Development School (PDS) in partnership with Michigan State University, and the characteristics of its families, affected the ways that the project developed and the kinds of activities that it implemented. Even though the project group was small, the activities they implemented impacted the whole school. The group attempted to implement a range of activities to involve families and community members; some of these were more successful than others. The author compares and contrasts two of these activities and examines why they may have been different in terms of involving families and community members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A summer to remember

To my mom, who welcomed me home when I needed to be home, who allowed me leave when I needed to leave, and who nurtured her grandsons while I tried to nurture my writing. This summer with “Mimi” will always be a special memory for Josh and Des.

To my sons, Joshua and Desmond, who hugged me with their arms when I was with them and with their voices when I was away.

To my husband, who let go of fishing, camping, biking, reading and laughing with his sons for the summer, and who welcomed and loved whichever “me” he encountered day to day.

To my brother, aunt, uncle and cousin, who gave my sons a fun summer with the kind of extended family that I cherished as a child.

To my committee members – Doug Campbell, Evelyn Oka, Lauren Young and Patrick Dickson – who provided guidance and insight that facilitated my personal and professional growth. Your collective and individual perspectives and expertise enriched my work. A special thanks to Doug Campbell, who consistently went “above and beyond the call of duty”

as a mentor to guide me through the many processes involved in this endeavor.

To my support system at CSI: Claudeen and Alice, who said, “This is priority, the rest will wait,” and Rajean and Edit, who held my hand through three computers, a few diagrams and some e-mail messages.

To the Harmony in Action group: Your vision continues to inspire.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
 CHAPTER 1	
UNFOLDING THE MAP: LITERATURE ON SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS.....	10
 CHAPTER 2	
GETTING TO KNOW THE EMERSON LANDSCAPE.....	22
 CHAPTER 3	
FOLLOWING THE COMPASS: EVOLUTION AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY.....	40
Evolution of the Study.....	41
Data Sources.....	53
Analysis.....	54
Writing.....	57
 CHAPTER 4	
A LITTLE PIECE OF LAND: HARMONY IN ACTION IN THE EMERSON LANDSCAPE.....	58
<i>Who</i> Was Harmony in Action?.....	59
<i>When</i> and <i>Where</i> Was Harmony in Action?.....	64
<i>What</i> Did Harmony in Action Do?.....	68
<i>Why</i> did Harmony in Action Do This Work?.....	74
<i>How</i> did Harmony in Action Do Their Work?.....	80
Nurturing Relationships.....	87
Procedural Tools.....	96

CHAPTER 5
DIRECT ROUTES AND DETOURS: CONTRASTING
EXAMPLES OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY
INVOLVEMENT.....99

Student of the Week Program.....	105
Negotiation Within the Project Group.....	106
Management Within the Project Group.....	117
Negotiation Outside the Project Group.....	121
Management Outside the Project Group.....	128
A Place for Everyone.....	131
Recess Activities Program.....	131
Negotiation and Management Within the Project Group.....	133
Negotiation and Management Outside the Project Group.....	142
Summary.....	144

CHAPTER 6
“ARE WE THERE YET?”: PERCEPTIONS OF
HARMONY IN ACTION AT EMERSON.....147

General Perceptions of Harmony in Action.....	148
Harmony in Action: A Good Thing for Emerson?.....	148
Will the Real Harmony in Action Please Stand Up?.....	151
Harmony in Action: To Be (a PDS Project)	
or Not To Be (a PDS Project)?.....	153
What Did Students Know about Harmony in Action?.....	156
Student of the Week.....	158
Increasing Self Esteem.....	158
Fostering a Sense of Belonging.....	160
A Chance to Be Heard.....	162
Student Perceptions of Student of the Week.....	163
Recess Activities.....	166
MSU/ET Component of the Recess Activities Program.....	167
Family/Community Component of the Recess Activities	
Program.....	170
Summary.....	172

CHAPTER 7

“IT IS GOOD TO HAVE AN END TO JOURNEY TOWARDS, BUT IT IS THE JOURNEY THAT MATTERS IN THE END”.....	173
---	------------

Small Groups Can Affect Change.....	174
Groups Need to Be Nurtured	176
Negotiation and Management: A Heuristic Framework.....	179
There Are Many Paths to Family and Community Involvement.....	182
The Landscape Matters When Choosing Paths.....	184
Reflections on My Role: Places on the Participant-Observer Continuum.....	189
Concluding This Journey: Final Thoughts and Recommendations.....	190

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Harmony in Action Chronology Sample Page (1992-93).....	196
Appendix B: Sample By-Topic Meeting Summary Sheet.....	198
Appendix C: Harmony in Action Brochure.....	200
Appendix D: Harmony in Action Calendar (Sample).....	204
Appendix E: Harmony in Action First Memo to Emerson Staff, October 1992.....	206
Appendix F: Student of the Week Letter to Families 1992.....	210
Appendix G: Student of the Week Letter to Families 1993.....	212
Appendix H: Recess Activities Interest Survey 1993.....	214
Appendix I: 1993-94 Year-End Student Survey.....	216
Appendix J: 1993-94 Year-End Family Survey.....	219

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	222
--------------------------	------------

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: 1993-94 Year End Student Survey Responses:	
Student of the Week Questions.....	163

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Harmony in Action Participants.....	62
Figure 2: Harmony in Action Activities.....	69
Figure 3: Negotiating and Managing Within and Outside HIA.....	82
Figure 4: Harmony in Action's Family and Community Activities.....	100

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation study is about a project called Harmony in Action, which began in the fall of 1992 at Emerson¹ Elementary School in Harris, Michigan. The Harmony in Action project was one of several efforts at Emerson aimed at developing links between the school, families, and community. The central question of this study is:

How did the Harmony in Action project attempt to strengthen family

In this study, I describe the Harmony in Action project – its participants, how they worked together, and the kinds of activities the group implemented to involve families and community members. This study provided me with an opportunity to examine school-family-community relationships in several ways. Because the project group was composed of school staff, parents, community members, and university participants, I examined the processes and issues involved as these different groups of people worked together. Because the group implemented several school-wide activities to involve families and community members, I examined the processes and issues

¹ All names –school, town, roads, students and adults are pseudonyms

involved in developing school-family-community links in this particular setting. This study also provided me with an opportunity to consider ways in which the Harmony in Action project relates to the literature on family-school-community relationships.

Since 1989, Emerson had been a Professional Development School (PDS) in partnership with Michigan State University (MSU) under the auspices of the Michigan Partnership for New Education (MPNE). The Holmes Group (1990) described PDSs as restructured school contexts where teaching and learning at all levels is explored and relationships between institutions are redefined. At the time that Harmony in Action (HIA) began at Emerson, there were several PDS projects involving teachers and MSU faculty and graduate students working together to improve teaching and learning, often in a particular subject matter area.

By the spring of 1992, there had been many ups and downs in Emerson's journey to develop and restructure relationships among teachers and between teachers and MSU staff. The HIA project began in a school environment that was struggling with change, and dealing with much conflict and fragmentation among teachers, administration, and MSU staff. At the same time, participants in the PDS projects recognized a need for a shared focus across projects, as well as for opportunities to share information across

projects and with others at Emerson. One component of the shared focus that project groups were developing was an emphasis on developing links between school, families and community. At the yearly PDS planning sessions in the spring of 1992, Karen James, the Physical Education teacher, began to share some ideas for a new PDS project at Emerson. Karen was concerned about the lack of cohesiveness among staff at Emerson, and felt that her ideas fit well with Emerson's need to build a sense of identity and school spirit, as well as with the emerging focus on family and community involvement.

In contrast to previous PDS projects at Emerson, in which teachers in the project groups focused on changes in their classrooms or working together across particular classrooms, the HIA project was aimed at developing activities for the *whole school*. The project goals were to address building level collaboration, integration of themes across PDS projects, diversity, involvement of family and community members, and attention to non-classroom times (e.g., recess and lunch) during children's school day. Also in contrast to previous PDS projects at Emerson, which had involved only teachers and MSU faculty and graduate students, Karen invited school staff in addition to teachers (e.g., paraprofessionals, secretary, custodians,

and other support staff), students, family members, community members, and faculty and graduate students from MSU to participate in the project.

I was a graduate student working with the Home-School Connections PDS project when the HIA project was conceived in the spring of 1992. I had been interested in the area of school-family-community relationships for quite some time. Prior to graduate school, I was involved in work aimed at developing these relationships, and I pursued this interest in my graduate courses by exploring the literature about school-family-community relationships. The research that intrigued me most was detailed accounts of how these relationships developed among people in various contexts. The Home-School Connections project and the HIA project were contexts where I could observe relationships developing between school staff and family and community members.

During the 1992-93 school year, I was the assistant building coordinator, a liaison position between Emerson and MSU. Part of my role was to support and extend activities in the school that were aimed at developing links with families and community members. While I continued to work with the Home-School Connections PDS project, I joined the HIA project in the fall of 1992 and continued to participate throughout the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years.

Unlike other PDS projects at Emerson, HIA did not have a university faculty member involved when it began, so I was the only “university” person in the group until mid-way through the first year of the project, when Ron, a graduate student in Physical Education, was hired as a graduate assistant for the project, and Sid, a faculty member in Physical Education, joined the group informally. Throughout my involvement with Harmony in Action, I regularly reflected on my role in the group. I was an active participant, attending meetings, participating in discussions, and helping to plan and implement project activities. However, I also continually stepped back from my role as a participant to document Harmony in Action’s activities. I took on the role of “documenter” for the project for several reasons. First, based on my past experiences with other PDS projects, I knew that we would need documentation about the project for reports to MPNE. Second, in my role as assistant building coordinator, I needed to document what was going on in this project and in the school more generally about school-family-community links. Third, my orientation to PDS work so far had included taking a qualitative research stance (Erickson, 1986; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1983; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Miles & Huberman, 1984) as a participant observer to understand the processes involved as PDS project participants tried out innovations and reflected on them. Finally, early in my participation with the

project, I began to think about the HIA project as a context for my dissertation study. For all of these reasons, I began to document project activities as soon as I joined Harmony in Action.

I did not join HIA with a dissertation study in mind, but I paid attention to how the project began, how it developed, what it did, how participants worked together and worked with others in the school and community, and how the project was perceived by both participants and others in the school. I took extensive notes at meetings and wrote notes to myself about interactions and conversations that project members were having as they implemented different kinds of activities. During the second year of the project, many HIA meetings were audiotaped, and some of the projects' activities were videotaped. I paid attention to the roles of parents and community members in the group, and to how project activities addressed family and community involvement. I collected artifacts such as proposals, reports, minutes, memos, surveys, and photographs, and I wrote up observations of various activities that the group was implementing. My proposal to study HIA included using this existing documentation as data, as well as interviewing HIA members, teachers, and Emerson students.

Data sources for this dissertation include: 1) fieldnotes, narrative descriptions, audiotapes and videotapes of project meetings; 2) artifacts such

as minutes, proposals, photographs, and written communications; 3) videotapes of various activities; 4) interviews with project participants, students, and others; and 5) surveys of students, families, and staff. In the following chapters, I will attempt to answer the question, *“How did the Harmony in Action project attempt to strengthen family and community involvement at Emerson?”*

The chapter headings reflect the notion that this study represents my journey to explore school-family-community relationships in one particular context. Chapter 1, “Unfolding the Map,” provides a broad look at the literature in the area of school-family-community relationships that influenced both how I approached my work with the HIA project and how I understood what I observed as I participated with the group and talked with others about their perceptions. Chapter 2, “Getting to Know the Landscape,” describes the context in which HIA began and developed. Emerson elementary school’s history as a PDS, and its emerging focus on family and community involvement, influenced the nature of the HIA project’s work in the school. Perceptions about community and family characteristics are also included here, since these perceptions influenced HIA project members’ orientations to the kinds of activities they planned. In Chapter 3, “Following the Compass,” I explain how the dissertation study evolved from my participation in the HIA

project, describe the data sources that I used in analysis, and present the analysis techniques that I used to make assertions and draw conclusions about the HIA project. In Chapter 4, “A Little Piece of Land,” I attempt to describe the some of the particulars of the Harmony in Action project. The project represents a “little piece of land” in the overall map of school-family-community involvement research, and a part of the “landscape” of a school attempting to involve families and community members. In this chapter, I attempt to answer a question that project members were often asked, “What is Harmony in Action?” I take a look at some of the specifics of the group. Who were they? When and where did they meet? What kinds of things did they do? How did they do them? Why did they do them? In Chapter 5, “Direct Routes and Detours,” I examine two of HIA’s activities that were aimed at involving families and community members in the school. These activities provide a contrast between a “successful” and an “unsuccessful” effort to involve families and community members. I explore the differences in the nature of these two activities and in the processes that took place within and outside the group to implement them. In Chapter 6, “Are We There Yet?,” I present some similarities and differences in the ways that the Harmony in Action project in general, as well as specific activities, were perceived by project members and others at Emerson. In Chapter 7, “It Is

Good to Have an End to Journey Towards, But It Is the Journey That Matters in the End,” I summarize some of the main ideas that I learned from participating in Harmony in Action’s journey to strengthen family and community involvement in one school setting, and comment about Harmony in Action’s work within the framework of ongoing research about family-school-community interactions.

CHAPTER 1

UNFOLDING THE MAP: LITERATURE ON SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

In the midst of ongoing concern about the state of education, of families, of communities, and of society in general, there is a renewed emphasis on the relationships between schools, families, and communities. This is evidenced by the many federal, state, and local initiatives aimed at promoting the development of school-family-community partnerships (Epstein, 1991). These initiatives are informed by years of study that have provided us with a great deal of knowledge about school-family-community relationships.

There are a number of models and typologies, which describe relationships that exist between schools, families, and communities. Cervone & O’Leary (1982), for example, suggest that parent involvement falls along a continuum from parent as passive recipient of information to active partner in the educational process, with places along the continuum including “reporting progress” activities such as newsletters and conferences, “special events” such as school open house, “parent education” such as lending libraries and workshops, and “parent teaching” such as home activities and parents in the classroom.

Epstein (1987) outlined three perspectives on family and school relations, which emphasize separate, sequential, and shared responsibilities of home and school. The separate responsibilities perspective assumes that schools' and families' goals, roles, and responsibilities are different and best fulfilled independently. The sequential responsibilities perspective is based on the idea of critical stages in the contributions of families and schools to children's development. The shared responsibilities perspective emphasizes the complementarity of schools and families and encourages collaborations between home and school. Epstein (1990) also outlined six types of family and community involvement that are part of a comprehensive school-family program: 1) Assisting families with parenting and childrearing; 2) Communicating with families about school programs and student progress; 3) Volunteering; 4) Learning at home; 5) Decision making; and 6) Collaborating with the community.

Another categorization framework is Swap's (1993) three models of home-school relationships. In the protective model, parents' and educators' functions are separate, and the school is protected from interference by families. In the school-to-home transmission model, parents are enlisted to support the goals of the school, but have little or no voice in establishing those goals. In the curriculum enrichment model, school staff seeks to

expand the curriculum by incorporating the contributions and experiences of families, but doesn't generally involve parents in school management. Swap suggests a fourth model, the partnership model, "in which collaborative relationships between home and school permeate all areas of school culture" (p. 46).

School-community relationships are also categorized in different ways. Nettles (1991), for example, considered the effects of community involvement on disadvantaged students as a typology of four processes of social change. Conversion involves changing students' beliefs and behaviors; mobilization involves increasing citizen and organizational participation in education; allocation refers to the community agencies providing resources, opportunities, or incentives to students; and instruction includes assisting students in their intellectual or social learning through tutoring, mentoring, apprenticeships, clubs, and presentations at school or the worksite.

The benefits of family and community involvement in schools are well documented (e.g., Henderson, 1987). Involvement promotes positive academic, social and emotional development for students, as well as positive orientations towards schooling by both students and parents (Clark, 1987; Comer, 1980a; Epstein, 1990; Swap, 1993). Family and community members benefit from better understandings of children's school experiences, feel

empowered about their role in education, and in turn are better able to support and advocate for children (Cochran, 1987). Teachers benefit because family and community involvement increases student motivation towards school, because family and community members may provide additional adult interaction during school activities, because family and community members are resources for better understanding and incorporating students' home and community life in the school setting, and because families and community members who work in the school can enhance communication with the community and build support for the schools (Ames, 1990; Moll & Greenberg, 1990, Swap, 1993). Teachers, family members, and community members are more likely to recognize common goals and develop complementary roles when there is increased communication and participation (Kagan, 1987).

Despite the evidence of benefits, school-family-community relationships are often slow to develop and at times feel uncomfortable for teachers, families and community members. There are several barriers to family and community involvement in schools. Teachers may fear that involving family and community members will jeopardize their professional status; this professional status may also inhibit family and community members from contributing ideas or even asking questions (Saxe, 1984;

Oakes & Lipton, 1990). Family members may have had difficult school experiences themselves, and may not view schools as a welcoming, comfortable place (Connel, Ahendon, Kessler & Dowsett, 1982). Teachers may hold assumptions about particular families or groups of families that shape differential interactions with them (Lightfoot, 1978), or they may not have the knowledge or understandings of cultural variations that affect children's and families' experiences with schools (Au & Mason, 1981; Clark, 1987; Edwards, 1989; Heath, 1982; Okakok, 1989). Additionally, social and economic changes, such as different family configurations, single parents, and dual-income families impact on school-family-community relationships (Coleman, 1987; Heath & McLaughlin, 1987, Thornburg, Hoffman & Remeika, 1991; Powell, 1991; Zill, 1996).

In addition to these interpersonal barriers between school staff and family and community members, there are inter-institutional barriers that prohibit the development of inter-agency networks that pull together and organize a wide range of services for children and families. Gardner (1990), Melaville & Blank (1991; 1993), Crowson & Boyd (1993), Schorr (1988) and Kirst & McLaughlin (1990) have all written about the fragmentation of services that occurs because agencies have different and sometimes conflicting philosophies about and approaches to assisting families, because

there is little communication among programs, and because each organization has its own eligibility standards and rules.

There are varying perspectives on how relationships among institutions might be developed, but a frequent theme is that the school may be the best candidate among community institutions for taking a leadership role in initiating and strengthening links that support children (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Heath & McLaughlin, 1987). This may mean taking over a range of services directly, as Haberman (1992) describes, by seeking “funds for expanded vocational training, preschool and after-school, parent education, literacy training and anything else that is available” (p.35), or it may mean becoming a “nexus of institutions” within the community; a broker of multiple services (Heath & McLaughlin, 1987, p. 579).

Others call into question whether schools should, or have the ability to, take on additional roles in the lives of children. Powell (1991) suggests that schools are envisioned as conduits for services, “owing to the school’s contact with, and access to a large segment of the American population” (p. 308). He examines several policy issues that schools must consider if they are to take on the role of family support system, and concludes that schools have limited capacities for providing a range of services. Haberman (1992) called into question the school’s ability to “overcome demographic, social

and political realities” (p.37), and argued that we need to learn more about how various community contexts educate in order to build initiatives from this information. Bronfenbrenner, Moen & Garbarino (1984) suggest focusing on the links between school characteristics and community characteristics, “how the relation of the school to the rest of the community can influence what happens in the immediate settings in which development takes place, such as the family, the classroom, the peer group ... and the work place” (p. 30).

Much of the current emphasis of reform efforts is on developing partnerships (Epstein, 1991; Davies, Burch & Johnson, 1992). Partnerships are distinguished from other kinds of school-family-community relationships in that they are based on collaboration and the development of shared goals as well as shared responsibility for implementing changes, in contrast to relationships in which family and community are viewed as having separate and distinct roles from the school, or are expected to support the school’s agenda (see, e.g., Cervone & O’Leary, 1982; Epstein, 1987, 1990; Swap, 1993). One basis for the emphasis on developing partnerships is the acknowledgement that in order to provide children with the experiences that promote positive academic, social, and emotional development, the many institutions that constitute children’s worlds must seek ways to work

collaboratively towards these goals (Krist & McLaughlin, 1990; Melaville & Blank, 1993). Collaboration demands that we look beyond any single institution as either the source of the problems or of the solutions. Another basis for this emphasis is that public trust in schools is low; establishing new relationships which increase family and community participation in school activities and governance, as well as school participation in communities, is seen as an important means to regain public confidence (Davies, 1981; Saxe, 1984). Whether the reason for developing school-family-community partnerships is developmental or political, the implication is that the key stakeholders should be involved in decision-making about reform (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

Understanding the benefits of and barriers to school-family-community relationships, as well as the rationales for developing programs, provides an important starting point for local groups who are working to develop and modify these relationships. However, school-family-community involvement programs are interpreted and implemented in particular ways in individual settings, because schools, families and communities have unique histories, characteristics and goals, and they develop novel ways of working together (Davies, 1981; Lutz & Merz, 1992). Developing relationships and programs is often a complex, ongoing process of mediating ideas, beliefs, skills, and

resources that various participants bring to their work together (Comer, 1980; Davies, Burch and Johnson, 1992; Grant, 1989).

In the prologue to Learning Relations (1989), Sister Doreen Grant writes, “The plan seemed very simple. I would knock on doors and ask parents if they were willing to discuss their children’s education with me.” In her book, she goes on to describe the twelve years of work and study to build a “coherent learning milieu” (p. xii) for children by connecting school, family and community in Glasgow, England. The plan turned out to be anything but simple. Sister Doreen tells of the cautious, slow journey that she, the residents of “Wine Alley” and the local school staff made to learn from one another and to affect children’s learning and attitudes towards school. She documents the experiences and assumptions that shaped the way the school staff and parents viewed one another and themselves. She tells stories of the events and activities that developed over time, and of the difficulties of maintaining these activities in the face of both interpersonal and bureaucratic roadblocks.

James Comer, in School Power (1980a), also describes a complex, long-term and evolving relationship among schools, university staff, families and community members in New Haven Connecticut. Dr. Comer gives an account of the year-to-year developments at two schools, where Yale Child

Study staff sought to collaborate with school staff and families to apply social and behavioral science principles and knowledge of child development to every aspect of the school's programs. He tells of the continual efforts to build and maintain relationships, to overcome stereotypes that different constituencies had of one another, and to develop shared understandings and learn how to share expertise. He emphasized that "no problem or adaptive arrangement or solution is permanent in an ever-changing school and society. Old and new problems demand repeated attention" (p. 208).

These authors have provided detailed accounts of the challenges and benefits of building relationships among schools, families and communities. Grant (1989) and Comer (1980a) describe the programs, processes and interactions that helped me understand what school-family-community relationships looked like in these particular settings. From their stories, I get a sense of the places, the people, and the issues that guided them in their work together.

Several national projects have also published case studies, monographs, and reports that provide comprehensive analyses of the programs they are developing and studying. Davies, Burch & Johnson (1992) reported on practices of schools in the League of Schools Reaching Out project; Epstein & Dauber (1989a, 1989b) gave detailed examples from the

Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) program; Rich (1992) described the evolution of the New Partnerships for Education project, and Nettles (1991) cited several school-community project evaluation reports and case studies which provide details of the planning and organizational stages of these projects, as well as accounts of the difficulties participants encountered. In this literature are stories of people learning to work together, building relationships, sharing ideas and experiences, agreeing, disagreeing, and taking action to change their environments. Descriptions were woven through a solid conceptual framework, gained both in the process of their work and in reflection upon it. Detailed accounts of existing and developing partnerships in local settings are called for as one means of furthering our understandings of school-family-community relationships (Chrispeels, 1991; Epstein, 1991; Henderson, 1987). These accounts can enrich our existing frameworks for understanding collaborative relationships and further inform practice and policy.

This dissertation study contributes to the literature on school-family-community relations by providing a detailed account of a project called Harmony in Action. The Harmony in Action project focused on implementing activities to build a sense of school spirit and identity, and on ways to involve families and community members in an elementary school

setting. HIA began at Emerson elementary school during a time when staff were beginning to articulate their values and beliefs about involving families and community members in various ways in the school setting. It also began during a time of challenging relationships among staff and between staff and university participants who were involved together at Emerson as it developed as a Professional Development School (PDS). Describing and interpreting the project's development in this particular setting places it among accounts in the literature of how local groups develop in settings that have unique histories and characteristics.

This study examines the ways that parents and community members were involved in the school and the roles they had as decision makers, supporters, and advocates. It also compares and contrasts family and community involvement activities undertaken by Harmony in Action members. Here, it links to and contributes to literature which describes categories of parent and community involvement in the schools. This study also offers a conceptual framework that describes the processes in which Harmony in Action members engaged as they implemented activities in the school. This framework may be a useful tool for others studying cases of school-family-community involvement.

CHAPTER 2

GETTING TO KNOW THE EMERSON LANDSCAPE

I enjoyed the drive from the university out to Emerson elementary school every day. Once I got past the congestion of the campus and crossed the railroad tracks, I looked forward to the long stretch headed south on Commerce Road past some of the MSU agricultural fields. It gave me time to think, breathe, and eat breakfast or lunch, which I often did in my car. Turning left on Harris Road, one of the main thoroughfares in the town of Harris where Emerson was located, I always looked for the giant billboard that advertised a local civic group that I had studied for my ethnography class. Then the blue auto parts building, then the left turn on Dix. The first few times I went to Emerson, I missed the little road that would get me to the school, tucked back in a small neighborhood away from the busier Harris Road.

I almost always parked in the lot across from the tree, and juggled my backpack, purse, and other belongings over to the main entrance. Left to the office, hello to Jean, the secretary, check the mailbox, and I was off to my destination for the day. Since I wore many hats during the time I was at Emerson, this might be a classroom, or the conference room, or the Community Room. A right out of the office through the lunchroom took me

to the side of the building where the upper elementary classrooms, the teacher's lounge, and the conference room were. A left out of the office took me past the custodian's room, and to the side of the building where the Community room, the lower elementary classrooms, and the teacher's supply and work room were. Emerson was a big square, with a courtyard in the middle. It never failed that when I was on one side, I needed to be on the other. The courtyard wasn't considered a cut-through, so I'm sure that my footsteps, along with many others, eventually wore a track around the school hallways. Either path that I took, there was a busy, but calm, hum of active students and teachers.

I came to Emerson many, many days during my 5 years at Michigan State University (MSU). I was a graduate student in the College of Education, and Emerson was a Professional Development School (PDS) in partnership with MSU, under the auspices of the Michigan Partnership for New Education (MPNE). There were several faculty and graduate students who came to Emerson almost daily, to do the work described in Tomorrow's Schools (Holmes Group, 1990). This document describes PDSs as settings where the nature of university/school relationships are redefined in the context of a restructured school environment and where teachers and other practitioners collaborate with university faculty to improve teaching and

learning for K-12 students, improve the education of new teachers and other educators, and make supporting changes in both the schools and universities as organizations. In PDS's teachers and other professionals are provided with time and opportunities to engage in many reform activities.

Each year since 1989, when Emerson became a PDS, groups of teachers and university participants formed project or study groups focused on particular areas of interest such as mathematics, science, literacy and technology. Teachers and university participants worked together in a variety of ways, including collaborative teaching, observing each other, designing curriculum and assessment, interviewing students, and analyzing and writing about their inquiry. Teachers had reassigned time to meet with each other and with university participants. Co-teachers were assigned to each classroom during teacher's reassigned time, so that children had a consistent teaching staff. They may teach in more than one classroom, but they were in the same classrooms for the same subjects and activities each week.

PDS planning meetings were held each year to reflect on the previous year and write the year-end report, and to write the work plan for the upcoming year. The work plan was to be based on, and build on, the previous year's work and modifications. Each PDS project submitted a work plan and a proposed budget to the planning group; these plans were refined

and combined into Emerson's PDS plan, which was submitted to MPNE.

Included in the budgets were co-teacher hours, graduate student hours, stipends for teachers in PDS projects, curriculum supplies, research supplies, and travel expenses for workshops and dissemination efforts.

Earlier I said that I wore many hats at Emerson. As a graduate student, I had the opportunity to work with three different PDS projects at Emerson, sometimes more than one at a time. During the 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 school years, I worked with the Math Study Group (MSG). In the spring of 1992, I also joined the Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum (DAC) group. During 1992-93 and 1993-94, I worked with the DAC group (renamed to Home-School Connections in 1993), and the Harmony in Action group. Thus, the reason for my tracks around Emerson.

Emerson-MSU PDS went through many changes while I was there. Looking at the development of this PDS over time helped me to understand the climate in which Harmony in Action had its genesis and development. The first two years that Emerson was a PDS (1989-90 and 1990-91), much of the work of educational inquiry and research took place in the context of three projects – Math Study Group (MSG), Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum (DAC), and Literacy in Science and Social Studies (LISSS). During Emerson's third year as a PDS (1991-1992), participants in these

groups, and one new group – Teacher Education (TE) – developed a shared focus on “Creating Visions of Literacy” which represented an effort to develop a building-wide discourse and learning community.

Each of the projects articulated the ways that they would address five components:

- Restructuring of discourse and learning communities
- Curriculum planning and implementation
- Alternative assessment
- Educational and communication links with parents and community
- Inquiry/research

Within this shared focus, a new strand of work was being highlighted that hadn’t previously been as explicit – links with parents and community.

In the 1991-92 work plan, this aspect of PDS work was described as “stepping outside the traditional boundaries of classroom teaching and learning.” The plan stated that,

We will extend the learning community idea to parents and the larger Harrison Community. We want to challenge past patterns of blaming parents and the community for not sending students to school with rich experiential learning, with mature social development, and with stable emotional development. Instead we aim to work with parents as genuine partners and participants in the educational process. (p. 4)

In addition to developing a shared focus, PDS participants implemented some restructuring to address two concerns that had surfaced the previous year. First, there had been a “lack of opportunity for staff to

interact regularly across projects.” Second, “the fragmentation created by loyalties to particular groups led to communication misunderstandings, tensions, and jealousies that contributed negatively to a building-wide learning community.” Strategies to increase building-wide sharing included 1) cross-project forums each Friday morning; 2) a newsletter, “Explorer,” which included brief articles and updates about projects; 3) a site coordinator position to enhance communication, facilitate schedules, and assist with administrative tasks; 4) an assistant building coordinator position to provide administrative and intellectual support across projects; and 5) a consultant to address communication and relationship issues in the building.

During the 1991-92 school year, Karen James, the physical education teacher, had begun talking with others about some ideas she had to facilitate a building-level sense of belonging and collaboration, to integrate some themes across the school settings (including P.E.), and to involve families and community members, all ideas which were consistent with the building-wide focus. Karen attended the spring, 1992 PDS planning meeting, during which the Work Plan for the next school year was developed. The Harmony in Action project was formed in the nexus between an emerging attention to family and community during 1991-1992 and a more developed attention during 1992-93.

At this meeting, PDS participants articulated the building-wide focus for the fourth PDS year (1992-93), “Creating Visions of Literacy for Communities of Lifelong Learners.” The Building Level Integration with Recess and Lunch (BLIPERL) project, later renamed Harmony in Action, was integrated into the 1992-1993 work plan, along with some other new projects. Karen’s ideas helped to shape and were shaped by the discussions at the planning meeting. The continuing strand of work focusing on links with families and community was articulated in several places throughout the 1992-93 work plan:

A main emphasis in our PDS work during 1992-93 will be to explore the development of literacy in positive communities of learners in classrooms and in the school, and to invite support from and extend support to the larger community in our efforts to promote the six principles embraced by the Holmes Group in Tomorrow’s Schools (1990). (p. 1)

Our vision of “community of learners” has both deepened and broadened over the past three years. Our initial focus was on building classroom learning communities, but as we participated in project groups, in all-school restructuring, in teacher education and in conferences, institutes, and seminars, we became aware of the multiple and overlapping communities in which we were involved. (p. 4)

Our commitment to involving families and community members is reflected in part in our efforts to include them in the new forums we are creating for this year. Individual teachers and projects have worked to involve families and community members in a variety of ways in the past, and their efforts can inform our school-wide emphasis on expanding our community. Highlighting this emphasis is

a natural outgrowth of the ongoing interests and endeavors of our PDS participants. Changing the traditional relationships between home, school and community requires that we examine our assumptions about the roles and responsibilities of each; we must also engender communication about our perceptions of one another. Expanding our community means involving others in our work as a PDS; it also means becoming more involved in the community beyond the school. (p. 5)

Our efforts to create Visions of Literacy for Communities of Lifelong Learners reflects our understanding that our students are at the heart of multiple communities, and that improving these communities strengthens the ways in which they can support students. ... Implicitly or explicitly, it is students' academic, social and emotional learning and development that guides the evaluation of our PDS growth. (p. 8)

We will explore ways to better solicit and document input from family and community members who are involved in our school in a variety of ways. We want to gain a better understanding of how people think and feel about their participation at Emerson, whether it is attending an all-school family event, volunteering in some capacity, sharing information with classrooms, providing a service to the school, attending conferences, or helping their children with homework. (p. 8)

At the same time that they were working to re-conceptualize their understandings of “community” to include families and community members, they were also trying to address some difficult issues about “community” among Emerson staff. One issue in particular was identified as problematic in the 1992-93 work plan:

We also became aware that, for a variety of reasons, not everyone considers themselves a participant in a PDS. Teachers who have not been involved in a project group often think of themselves, and are thought of, as “non-PDS.” ... Our goal in this and future years is to

create a community in which every member feels part of, supports, and is supported by the PDS endeavor, regardless of their level or kind of participation in our school. In order to accomplish this, we must work to change our thinking and our language. "Non-PDS" is not an appropriate label for any of the participants in our school. Rather, we are all PDS participants, whose diverse and unique contributions can be acknowledged and celebrated. (p. 4)

To address concerns about a perceived division between PSD and non-PDS members of the school community, several restructuring efforts were implemented during the 1992-93 school year. Friday morning cross-project groups were redesigned into a more flexible "Sprout Group" format as a way to explore a range of different topics outside the demands of participation in a project group. All-school sharing sessions were to be scheduled during the Friday morning reassigned time. MSU Teacher Education students were available to cover all classrooms so that all Emerson teachers would have the opportunity to participate in the Sprout Groups and all-school sharing sessions. In addition to these opportunities for exploration and discussion, the coordinating council restructured by added two "at-large" representatives to represent Emerson and MSU generally.

Even with the efforts to restructure the governance of and access to PDS work, the 1992-93 school year proved to be one of the most difficult and stressful years for Emerson school staff and university participants. Near the end of the school year, there were discussions about having a vote to decide

whether or not Emerson should remain PDS School. During this time, PDS project participants often prefaced their planning for the following year with “If we’re a PDS next year” The school district decided not to have the vote, but there was a lingering tension that hovered over Emerson as teachers and university participants moved into the next year.

Despite the conflicts and controversies, many efforts to build a sense of community within classrooms, and many efforts to involve families and community members were pursued. Because Harmony in Action’s work was focused on all-school activities, their accomplishments, such as the Student of the Week program, and all-school assemblies, may have been some of the most visible of all the projects. However, their identity as a PDS project was somewhat obscured, in part because they involved people who did not fit into traditional PDS project members categories, and in part because they included all students in the activities that they planned.

During the 1993-94 school year, Emerson’s fifth year as a PDS and Harmony in Action’s second year as a project, the building- wide focus was, “Improving Children’s Education through School Improvement.” The first paragraph in the 1993-94 work plan states:

Discussions during 1992-93 school year have led to a determination that the primary focus of work at Emerson school should be the improvement of children's education in accordance with mandates and guidelines for school improvement articulated by the State of Michigan (PA 25), the Harris School District, and by the Emerson School Improvement team. The School Improvement focus is one which is necessary, whether or not the Emerson/MSU PDS relationship continues. However, the goals of School Improvement and the PDS principles are so closely aligned, that engaging in PDS work is an effective way in which to meet the School Improvement goals, while at the same time participating in professional development activities such as research and teacher education which go beyond the scope of PA 25. (p. 3)

Again, the structural organization of Emerson changed. The School Improvement Steering Committee, which had been required for each school by the district for several years, was revitalized at Emerson. This Committee was to oversee the governance of Emerson. On this committee were representatives from all groups invested in the work going on at Emerson, including teachers, university participants, PDS participants, community members, and support staff. In response to district-wide staff reassignments related to the opening of two new schools, the Emerson 1993-94 work plan also included strategies to welcome new staff and provide opportunities to explore existing PDS projects. Using reassigned time, new Emerson staff could visit various projects to decide which if any, they might be interested in joining. One of the reassignments that rocked the Harmony in Action group was that Karen, who had initiated the project, was being reassigned to the

junior high school, due to district cuts in physical education. Harmony in Action members, and others in the school, were saddened and frustrated that Karen would not be at Emerson the coming school year. In August, before school started, I met with Sarah, a Harmony in Action member, to do an interview. In a memo to myself later that day, I wrote:

Went to Emerson today to interview Sarah. Walked out of the office and there was Karen. Karen, Jean, Sarah, Bobbie and I went to lunch together. Everyone is more than a little disappointed that Karen was not assigned to Emerson for next year. Everyone kept saying, "let's not talk about it, let's not think about it, maybe something will still change." There is some talk that there still may be some shifting around and Karen could possibly get a classroom position or possibly trade with one of the other gym teachers. To backtrack a bit – Karen called me on the phone the day we got back from Bangkok. She said she had been assigned to the Jr. High but was trying to work something out. My first reaction was that it would not be the same without Karen; Harmony in Action was her baby even though a lot of people participated and got things going. Karen was the mainstay, the communicator.

As it turned out, Karen did return to Emerson later in the year after a legislative vote passing the Hedley Act allowed the district to reinstate physical education to twice a week. Harmony in Action started out without Karen that fall, but her vision and voice remained in the project plans.

The focus on building links with families and community members remained as Emerson shifted to working within the framework of School Improvement. The ongoing work of Harmony in Action and other PDS

projects supported, and was supported by, the three goals outlined by the

Emerson School Improvement Team:

- To improve student learning
- To facilitate a positive atmosphere and to improve student, school and parent communication. We feel that when students, parents and teachers feel positively about the school, it has a direct and positive affect on student achievement.
- To celebrate and welcome diversity in heritage, customs, interest, ability, creativity and thought

Since I didn't live in Harris, Emerson school and the people inside were my focus. Once in the building, and busy in my interactions with students, teachers, and others, I didn't often think about where all of these people lived, worked, and played. However, as my work in the Harmony in Action group developed, I had an interest and a need to learn about the broader community I visited nearly every day. I had read, and even written reports for PDS purposes that described "the setting." A similar description was moved from one report to another:

Emerson Elementary School is in the Harris-Dover school district, the second largest in the area. This area was originally a farming community, but is rapidly becoming a suburb of the capital city, which is just 10 miles away. It is primarily a residential community with very little industry and few small businesses. Harris is a predominantly white community of 11,750, with a diverse socioeconomic population ranging from working class people to middle income people. Emerson's families reflect this socioeconomic diversity. It also reflects a diversity of family forms. Of the nearly 400 students at Emerson, 54% live with other than their two biological parents. The student population includes a large percentage who are

considered “at risk,” as well as children who are average to above average students. Of Emerson’s students, 18% receive free or reduced lunch, and 6% receive Special Education services.

Emerson’s community demonstrates support for education in many ways, including passing school millages and a bond issue to build two new buildings. Educators in this school district are seeking ways to strengthen communication and support between and among schools. The district is also currently developing “local area partnerships” with several community organizations, such as the School Business Alliance and the Family Community Involvement Coalition, in order to explore ways in which various institutions and organizations can work together to meet the educational, social, emotional, and economic needs of all community members.

Although this description included much helpful and important information, it didn’t really give me a “feel” for Harris, or for parts of the community that were involved in Emerson. These insights I got from talking to people who did live, work and play in Harris. For example, Sarah, a Harmony in Action member, shared this story as we were getting ready to plan a display for the Harris Education Fair, an event hosted by the district to showcase school programs and other community organizations and agencies:

We moved here four years ago in May and the weekend we moved in was the Ed Fair. And people had told us to go to get an idea of the area and the schools and stuff, and I’ll never forget, as long as I live, we went to that Ed Fair and met neighbors, met the superintendent, met some real estate agents that we knew ... and it just gave me such a positive impression of this school district and it was the first impression we had – we just moved in It felt really good to know that these good things were going on in this school district that we had just moved to I was impressed with that Business Alliance. They were the first one I saw when I came in the door, and thought wasn’t this neat – the superintendent was at that table, and it was like

this big stress for community and business and schools and everybody all working together and it was real impressive.

I also asked Renae, the principal, to help me get a handle on the “community.” Her insights and observations about different aspects of the Harris/Emerson community were helpful. One aspect of Harris that I hadn’t considered on my travels down the “country side” of Harris from the university was the geography of the town itself. Renae described it this way:

It is real slippery. If you go to Martin, you know you’re in Martin, because there’s a downtown. If you go to Harris, you don’t know you’re in Harris. You’re somewhere between Martin and Landon. So there’s no symbolic center in Harris If we had a courthouse, people would say, “Well, that’s downtown Harris” I think just the geographical non-entity of Harris creates some problems I think that Family Community Involvement Coalition is trying really hard to build a sense of community – I think the Harris School-Business alliance wants to build a sense of community and I think both of those groups also are aware that lack of a symbolic center is an obstacle.

One day when I had some extra time, I decided to test Renae’s statement that Harris was a geographical non-entity. I started in Landon, and went toward Harris taking the “town route” (different than my farm-field route from the University). I decided that her assertion was pretty accurate. Driving from Landon, I never really noticed where Harris started, but I knew I was there when I reached Harris Road and recognized the pizza shop owned by an Emerson family. I knew the school was just around the corner. Not, perhaps, a reliable test of the theory, but it helped me to have a sense of what

Renae had been describing about Harris. Renae also felt that geography affected how families identified with their schools:

Again, it's a geographical thing. Harris-Dover public schools tries to be inclusive of Dover, but Dover very much has its own identity – it's very much a community unto itself. Then there are sort of the 'in-town' folks, even though there's no real center, the people who kind of live in town have a sense of being in Harris, but then there are some neighborhoods that are almost Landon. Some even have a Landon address. And those seem to be the places that are looking for a community and identity even more so than the in-town or the Dover, they identify with the school. And we happen to have the bulk of those peripheral areas And so those areas I think more than any place else identify with their school as their sense of community, as the social activities that go on at the school are one of the only things – and the summer teams, the flag football and the softball, and all those things tend to be how those people relate to community around their children so – and then those kids all kind of merge in middle school and junior high and high school, then there's sort of "we're all in this together" but at the elementary years, that elementary school takes on a little more focus because we don't have a symbolic center.

Renae also helped me to understand a bit more about Emerson's families. I had heard some references to different kinds of families at Emerson, but I wasn't sure what to make of them. Renae seemed to pick her words carefully as she tried to provide me with information that might at least clarify what I had occasionally heard:

We have some real definite neighborhoods like the trailer park, that's a neighborhood that's ours. Um, the Falls Terrace apartments, that whole complex is a neighborhood - that's ours. So we have some definite neighborhoods that are - how do I put this? West Village for instance – those people don't stay there long – a year or two is about

as long as we have anyone from there. And so that has school-community relationship implications. The trailer park has a whole other set of relationships because a lot of the inner-relationship problems in the trailer park carry over into the school. Also there's another neighborhood that has been traditionally Emerson's for a very long time, that's that little neighborhood just east of Anderson, and that is a neighborhood that has had traditionally had very low self esteem, had a lot of social problems. A few long-term stable families have established themselves in that neighborhood and worked very hard to overcome that – but there are several duplexes there that continue to have transient people with lots of problems, so that's a neighborhood that is trying to figure out who it is, and trying to not to be what it has been.

Renae's comments were admittedly subjective; I had simply asked her to help me understand some of the references I'd heard to different groups of children. Her next comments also gave me some insight into why she had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Student of the Week program, which honored all children for a variety of contributions to the Emerson community:

I'm sensitive to that neighborhood because I grew up in a place like that. When I was in elementary school where I lived was called Langley Hill, it also happened to be the only neighborhood that had black and white people, and I walked into the principals office, and I must have been in 6th or 7th grade – they went K-8 at that time – and the principal and the secretary were talking about that “Langley Hill trash” and I remember saying, I resent that, why would you say something like that? But it had a real impact on me cause I had never thought of where I lived that way and to have these people that I respected talking about me – my neighborhood – that way was really insulting.

In her opinion, the neighborhood that children came from didn't necessarily affect family involvement:

...and we have a lot of participation in school activities from all of those areas. Those parents come to things around their children.

I had learned a little about the communities of Emerson elementary school. In crafting the PDS work plans during the last three years, Emerson had continually moved towards a stronger emphasis on interacting and working with families and community members. To do the work described in the project descriptions, everyone would have to learn more about the communities of Emerson. Harmony in Action members approached this endeavor in a variety of ways over two years. This study is about some of those endeavors. Harmony in Action "grew up" in a school that nurtured, at least in theory, the kinds of relationships that it was trying to build. It also "grew up" in a school that was struggling with conflict that often comes with change and innovation. Both of these aspects contributed to how Harmony in Action attempted to strengthen family and community and involvement at Emerson.

CHAPTER 3

FOLLOWING THE COMPASS: EVOLUTION AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Before I ever heard of the Harmony in Action project, I knew that I would be doing qualitative research for my dissertation. I had been taking courses on qualitative research at MSU, and found myself drawn to the idea of participant observation as a way to learn about people, places and topics in education. I also found myself immersed in and intrigued by the kinds of stories and accounts that interpretive research produced. Also, all of the work that I had been doing as a graduate assistant since 1989 was qualitative-case studies of mathematics teaching for the Elementary Subjects Center at MSU, and participant-observation in two PDS groups at Emerson who were exploring and documenting changes in teaching and learning.

I had arrived at MSU during a time when faculties in Teacher Education and Educational Psychology were making a shift from a reliance on quantitative methodologies to an appreciation of qualitative methodologies as a way to make sense of educational processes in new ways. This shift in methodology was in part a consequence of the kinds of reform being made in educational institutions from kindergarten to college. Colleges and universities were changing the ways that they worked with both preservice

and practicing teachers; professors were charged with “coming down from their ivory towers” and getting back into the schools, not as the “experts” but as co-learners with teachers and students. School teachers were being asked to take on new roles as mentors, co-faculty, action researchers, and writers. Many of these changes and processes could not be studied statistically, but required different approaches that allow for the complexity and ambiguity involved when participants strive to make changes and simultaneously study these changes (e.g., Brown, 1991; Campbell, 1988; Lieberman, 1992; Wagner, 1990).

Evolution of the Study

I began to document Harmony in Action’s development during spring and summer 1992 Professional Development School (PDS) planning meetings, when school and university staff gathered to reflect on the current year’s progress and plan for the upcoming school year. I was a graduate student, and responsible for providing daily summaries to facilitate discussion. I had also volunteered to consolidate the 1991-92 Year-end Report and the 1992-93 Work Plan based on these discussions. I was going to be the Assistant Building Coordinator at Emerson during the 1992-93 school year; this was a liaison position between the school and the university. I thought that synthesizing information about all of the PDS projects would

help me in this position. During the 1991-92 school year, concerns had surfaced about lack of opportunities for projects to share ideas and information with one another, and about fragmentation among teachers, administration, and MSU participants. Concurrently, the projects had worked together to develop a shared focus – “Creating Visions of Literacy” – and had begun to highlight an emerging component of their which included fostering interactions with families and community members.

Karen James, who came to Emerson in the fall of 1991 as the physical education teacher, had not been involved in a PDS project her first year. She began to talk with others about a range of ideas she had for developing a sense of belonging and collaboration for both students and adults at the building level. She wondered if there was a way to integrate some common themes from various PDS projects during her physical education classes. Parents and staff had raised concerns about conflict between children on the playground, and Karen thought family and community members might be enlisted to model cooperative play and problem solving. Karen also wanted to promote an appreciation of diversity among children and staff at Emerson, and felt that family and community members could be an important resource in this area.

Karen participated in the spring and summer 1992 PDS planning sessions during which the building-wide focus for the 1992-93 school year was expanded to the theme of “Visions of Literacy for Communities of Lifelong Learners.” In discussions of how this theme would be addressed in each project and within the school more generally, the focus on involving families and community members was strengthened. Karen’s ideas were consistent with the building-wide theme; with the help of some teachers and some MSU participants, she developed a proposal for an exploratory project that was then titled, “Building Level Integration with Physical Education, Recess, and Lunch” (BLIPERL), and changed to Harmony in Action early in the 1992-93 school year.

When school began in the Fall of 1992, Karen began to spread the word about this new project and invited a range of people, including teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, playground supervisors, and community members to attend an initial meeting where they would begin to talk about activities they could get underway. I joined the project initially because as the assistant building coordinator for this PDS I was to focus on home-school-community relationships in the school as a way to support our building-wide theme. I was already involved in the Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum (DAC) project, which was exploring ways to involve parents in children’s education

through classroom and home activities. Harmony in Action provided a different approach to developing and studying home-school-community relationships. Also, I was simply curious about what would happen in this new project. This was the first PDS project in this school to formally involve school staff in addition to teachers (e.g., paraprofessionals, co-teachers, the secretary, custodians, playground and lunch supervisors), as well as students, family members and community members. How would it get off the ground? How would it develop? How would project members interact and work together? These general questions guided how I watched, listened and participated as a member of this project.

I brought to my participation in HIA what Malinowski (1922) calls ‘foreshadowed problems’ – “Good training in theory, and acquaintance with its latest results” (in Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). My previous study of school-family-community literature, as well as my previous experiences and biases, informed the way I watched and listened as Karen described her ideas and began to get the project underway. I was optimistic and excited about the prospect of a project that started with the intent of involving family and community members as integral participants and decision-makers, rather than only as resources to carry out the school’s agenda. I had a sense that Karen was truly interested in hearing and incorporating student, parent, staff

and community perspectives. During Karen's first year at Emerson, I had observed her involve family and community members in all-school events, as well as provide ways for students to participate in the community, through several community organizations to which she belonged. I hoped this project would go beyond "typical" school practices, such as conferences and open houses, and try to "reach out" to family and community in a variety of ways (Davies, Burch & Johnson, 1992, p. 1). At the same time, my optimism about the HIA project was tempered with what I consider a healthy skepticism about the realities of developing relationships between home, school, and community, again based on my experiences, as well as on the literature which documents the barriers to these relationships.

My previous three years as a graduate assistant in various PDS projects also provided a framework for how I paid attention to Harmony in Action. In other PDS projects in this school, participants generally consisted of a group of teachers, one or two university faculty members, and one or more graduate research assistants. In each project, participants devised different ways of working together, such as collaborative curriculum planning, co-teaching arrangements, documenting classroom activities and reflecting on them, and writing together. My experiences had taught me just how complicated inquiry about teaching and learning could be when teachers and researchers

were learning how to share in decisions about research questions and design, and to develop new roles in the endeavor of constructing and studying innovations in teaching, learning and school structures.

In other PDS projects, project goals and studies emerged in grassroots fashion from the interests, questions, and issues of group members.

Participants had developed an evolving inquiry framework in which formative goals and practices were based on their ongoing work and the study of the processes and outcomes of this work. I had observed teachers learning to think of reflecting on their own practice and studying it systematically as research; I had observed researchers learning to better understand, participate in and honor the daily practices of teaching and learning. These were not easy tasks for either teachers or researchers; three years of collaboration seemed to raise more questions than answers about this endeavor. I wondered if I would see the same kinds of transformations going on in the Harmony in Action project. Would these transformations be complicated by the fact that some of the participants were parents, community members and school staff who had not been immersed in the kind of continual reflection and discussion that others in this school had experienced?

I did not join HIA with a dissertation study in mind; I was there to support and learn about this project. I knew from my past experience with

PDS projects that we would need documentation about the project for our mid-year and year-end reports to the Michigan Partnership for New Education (MPNE); this information was used to determine project continuation. In other PDS projects at Emerson, the university colleagues had initially taken responsibility for documenting and writing about project work; but shared responsibilities for research design, data collection and writing developed gradually. In the fall of 1992, HIA had neither a university faculty member nor graduate student officially involved, so I was the “university person” in this project for the first few months.

Mid-way through the first year, Sid, a faculty member from the Physical Education department joined the project informally (i.e., he did not have load time) and Ron, a P.E. graduate student, was hired as a research assistant to the project. However, I continued throughout the 1992-1993 school year to take extensive notes at meetings, collect documents such as meeting minutes, memos, and surveys, and write up my observations of various activities that the group had implemented. Based on previous research experience in this PDS, and drawing on examples in the literature on fieldwork and interpretive research (Erickson, 1986), I trusted that the study (or studies) of this project would emerge and change over time.

Because the project was formative, it developed in a number of directions as Harmony in Action project members initiated a range of activities, including a Student of the Week program, involving members of the Physically Challenged Athletes of Mid-Michigan (PCAMM) in classrooms and on the playground, holding all-school assemblies, and planning special activities during recesses. Harmony in Action accomplished much during its first year as an “exploratory” project. During summer planning meetings in 1993, the project expanded and refined its goals and strategies. By this time, I knew that I wanted to craft a dissertation study from my involvement with HIA. However, as the project expanded, so did my confusion about what exactly I wanted to “study.” I realized that I could take any “piece” of the project work as the focus of my dissertation. Each of the project activities involved in one way or another taking a look at school-family-community interactions. But having been immersed in the project, and involved to some extent in every “piece,” I kept coming back to the questions about the “whole.”

Reading Grant’s (1989) book, Learning Relations, and Comer’s (1980) book, School Power, was helpful during this time. Both of these authors described in detail the programs, processes and interactions that help us understand what school-family-community relations looked like in these

particular settings. I began to seek out other examples that described the processes involved in developing school-family-community relationships. In this literature I saw many parallels in the experiences that these authors described and our work in Harmony in Action. I wanted others to know about Harmony in Action as I had come to know about the groups I'd been reading about.

As school began in the fall of 1993, I still hadn't submitted an official proposal to study HIA. I continued to document the project for the purposes of our reporting activities for MPNE, but I knew I had been and would continue to "study" this group as a participant observer. I added some structure and layers to the documentation efforts, such as audio taping meetings, tabulating information from surveys done the previous year, and piloting some interview protocols.

All that fall, I kept going back to my fieldnotes, and to notes from conversations with many people, where I'd tried to articulate what I knew and wanted to know about this group. All along, I had been paying attention to processes and interactions within the group and between the project members and others in the school. From my readings about qualitative research methodology (e.g., Miles & Huberman, 1984; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Bodgan & Biklen, 1982; Erickson, 1986). I knew that I had been

doing analysis. Every time I had opened my fat black binder, making a note or jotting a question, or sitting down to write myself a memo after a HIA meeting, I had been paying attention to patterns and themes in the relationships I was experiencing and observing.

However, it wasn't until I began preparing for the Pennsylvania Ethnography Conference in February of 1994 that I recognized what I was doing as the three concurrent flows of activity associated with qualitative data analysis that Miles and Huberman (1984) describe: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (p. 21). About this time, I ran across some notes from one of my committee meetings back in September, where I'd written, "How does HIA manage and negotiate a set of issues/activities?" I can't explain why I hadn't connected with this idea earlier, but in February this scribbled note made a lot of sense to me. Part of what I had been learning from my participation in Harmony in Action was how project members negotiated and managed the goals they had for the school. I further defined what I meant by negotiation (developing and communicating shared understandings, meanings, and purposes) and management (identifying and mobilizing resources, and developing procedures to implement project activities). I had drawn my first tentative "conclusion" about the HIA project! During the conference, I used the

constructs of negotiation and management to help me make sense of the numerous written documents I had been collecting in an artifacts file.

Another understanding that emerged for me was that my analysis was facilitated by having to prepare my ideas for an audience in a public forum. Miles and Huberman (1984) note that “Humans are not very powerful as processors in large amounts of information” (p. 21). Data displays which assemble and organize information are helpful not only to the researcher, but to the recipients of research. In the conference setting, I had a limited time to present and get feedback on my emerging analysis. This pushed me to begin thinking about the data analysis and reduction activities of analysis.

As I prepared for an American Educational Research Association (AERA) poster session in April 1994, I continued to refine the concepts of negotiation and management further by comparing negotiation and management processes within and outside the project group. I prepared a paper that used one of Harmony in Action’s activities, the Student of the Week program, to illustrate the concepts of negotiation and management. The Student of the Week program had started as a student recognition activity that evolved into a weekly family lunch that included student and family participation in filling out a survey about the school. I examined the negotiation and management processes involved in implementing this family

involvement activity at Emerson: How did the project members come to a shared understanding about the importance of recognizing students and involving families? How did they communicate these understandings to family members and Emerson staff? How did they identify people who would carry out activities related to Student of the Week activities? How did they manage the routines and tasks required by family members and others in the school?

I drew examples from project meetings, and from artifacts such as meeting minutes, memos, and surveys to illustrate the processes of negotiation and management. I used the concepts of negotiation and management as a framework for understanding how Harmony in Action members had encouraged (and increased) family involvement through the Student of the Week program at Emerson. I was convinced that I wanted to use this framework to examine some of the other activities that Harmony in Action had initiated to involve families and community members.

As William Foote Whyte (1955) says in the Appendix of Street Corner Society, “I was eighteen months in the field before I knew where my research was going” (p. 321). I reflected on the reason that I had initially joined the Harmony in Action group. I had joined the group in order to support and document what the project did to involve family and community members.

After nearly two years of participation in Harmony in Action, I was ready to articulate the question for my dissertation study that had been guiding my work with Harmony in Action all along:

How did the Harmony in Action project attempt to strengthen family and community involvement at Emerson?

I had already begun to craft one answer to this question as I worked on presentations for the Pennsylvania Ethnography Conference and AERA. Negotiation and management were, in fact processes that the Harmony in Action group used to strengthen family and community involvement, both inside and outside the group. I wanted to continue to look at these processes, as well as other features of how the project involved families and community members at Emerson.

Data Sources

I requested consent from project members to use a range of existing documents and records collected by myself and other Harmony in Action participants from August, 1992 to June, 1994. These documents and records include:

- Field notes taken at meetings as a project participant
- Audio-and videotapes of project meetings (1993-94)

- Videotapes of various activities such as Student of the Week lunches and conflict role play activities
- Documents such proposals, reports, meeting minutes, memos, calendars, brochures, cards, and photographs
- Surveys:

Student of the Week surveys (300)

1993-94 End- of- year student surveys (121)

1993-94 End of year staff, family and MSU surveys (21)

Near the end of the 1993-94 school year, I also interviewed project group members and others adults, as well as 4th and 5th grade students whom had been involved in project activities. I interviewed 15 adults and 13 students.

Analysis

I realized early in my participation with the HIA project that keeping my collections, or data, organized would be important. I chose to use three-ring binders with tabbed section dividers to keep meeting agendas, notes and minutes separate from other written documents like memos to staff, calendars, and flyers.

This proved to be useful when I began to create a chronology for each of the two years of the project (see Appendix A). These chronologies helped

me have an overview of each year, and by shading meeting entries versus other kinds of activities, I could see some pattern of activity over the course of a given year. Separating the meetings from other documents also provided a cross-check that made the chronology more thorough and accurate. For example, I started with just the meetings in the chronology, then added other events, including when memos were sent out, and when activities took place. Sometimes when I was adding an activity to the chronology I ran across a reference to a meeting that was not in my “meeting notes” section. This prompted me look for clues about why this meeting was not in the notes – was it cancelled? Or was I sick that day?

On the meeting transcripts, and on other documents, I used a simple coding abbreviation that reflected the four constructs of negotiating within the group (NIG), negotiating outside the group (NOG), managing within the group (MIG), and managing outside the group (MOG). At another level of data reduction and display, I created summary sheets displaying cells for these four constructs. I used these summary sheets to try to display condensed information from meetings. As Miles and Huberman (1984) mention, creating a good display format usually requires a number of iterations (p. 80).

I started with one summary sheet per meeting, but quickly realized that there was not enough room to record all the information from a meeting on one sheet. Also, I was losing my focus on various activities that involved families and community members. So another iteration with these summary sheets was to use one sheet for each topic that was discussed at the meeting, such as “planning family nights” or “how to invite community members to help implement the Recess Activities plan.” On this *by-topic* summary sheet (see Appendix B) I also added small circled numbers by each piece of summarized text so that I could still see the flow of the conversation, even though in a very digested form.

Looking at the chronology and at the negotiation and management processes across several different strands of activities, led me to another level of analysis. I noticed that there were differences in the way that various activities got played out. The Student of the Week program, for example, had seemed be a relatively simple and easy way to get families involved in the school. The focus of the program, during both the first year (i.e., student recognition) and the second year (i.e., student recognition, family involvement to celebrate children, and gaining student input) seemed to be ones that were fairly easy to agree on by both families and school staff. Other activities were also relatively easy to negotiate and manage, such as the involving community

members from the Physically Challenged Athletes of Mid-Michigan (PCAMM) in the school. Some activities, however, were more difficult to “pull off,” such as involving parents and community members in the Recess Activities program. The project members seemed to have more difficulty articulating their vision of the program; the logistics of managing this program were also more complicated. I decided that a closer look at various family and community involvement activities would be helpful.

Writing

Writing about findings and creating a story line is, of course, another form of analysis. I didn’t want to leave anything out about the hard work of the project group members, or about my hard work of doing the study. There were many aspects to share about this group that had taken on the endeavor of trying to bring a school together in spirit, and to open the doors of this school a little wider to family and community members. There were many ways that the story could have been told. In choosing to focus on the group processes of negotiation and management, and in further choosing to concentrate on some of the specific activities that project members attempted to implement, I had to let go of some good data, and some good ideas. Mentors, friends, and colleagues assured me that there would be other opportunities to tell these stories.

CHAPTER 4

A LITTLE PIECE OF LAND: HARMONY IN ACTION IN THE EMERSON LANDSCAPE

*HARMONY IN ACTION is a project at Emerson*MSU Professional Development School in Harris Michigan. The Harmony in Action project involves school staff, students, families, community members, and MSU participants. The overarching purpose of the Harmony in Action project is to promote the development of a positive learning community for everyone involved at Emerson Elementary School. We pursued a variety of activities, which are centered on four main goals:*

- *Promoting a sense of belonging and school spirit*
- *Promoting cooperation, problem-solving and independence*
- *Promoting interactions among school, family and community members*
- *Promoting an understanding and appreciation of diversity*

Specific activities are outlined in this brochure but we continually evaluate and revise our work in response to particular issues and interests of students, staff, families, community members and MSU participants. We welcome your participation, expertise and input about our project! Our work together has reinforced the belief that HARMONY can only be realized through thoughtful ACTION on the part of all community members.

This introduction in a brochure (see Appendix C) developed by Harmony in Action members during the second year of the project was a representation of the project's visions, of who was involved and of how participants approached their work. During interviews with project members and others in the school, I asked them how they would describe Harmony in Action to someone who didn't know about it. Many of them commented,

“Oh, I’ve done that lots of times.” Often when they told me how they described Harmony in Action, they included, in varying amounts of detail, *who* was in the group, *when* they met, *what* kinds of activities they did, and *why* they did those activities. I used these categories to organize this chapter to describe “What is Harmony in Action”? In the final section of the chapter, I also introduce ideas about *how* Harmony in Action did its work.

Who Was Harmony in Action?

Karen James initiated the Harmony in Action project. Project members and others in the school repeatedly said that HIA started with Karen’s visions for the school. In doing interviews, I found that Karen had begun to share ideas with Renae, the principal, and Ruth, a 5th grade teacher throughout the 1991-92 school year. During the spring 1992 PDS planning meetings, Dwight Carson, an MSU faculty who had been working with two other PDS groups, helped Karen formalize her ideas into a proposal for an exploratory PDS project. It was called Building Level Integration with Physical Education, Recess and Lunch (BLIPERL), but renamed Harmony in Action early in the fall. Karen was the only Emerson teacher listed on the project proposal, but by the first meeting in October, 1992, she had recruited others to join her. During the summer and fall, Karen spread the word about this new project and invited a range of people, including teachers, parents,

paraprofessionals, playground supervisors, and community members to attend an initial meeting where they would begin to talk about activities they could get under way.

On October 6, 1992, the BLIPERL group had its first meeting after school in a classroom. At that meeting were Karen, Ruth, Renae, Tahna (1st grade teacher), Laurie (a co-teacher), Olga, Melanie and Dawn (parents), Jocelyn (a supervisor from a community agency for developmentally delayed adults), and me (a graduate student).

Every Harmony in Action meeting over the course of two years was “open” to anyone in the school community – parents, school staff, community members. Karen stressed from the very beginning that she wanted the group to be inclusive of many people from many backgrounds. Simply announcing that meetings are open doesn’t assure that people feel comfortable to come. Karen and Ruth were instrumental in making sure this message felt genuine to others by verbally inviting them to meetings. Karen asked Jocelyn to come because she wanted to find a way to have developmentally delayed adults involved in the school. Ruth asked Olga, who was a parent of a child in her classroom, to come. Later, Olga invited another parent, Liz, to help her with the Student of the Week program. This kind of word-of-mouth and personal invitation remained an effective way to get people involved in a variety of

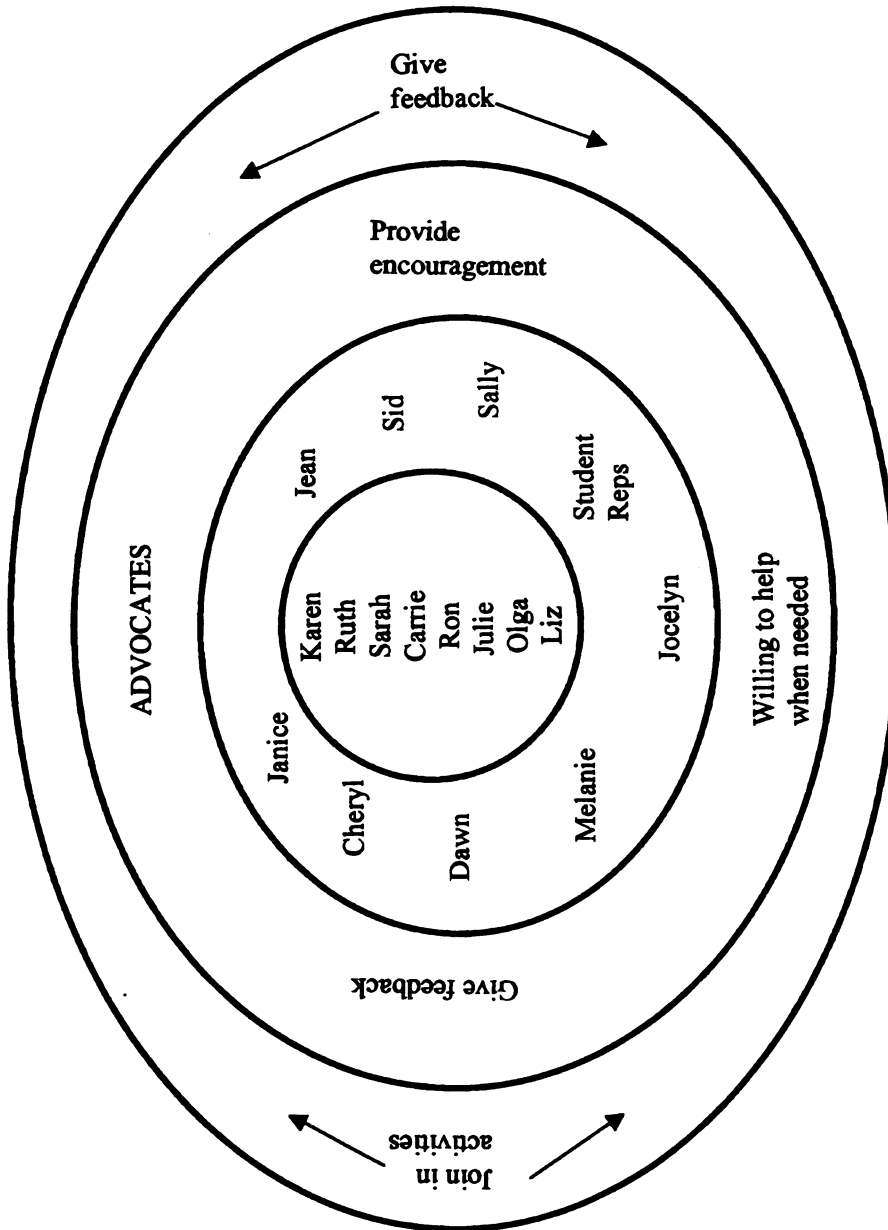
ways over the next two years. Written invitations to meetings were also included in almost every memo or notice sent to staff and families. Another way that the group tried to encourage participation during the first year was to schedule alternating evening and breakfast meetings so that a range of people might be able to attend one or the other.

During the first few months, some people who were interested in and supportive of the project attended one or two meetings, and others came in later that hadn't been at the initial meetings. Some teachers, like Tahna and Sheila (kindergarten teacher) were very supportive of the group, but were involved in other PDS projects or had other responsibilities within the school or district.

Eventually, as with most groups, there was a "core" set of people who attended most of the meetings and who did the bulk of the project work (see Figure 1). These core people remained fairly consistent over the two years that I documented the project, and included Karen, Ruth, Sarah (a paraprofessional), Carrie (a co-teacher), Ron and myself (grad students), and Olga and Liz (parents). The first year, Laurie was also a part of the core group, and volunteered to do minutes of each meeting. She went on maternity leave the second year of the project. Even when Karen was assigned to teach junior high English during the first part of the second year, she continued to

Figure 1

Harmony in Action Participants



attend meetings and help with activities when she could. At the first meeting in September, 1993, Karen introduced her self as “an Emerson misplaced urchin.” She had been reassigned due to the district cutting physical education classes to once a week per classroom. She returned to Emerson as the P.E. teacher after a legislative vote passing the Hedley Act allowed the district to reinstate physical education to twice a week. My sense of who was in this core group was confirmed when I did interviews with HIA members, other teachers, and students. Nearly everyone listed the same people as being involved in HIA.

A second “layer” of participants were people involved in project work on a regular basis, but who did not necessarily attend meetings regularly. Included in this group were Cheryl and Janice (paraprofessionals and parents), Melanie & Dawn (parents), Jean (secretary), Sid (MSU faculty), Jocelyn, and Sally (community member). Sally was Emerson’s liaison to the Harris School Business Alliance, a school district initiative to link business people with schools. The second year of the project, Student Representatives were also included in this second layer of people. A third layer of people, including several teachers, the custodian, and some community members, were willing to be called on to help with special activities or events, and were considered by project members as “advocates” of the project. A fourth layer

of people were others in the school who participated in activities that HIA planned for the school. Some of these people also gave us feedback when asked directly, in the context of staff meetings, and on surveys HIA sent out. The diagram below illustrates these four layers of project participants. The core group included two teachers, two parents, two university students, a paraprofessional and a co-teacher, while the second “layer” included four parents (two of whom were also paraprofessionals at Emerson), one university faculty, the school secretary, two community representatives, Emerson’s student representatives. The people who were most involved with the project included all of the groups Karen intended to include when she originally developed the PDS proposal.

When and Where Was Harmony in Action?

During both school years, the HIA project kept fairly regular schedule of meetings. This was in part to help project members, most of whom had pretty busy schedules, and in part to help the group become “institutionalized” in the school setting and community. It’s Thursday night, it must be meatloaf! By November of 1992, Harmony in Action meetings alternated for the remainder of the school year between Thursday evenings at Emerson in a classroom, and Friday mornings before school at the Darly Café (owned by a family whose children attended Emerson). The Darly Café was

also where the School-Business Alliance met on Friday mornings once a month.

During the 1993-94 school year, the group met every other Thursday evening and once a month on Tuesday mornings during the school day. Karen and Ruth received release time to attend Tuesday morning meetings. During this year we met in the Community Room at Emerson. A new elementary school had opened in the district that fall, alleviating overcrowding at some other elementary schools. There was an extra classroom at Emerson, which had been used for storage while the new gym and library were being built. In September, Harmony in Action organized a “Create the Community Room Night.” From teachers, families, and community members, we’d gotten donations of couches and chairs, area rugs, pillows, lamps, plants, curtains, a coffee pot, and other items.

Fueled by lasagna and desserts made by Olga, and pizza donated by a local business, 21 adults and 15 children started working after school to transform this one-time elementary school classroom into a welcoming, cozy place for teachers, families, students and volunteers. We cleaned, organized and decorated by hanging curtains and plants, covering bulletin boards with fabric, and painting furniture. The room was organized into two sections - one with soft cozy furniture, and one with a long table and chairs for

meetings. Most of the time, the room was lit with lamps, not fluorescent lights, and soft classical music played from a radio.

This became Harmony in Action's new "home." It was used for our meetings, for our Student of the Week lunches, as a gathering place for Student Representatives, for our Family Nights, and was a place where volunteers in the school could hang a coat, work on projects, or just sit for minute. It was also where the Family Resource Center would eventually be housed. Harmony in Action members had written a grant to provide a "lending library" of books and other materials for families in the school. The Community Room was eventually used for a variety of activities. Community groups occasionally used the room for meetings; Olga met with her girl scout troop there one evening a week; teachers sent small groups of children in with a paraprofessional or volunteer for specific activities like cooking experiences or practicing a play; it was a place for students who needed a quiet place away from the regular classroom environment.

Harmony in Action meeting dates and times were communicated to school, family and community members in a variety of ways. Karen and Ruth gave verbal reminders at staff meetings and the dates were included on a monthly calendar that HIA produced, on memos to staff, and during the second year, on the back of our brochure. District administrators were also

invited to meetings and activities, and were kept informed about the group's projects.

Whenever the group varied from this predictable schedule, notices about the change were posted in the office, and during the second year, were posted on the door of the Community Room, where our meetings were held. Karen, in particular, worried when we changed a meeting date and would often make phone calls or ask group members to inform specific people. Even though most of the time no one besides the core group came to meetings, she wanted to be sure we'd done what we could to inform people of changes, "just in case" someone decided to come to a meeting. An example of this kind of concern is illustrated in the following excerpt from a HIA meeting:

Tuesday morning February 15, 1994 – we were discussing canceling the Thursday evening meeting for February 17, since this was the eve of winter break. I had already put a note in everyone's box asking for input about this. During the meeting, some one suggested that we could meet the following week on the 24th.

Karen: Is there anything we can do for the 17th? So if people come we can tell them we're not coming?

Sarah: Huh?

Karen: We circulate this calendar to 400 families, and to all these people – if people come on the 17th.

Carrie: To the meeting? We've never had that happen yet.

Sarah: Never had anybody just walk in.

Karen: Even like Janice, Cheryl, and Liz and Olga.

Julie: Oh, I put notes in all their boxes about possibly changing that – this little note? Did you get one?

Karen: Right, but we never told ‘em.

Julie: We never decided – so we could just put a note- we could just hang a note up.

Karen: The February 17th meeting has been cancelled and please come on the 24th.

Sarah: That’s a good way to tell em the next meeting – come on the 24th instead.

Karen: OK I just think there’s people that might fall through the cracks – even if we just put a note on the door – or if there’s somebody else we need to call that might be here. Like at MSU.

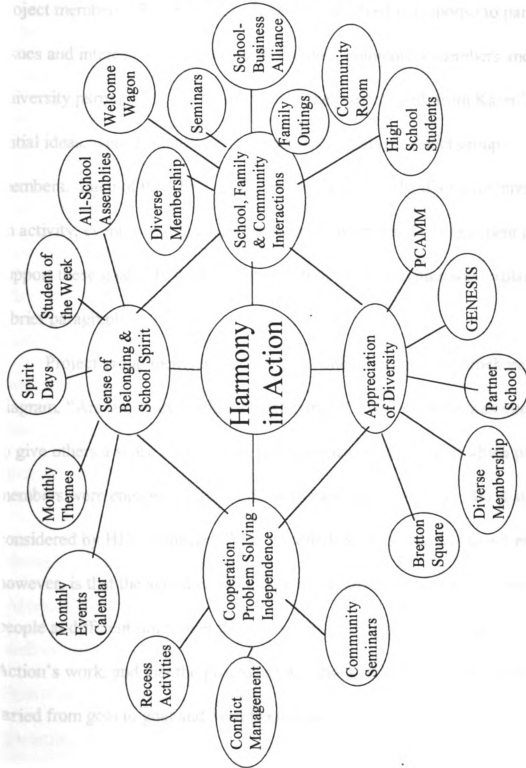
This kind of attention to making sure that people knew about changes in our “availability” seems to be evidence that Karen was genuine about wanting to be inclusive and maintain an open door atmosphere around HIA.

What Did Harmony in Action Do?

During the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years, Harmony in Action developed a wide range of activities around the four project goals that involved the whole school as well as families and community members. The diagram below (see Figure 2), created for the brochure early in the second

Figure 2

Harmony in Action Activities



year of the project, illustrates the diversity of activities that were initiated by project members. These goals and activities evolved in response to particular issues and interests of students, staff, families, community members and university participants. The four goals of the project, built from Karen's initial ideas, were gradually refined and articulated by project group members. Each of the small circles on the outside of the diagram represents an activity, event, or program that project members tried to implement to support these goals. In the brochure, each of these activities was explained in a brief paragraph.

Project group members commented, when they saw the brochure and diagram, "Are we really doing all these things?" The brochure was intended to give others a sense of the scope and diversity of the work in which project members were engaged. Each of the activities was, in fact, an idea that was considered by HIA members. What the brochure and diagram do not reflect, however, is that the activities required varying amounts of time, energy and people at different times over the two years I documented Harmony in Action's work, and that the process of moving from ideas to implementation varied from goal to goal and even from activity to activity.

Some activities, such as setting up the Community Room, took a lot of work from a lot of people, but for a short period of time. Once it was set up, the Community room took little of the group's attention or energy. Involving participants from Bretton Square and Physically Challenged Athletes of Mid-Michigan (PCAMM) took some coordination between Karen and community members representing these groups to identify participants. Karen also met with interested teachers to explain how these community members might be involved, and to find out what kinds of things the teachers were interested in having participants do. With Bretton Square participants, Jocelyn came to the school to help orient and train them for the tasks that they would be doing, and monitored their work during the time they were there. However, once participants were placed in classrooms, the library, or the kitchen, this program also took little of Harmony in Action members' attention or energy.

Other activities were ongoing and required attention at specific times throughout the year. The monthly activity of producing the HIA calendar (see Appendix D) involved making decisions about assemblies and spirit days, as well as other possible events. Near the end of each month at a Harmony in Action meeting, group members discussed activities and dates for the upcoming month, based on the monthly themes that had been generated at the beginning of the year. I usually brought a draft copy of the calendar, and then

finalized it a few days after this meeting so that it could be copied to go out to families and staff by the beginning of the next month.

Even within this monthly pattern, there might be variations of how much time and energy was needed to complete an activity. For example, the amount of time, energy and people involved in planning an assembly could vary depending on the content of the assembly. Usually a sub-group of Harmony in Action members worked out the actual details of an assembly after it was agreed upon during a meeting. Who was involved depended on what the assembly was about and on the interests and expertise of group participants. Sometimes group members would involve other teachers, parents, or community members with a particular expertise or skill. If the assembly was simple to plan (e.g., singing songs), relatively little time and energy were needed. If the assembly was more complex to plan (e.g., involving speakers or presentations by students), more time and energy were needed.

In contrast to the monthly pattern of the calendars, spirit days and assemblies, the Student of the Week program entailed a weekly pattern of collecting Student of the Week certificates on Thursdays, announcing student names on Friday, displaying certificates on Monday and setting up for the lunch and collecting surveys on Wednesdays. Olga, Liz, and I were primarily

responsible for these activities each week. Other activities surfaced and submerged in the group's discussions more or less frequently depending on the interests of the project group members and their schedules and other responsibilities.

Another aspect of Harmony in Action's work is not reflected in the diagram or brochure. Even though every idea or activity was initially discussed at a meeting with the core group and others, over time individuals in the group became associated with particular activities. Olga, Liz and I were primarily responsible for the weekly tasks associated with Student of the Week. Karen, because of her associations with these organizations, took responsibility for including PCAMM and Bretton Square members in the Emerson community. Ron, with the support of Sid, coordinated the playground activities by involving undergraduate students from the Physical Education Department at MSU. During the second year, Ron let go of some of these activities to focus on the student representative program and to pilot some conflict negotiation activities with students. Karen and I were often the ones who made contacts with the School-Business Alliance and other community groups. Often, Ruth, Carrie and Ron enjoyed planning assemblies. Sarah, Laurie and I often pulled together written documents and organized getting them to people. Karen and Ruth were the group's links to

staff meetings and other school committees. Cheryl, Jocelyn and Karen were the group's links to PTO.

In summary, Harmony in Action addressed many issues and initiated many activities. Even though the circles on the diagram are uniform in size, the actual dimensions of the activities varied. It is important to note that although not every Harmony in Action member was involved in the details of every activity, and not every activity required the same amount of participants' time and energy, the tasks of implementing these activities were pretty evenly distributed across all group members – parents, school staff, community members, and MSU staff.

Why Did Harmony in Action Do This Work?

As stated earlier, Karen James initiated the BLIPERL project in the spring of 1992 during PDS planning meetings. Her ideas were based on building a stronger sense of belonging and community at Emerson, and on concerns she had about children's interactions and experiences at Emerson. In an interview in June of 1994, Karen described why she had proposed the project:

I saw 150 students and the difference in their personality and their self-esteem ... and they see me in gym class and they have recess 15 times a week and I really want to take advantage more of that recess time and help them make better choices with their less structured time.

And I really felt we needed some camaraderie and some team spirit and some Emerson identity and um, so I proposed the project

These ideas guided Harmony in Action's work during the 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 school years. Throughout this time, project members continually articulated and refined the philosophies, goals and activities of the group. In the brochure, a brief rationale was given for each of the four goals of the Harmony in Action project. Since the project members were involved in reviewing and revising the brochure, I feel safe in saying that these statements reflect project members collective values and beliefs:

Promote Cooperation, Problem Solving, and Independence:
Cooperation, problem solving and independence are vital aspects of a positive learning community. Children and adults who learn to work together, solve problems and conflicts in constructive ways, and develop confidence and a sense of independence contribute positively to the school community.

Promote Understanding and Appreciation of Diversity:
In order to become responsible and productive citizens in our increasingly pluralistic society, children need to learn about, appreciate and even celebrate the diversity of people in their immediate and larger communities.

Promote Interactions among School, Family and Community Members:
There is a growing acknowledgment that in order to provide children with experiences that promote positive academic, social and emotional development, the main institutions, which constitute children's worlds, must seek ways to work collaboratively. Schools, families and communities do not operate in isolation; these are overlapping and mutually supportive contexts. All involved can benefit from sharing perspectives, goals, ideas, and resources.

Promote a Sense of Belonging and School Spirit:

The overall climate of the school has an impact on the kinds of experiences that children and adults have in their various activities and interactions in the school setting. Activities which provide common information and experiences for all children and adults foster work towards common goals and provide a sense of ownership and pride in the school and surrounding community.

During Harmony in Action meetings, discussions among project members also tended to reflect these values and beliefs, associated with a range of issues and activities that the group was addressing. For example, at the first meeting in the fall of 1993, Olga shared a story that reflected her belief that schools should welcome parents who are interested in volunteering:

Olga: I prefer to be in the classroom where my kids are

Julie: Well, a lot of teachers - a lot of the classrooms are really trying to

Olga: encourage

Julie: encourage parents to come in.

Olga: Which is neat and I really love it because up north where I came from - well, a lot depends on the teacher, too, but they were like, 'What, you want to come in and help? You know, and it's like Elizabeth was in third grade and her teacher's chin just about hit the floor. I thought, 'I'll pick it up for you - yes, I want to come in and help out.' And it was just very shocking. And then Kelly's first grade teacher told me, 'Well, I don't like to have parents come in and help, because you can come in and help but maybe Joe's mom can't and Joe's gonna think his mom

doesn't love him like Kelly's mom.' I thought, 'Well, just say that we're very privileged to have a mom that's able to come in and help because she does not work out of the house, or whatever, you know.' To me I felt the whole classroom lost out because she didn't want an adult mom to come and help out and I feel that I just love it here at Emerson – It's like, 'What, you want to come help? Sure, come on! You know? I love that!

At the meeting on October 21, 1993, Jean, the school secretary, posed a solution to some lunch room problems that reflected her belief that children should and could be held responsible for their own behaviors, relating to the goal of cooperation, problem-solving and independence. Ruth had described her frustration at a recent staff meeting because the teachers had not reached consensus about what approach should be used to change behavior in the lunchroom. Some teachers were interested in using a reward system; others felt that they should be more authoritarian; some felt it wasn't their responsibility at all. Jean interjected:

This is a major concern and I think it's a pressing concern because the children are so concerned about it – and the surveys are telling us the lunch room is too noisy – that they don't like to eat in there – I'm wondering if there's another way of approaching this fast and then moving on to a plan I'm wondering if HLA can send out something that goes home – I'm wondering if we could do something ... letting these children know that very soon – unless the lunchroom is turned around and quieted down, there will be sets of rules to follow and I'm wondering if we can turn it back over to them – give them responsibility of quieting their own lunch space, giving them a chance of taking care of it before we have to set the rules down – I don't always agree with um, setting down rigid rules right away, nor do I

agree with having to reward them right away. I think maybe we should let them ... take care of it themselves.

During interviews in May and June of 1994, Harmony in Action members and others provided some additional insights into why this group did what it did. Frequently, the people I interviewed mentioned that they felt the HIA core group members held similar values and beliefs about what a “positive learning community” looked and felt like. Core group members also seemed to hold a common view that in order for change to take place, community members had to do something – to take action. The activities of the group were seen as efforts to move toward the vision they held, individually and collectively, for the school.

Sarah (paraprofessional): It's a group of people that are looking to better relationships and happenings in the school. When I think of relationships ... I say ownership – if the kids feel like they own this building, and the teachers feel like they own this building, everyone's gonna try harder. I'm a big advocate for ownership I know in my case the reason I'm involved is because I was so involved in PTA for years ... that it's kind of like an extension of what I used to do and I see how beneficial it can be It's so satisfying when you see stuff like that come to reality and the kids have such a great time, and satisfaction

Ron (graduate student): I guess my impressions are that a lot of those people have similar values in terms of what they'd like to see happen at the school and HIA is appealing because of that – because we're trying to do some of those things – trying to do some community learning, trying to involve the outside community in the building, trying to add diversity to the building, so I think those type things are things that those people appreciate and value. I also think that we

come to get things done and I think that's appealing and I think that we do a lot of activities, it's kind of a high profile project to be involved in, and it doesn't seem to me like any of these people are in interested in something that's high profile – it's not like they have some interest in being known – but I think that a lot of things happen through HLA whereas you don't see things that happen so much with the other projects because they're not always building-wide.

Carrie (co-teacher): Well, the first reason I got involved was because I was sort of invited, and it seemed like it would be a group that could really use some of the things I was interested in – some of my ideas, as well as I felt like I could be learning a lot about Emerson as a group, as a community.

Karen (P.E. teacher): Just a major emphasis where you're not only impacting one group of students or one classroom or one grade level, but you're impacting the whole school, so our community of 500 that we're talking about really gives you a sense of accomplishment and self-satisfaction and its real rewarding to feel like you're part of this bigger effort.

Renae (principal): I think the other people are in a way, lifelong learning oriented people. Lifelong connectedness to sort of growth and development and self concept and the connectedness of family and institutions and sort of either from a real personal gut level, or from an intellectual level, just sort of knowing that institutions can be alienating and if we don't humanize them, if we don't find some way of connecting to real life and everyday issues, that they stay alienating, so some people came at that both out of a sense of caring and a sense of intellectual interest in how to do that, and other people came at it as just a sort of way they operate. They're affective people and they want to deal with feelings and positive opportunities. I think the parents participated one, because they really believe in that whole thing about kids feeling good at school, but I also think parents participated because it was defined – it was here's a way I can participate in a defined task. Here's a way I can determine my amount of participation but I can really make a contribution that's defined, that's specific.

Cheryl (paraprofessional, parent): Well, I found out, Jocelyn and I since we're neighbors, and we talked about, yeah, this is something to get involved in because see at the time, our PTO was kind of a joke. We had maybe 4 parents, and Renae and Karen who was the teacher rep So that's why Jocelyn and I decided well, maybe we can do something in HIA to help where PTO couldn't.

These comments, during meetings and interviews, reflected some beliefs about being able to affect change in a school by working with others who have similar ideas and orientations. Making the school a better place for all community members seemed to be a goal that members of this project felt was important. They brought themselves to the endeavor – past experiences, ideas, and values, and began to work together to implement activities that reflected the goals that they had worked together to articulate in the brochure. In the next section, I describe *how* project members went about their work together.

How Did Harmony in Action Do Their Work?

“First they talk a lot and then they do stuff.” This is how Kelly, Olga’s daughter and a third grader at Emerson, described Harmony in Action. Kelly said this when I was interviewing her mom at their house, and had asked Olga how she would describe Harmony in Action to someone. Kelly had come to several of the HIA meetings; she and her sister Elizabeth, a fifth grader at Emerson, “hung out” in the Community Room reading, drawing, or doing

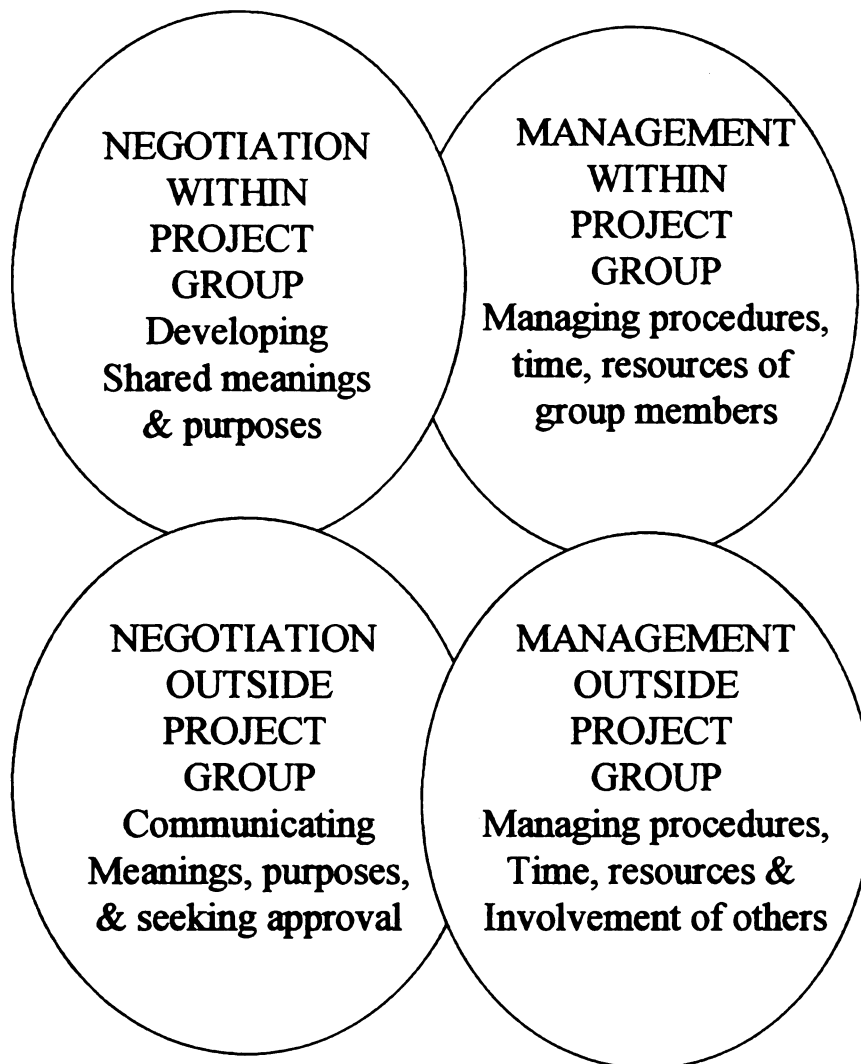
homework while Olga attended HIA meetings. Kelly's words were an elegant summary of how HIA members did their work. Here, I elaborate on this view by examining the processes involved as this group of parents, school staff, and community members implemented a range of activities at Emerson.

Project members seemed to be engaged in two kinds of intertwined processes as they worked. Sometimes they were *negotiating* about ideas-developing and communicating shared understanding, meanings and purposes. As Kelly would say, "talking a lot." Other times, they were *managing* how to get things done – identifying and mobilizing resources, and developing procedures to implement project activities. As Kelly would say, "doing stuff." These processes took place both *within* the project group and *outside* the project group. The diagram below (see Figure 3) illustrates these four dimensions of the group's work.

The top two circles represent processes that took place among project group members. Most of the time, Harmony in Action project meetings were the setting where the core group generated ideas, planned activities, and delegated tasks. Meetings were often the place where the group could figure things out before they presented ideas, activities or plans to the larger group of school staff, students, families and community members. During lively

Figure 3

Negotiating and Managing Within and Outside HIA



discussions about ideas brought to the table by project members (and others, via project members), the group negotiated and made sense of project goals. In the process, ideas and activities were clarified, modified, and occasionally tabled or discarded. When we agreed to proceed with an idea, we started the management process of figuring out how to make it happen, starting with dividing up the work among ourselves. Who can type up this list? Who can check on getting school pictures? Who can call and get information about that grant?

The bottom two circles represent processes that often took place outside Harmony in Action meetings group. Since most of our activities and programs involved the whole school, we had to communicate our ideas to others and gain their support and cooperation, as well as coordinate procedures and tasks so that everyone could participate.

Each aspect of the project's work required some negotiation of meanings and purposes and some management of procedures and resources. One of the earliest examples of these two processes was when the group changed its name from BLIPERL to Harmony in Action early in the first year. At the first meeting on October 6, 1992, after saying the name BLIPERL several times, Ruth said, "That name's gotta go" and several people commented that the group needed a name that wasn't so cumbersome and

that better reflected what the project was about. Near the end of the meeting, Karen asked everyone to think about a new name for the project. At the second meeting on October 16, 1992, the group brainstormed several names, and decided on "Harmony in Action," to reflect the group's emphasis on promoting a harmonious learning environment and the fact that this was an action-oriented group, already moving on several ideas by the second meeting. Changing the name of the project was a way that project participants *negotiated* their understandings of the project's goals and purposes *within* the group. The new name represented a shared understanding and vision by project members about the group and its purposes. We started right away to think about designing a logo for our project to use on letterheads, memos, and other documents. We knew that we would be communicating and coordinating our plans with school staff, families, students, and community groups. Having a recognizable logo would help others know when communication was coming from Harmony in Action, versus other groups such as the School Improvement Team or PTO. Melanie and I offered to play around with a logo design and bring our ideas back to the group, and Sarah offered to draft a letter to parents about one of the group's activities. Already, group members had begun to *manage* tasks *within* the group by volunteering their time and skills.

Near the end of October, Harmony in Action sent out its first memo to Emerson staff (see Appendix E) announcing the name change from BLIPERL to Harmony in Action, describing the project goals and some of the activities, and asking for input about some of the ideas and plans that were generated during the first few meetings. This memo was a tool for both *negotiating* and *managing outside* the project group. The first paragraph was a statement about project goals, and following paragraphs included a rationale for the activities for which the group was asking for feedback. These were ways to communicate meanings and purposes to the larger school community. The memo was also asking for input and seeking approval, other aspects of *negotiating outside* the group. In addition, the memo helped Harmony in Action *manage* their work *outside* the project, by providing a way for members to get a sense of other people's ideas, find out who was interested in pursuing activities, and have a written record for contacting people later. In January, the logo was finished, and the group decided to use goldenrod-colored paper for all Harmony in Action documents such as minutes, memos, notices, and calendars. The logo design provided repeated occasions for the larger community to see the goals of the project. Musical notes and little runners on bright golden paper promoted the group's identity and helped to manage their work in a school that was busy with many innovative projects.

In the example of the group changing its name, we see that in just a few weeks, parents and school staff had begun to work together to develop common goals, and both had begun to take on tasks within the project group.

These processes of negotiation and management were formative. Even in groups where participants have very similar interests and backgrounds, or have worked together for some time, shared visions are negotiated over time and through clarification of personal perspectives. Ways of managing project tasks also develop gradually and can change with new group configurations or changes in the setting. In groups with diverse membership, such as Harmony in Action, the processes of negotiating shared understandings and managing project activities may be more complex. Project participants brought their personal histories with them – their experiences as students, as parents, as teachers, and as community members. These personal histories influenced their understandings of and goals for the group, the roles they assumed in the group, and their interactions with one another and with other adults in the wider school and community setting. In the following sections I will describe what I consider to be the foundations, or building blocks, that supported the growth and the work of the group. Many of these building blocks were established early in the group's development, and were enriched

and expanded as a result of the group's ongoing interactions and work together.

Nurturing Relationships

At nearly every meeting, there was food. I know that my Granny would say that having food is a good way to get any gathering off to a good start. Often, one of the HIA members would bring a bag of candy or a box of cookies to the evening meetings. On Friday mornings the first year, we gathered at the café for breakfast while we worked. On Tuesday mornings the second year, the fare was more often donuts or bagels. It may seem trivial, but sharing food seemed to be one of the social rituals that made people feel comfortable. Feeling comfortable helped group members get to know each other, and getting to know each other helped us to develop a safe environment where we felt secure to take the risks of questioning, clarifying, and challenging ideas so we could reach agreement about what we wanted to do. Getting to know each other's interests, personal styles, skills and talents also helped us to manage time resources and people for accomplishing project activities.

Food wasn't the only thing that we shared. Often at meetings, someone would share a joke, a poem, a handout, or an inspirational story that they had heard. Many times, the message relayed had something to do with

the group's goals or philosophies. Carrie, for example, read the following at the beginning of one meeting:

*There's this little bit called "How to Love a Child" ...
Be there Say yes as often as possible Let them bang on pots
and pans If they're crabby put them in water If they're
unlovable, love yourself Realize how important it is to be a child
.... Go to a movie theater in your pajamas Read books out loud
with joy Invent pleasures together. Remember how really small
they are Giggle a lot Surprise them Say no when
necessary Teach feelings Heal your own inner child Learn
about parenting Hug trees together Make loving safe
Bake a cake and eat it with no hands Go find elephants and kiss
them Plan to build a rocket ship Imagine yourself magic ...
Make lots of forts with blankets Let your angel fly Reveal your
own dreams Search out the positive Keep the gleam in your
eye Mail letters to God Encourage silly Plant licorice in
your garden Open up Stop yelling Express your love, a
lot Speak kindly Handle with caring Children are
miraculous.*

Karen also often brought handouts to Harmony in Action meetings – such as “Making the most of today,” “Attitude” and a self-reflection worksheet called “What do you value?” – that she had copied from journals or picked up at conferences. Sharing these kinds of things provided project members with “food for thought” as we got to know each other, and they helped us to continually revisit the goals of the project.

Another way that group members nurtured one another was by giving each other credit for ideas or accomplishments, and “pats on the back” for their contributions to the project. At the first meeting in the fall of 1994,

there was a larger-than-normal group of people in attendance. As we were introducing our selves, Liz said, "I'm Liz and I worked with HIA last year." Sarah added, "She's one of the parents who makes Student of the Week the great thing that it is." A few minutes later, Olga introduced her self, "I'm Olga and I'm a mom." Ruth urged her, "Tell them what else," and Olga replied, "I helped Liz do Student of the Week last year." Ruth commented, "And a wonderful job you did!" and Karen added, "We're very appreciative." During an interview, Olga mentioned that these kinds of comments were important to her:

One thing I'd like to say is that everyone in the core group – I think I can speak for Liz here somewhat too – they all made us feel like what we did in our volunteering was very important and very appreciative of what we did do, and would make comments like, "If we had more parents like you," and you know, everybody needs a pat on the back. Everybody. It doesn't matter what our age is, just like the kids need it, us adults need it too, and so there would be lots of times when I came home feeling better about myself, just from one comment from one person.

Carrie also mentioned this during her interview, as she was talking about how the group members had different backgrounds and knowledge:

It seemed as though we could always pinpoint someone who might have a specialty in one or the other of those areas ... and I think in letting people know when they were good at those

For the most part, members said they felt that Harmony in Action was a positive, fun, nurturing group of people who tried to make everyone feel

included and comfortable. During interviews in May and June of 1994, I asked project members about the roles and relationships of project members:

Karen: It's just a wonderful, wonderful group. There's not one person who does all the work, um, there's different people that feel really comfortable with each other, to approach each other and say, could you help me with this? Or, I can't do this, can you take this over for me? Or, um, just a real comfortable, positive, upbeat, energetic group that feels comfortable sharing and working together.

Carrie: Well, congenial, and I think they are very aware of the diversity in our backgrounds, and our knowledge of different subjects I guess, or different parts of the project that we wanted to be doing I feel like there's a lot more to the relationships, but Figure out how to articulate that. I feel like there was also a ... well, almost a real sort of niceness ... it's hard to explain – making sure – there was a sense that we felt like everybody really needed to be included in what was going on and we wanted to hear everybody's ideas before we made a final decision and the communication between the different members was as good as I feel like it could have been, either at the meetings themselves, or through written communication, cause we always wanted a response to things before we decided, there was a little sense of creating consensus before we moved on, and that was, I think, positive It motivated people to continue to come.

Sarah: Professional, respectful, and it was just a group that clicked. Good working relationships I think. We all had the same goals, or similar goals. Similar philosophies or interests and what we thought we should do, and it was like everybody was supportive of each other, and it wasn't like anybody ever came in to argue and point, like you know, you can't do that. It never happened. We all just had the same goal in mind, I think.

Relationships in the project group weren't always smooth. However, when a problem or misunderstanding occurred, project members didn't let things go untended for long. Olga was the most visibly involved parent in the

Harmony in Action project. She attended most of the meetings, and was forthright with her opinions and ideas. She introduced the Student of the Week idea during Harmony in Action's first meeting, and coordinated the Student of the Week program both years that I documented the project. She also volunteered to help with many other of Harmony in Action's activities. During the second year of the project, Olga brought up the problem of Liz and herself not getting information from meetings that they missed. They usually came to the Thursday night meetings, but not the Tuesday meetings during the school day. Although notes were sometimes left for Olga and Liz via their daughters' classrooms, these didn't always get there in a timely fashion, if at all. The situation was remedied by putting a mail folder for Olga and Liz on a bulletin board in the Community Room.

Not providing these parents with a mail spot may seem like an insignificant oversight, but I remember thinking that someone should have thought about this detail. In particular, I felt *I* should have thought of this detail. Having been a graduate student at Emerson for some time, I and other graduate students had experienced the feeling of being "non-placed" as we worked with various projects in the school. Adding a shared graduate student mailbox in the office gave us a place to "check in" and fostered our sense of belonging in the school. School staff is on their own "turf," so things like

mailboxes and spaces to work are taken for granted. Details such as this are important to remember if we want parents and community members to feel invited to become regular participants in the school setting.

Sometimes nurturing relationships required addressing issues that may be uncomfortable for group members. During the first HIA meeting of 1993-94 on September 16, there were many “visitors” in attendance. Mostly, these were people who would be in the third layer of the project group, represented in the diagram earlier in the chapter. The group had been discussing lunchroom issues and solutions, and the conversation had turned to the playground. Olga voiced her concerns about the playground, and made some pretty pointed comments about the playground supervisors:

I have something – nothing against asking parents to volunteer. I think that’s great, but when I was in school, our playground supervisors played with us. We played softball. They got down on their hands and knees and played marbles with us. You know? I don’t see that ever, out here on this playground. I see the paraprofessionals out there, playing with the kids sometimes.... And the teachers, but these people that are playground supervisors, I’m sorry – stand there and blow that whistle. I live just down the road here. If my windows are open, I hear the whistle blow constantly. I hate it! I would like to come and shove that whistle down somebody’s throat – I will be honest. I don’t know how those kids can stand it! It has to drive them totally crazy. They’re not animals, they’re people. You whistle at animals

Olga’s comments made the participants at the meeting feel uncomfortable; their body language and facial expressions reflected this.

Some people tried to offer alternative points of view. Cheryl explained that for safety reasons, she had blown the whistle to get kids attention until she could get over to the situation. Carrie agreed in principle with the idea of being actively involved with the students, but thought that because there were still many conflicts among children, it would be difficult for the supervisors to divert their attention if they were playing with students. After the meeting, Ruth called Olga and shared her feeling that people at the meeting had “turned off” when she had criticized the playground supervisors. Olga recalled this event during her interview near the end of the second year:

There were a couple times when Mrs. W. called me up and said, “You know, Olga, people might have listened to you more if you weren’t so emotional.” I mean I am an emotional person If someone asks me my opinion on something, it’s going to come out emotionally I’m not a trained teacher. I’m not a trained person that’s trained to sit in meetings and negotiate, ok? I’m a parent. I’m a concerned parent who has not just the best interest of MY children, but the best interest of every child who walks through Emerson’s doors in mind when I was speaking. And I think when we talk about children, that is an emotional thing. And that if we leave the emotion out of it, that we’re not helping the children any I’m not saying that Mrs. W. called me and told me that in any way to criticize me, cause she told me that she thought what I said was very important and needed to be heard.

Ruth’s calling Olga was a way to nurture a relationship that had been developing over the past year. Ruth had encouraged Olga to become involved in the group, and wanted Olga to continue to be a vital and active

group member. Olga seemed to interpret her call in this way. Although it might have been easier, in the short run, for Ruth not to talk to Olga about her perceptions of what had happened during the meeting, she chose to address a concern that she felt might affect Olga's involvement in the long-run. Ruth explained her perspective during her interview when we were talking about roles of group members:

I guess what I'm good at is relating to people on a pretty deep level, out of committees, on a personal level, and then when I get back into the committee or into the group, I'm very aware then of where that person – where their readiness level is, or what's bothering them, or what it is they're trying to say, because I've talked to them about it at another time, or have been trying to listen I think appreciating different perspectives, I'm good at that, and not feeling there's one right way but we're all more that just one of us.

The relationships that were nurtured outside the project group were also important building blocks for the work of the group. Most of the people in our core group and “second layer” of participants were also involved in other groups that could support the activities implemented by Harmony in Action. Cheryl and Janice were PTO members who had joined HIA because the PTO wasn't very active during the first year of the HIA project. Karla was the Emerson staff representative to PTO, and attended their meetings, where she could share information about HIA. During the second year of the HIA, the PTO became quite active in the school, with many members and lots

of activities. Janice's husband, Gus, was the PTO president that year. HIA and PTO collaborated on a few projects during the year, such as selling t-shirts, and providing baskets of outdoor materials for each classroom. These co-activities strengthened the relationship between HIA and PTO, and towards the end of the 1993-94 school year, PTO members and HIA members were thinking of more ways to work together on common goals.

Karen and Ruth were also links to staff and School Improvement Team; their relationships with other Emerson teachers and administration was important in terms of gaining support for HIA activities that required the cooperation and involvement of the whole school, such as planning assemblies. Because there was an established schedule for all of these meetings and committees, it was possible for HIA members to anticipate when they might need to bring up an idea or issue at one of these meetings so that they could proceed with their plans. There were also established "ways" of doing things at Emerson, before Harmony in Action arrived on the scene. Identifying these established procedures and norms helped HIA members manage their work.

Procedural Tools

Most of us have seen the version of the “Golden Rules” that have to do with co-existing in the home or work place. This was hanging over the copy machine at Emerson one day:

- If you open it, close it.
- If you turn it on, turn it off.
- If you unlock it, lock it.
- If you break it, repair it.
- If you can’t fix it, call someone who can.
- If you borrow it, return it.
- If you use it, take care of it.
- If you make a mess, clean it up.
- If you move it, put it back.
- If it belongs to somebody else and you want to use it, get permission.
- If you don’t know how to operate it, leave it alone.
- If it doesn’t concern you, mind your own business.

In addition to these rules, Emerson, like most schools, had an additional list of rules that were particular to the setting, and that were important to know if you wanted to stay in good graces. Emerson’s “golden rules” included:

- If it’s not in the brown book, it doesn’t exist.
- If you’re making copies, write down your total in the right category (e.g., PDS).
- If you want something to be read, put it on colored paper.
- Take colored paper out of the copy machine when you are done.
- Let Jean know you are in the building if you expect to get your phone calls.

- Let Pat or Bob know if you borrow something from the custodian's closet.

Knowing about these rules was helpful as HIA members carried out the tasks related to implementing activities in the school. The “brown book” was a central calendar and organizer for almost anything that went on in the school. Everything from meetings scheduled in the conference room, to someone using the TV/VCR was written on this calendar. If you weren't sure about when or where something was taking place, it was likely that you could find out what you needed to know by looking in the brown book. Because Harmony in Action had many activities each month – meetings, assemblies, visitors, family nights, recess activities – the brown book was a tool we used often, in addition to monthly calendars that were sent home, sent to classrooms, and posted around the school. As I explained earlier, these calendars, and any other memo, survey or form that came from HIA were copied on goldenrod-colored paper with our logo on top.

Another tool that helped group members manage tasks within the group, as well as communicate with others outside the group was our meeting minutes. Laurie mostly did the minutes during the first year; during the second year we rotated responsibility. A “meeting monitor” took minutes for a meeting, and then was responsible for creating the agenda for and leading

the following meeting. During the second year, our agendas and minutes were organized around the four goals of the project, so if someone wanted to quickly scan to a particular topic of interest, they could look for this topic under the particular category. Also, our minutes included “action notes,” an idea introduced by Ron during the second year of the project. The action notes helped us to quickly scan to see who had agreed to take care of a particular task.

I started this chapter with the question, “What is Harmony in Action?” The answer, simply, is what group members told me. Harmony in Action is a group of people, Harmony in Action is a place and time, Harmony in Action is a assortment of activities, Harmony in Action is a collection of values and beliefs, and Harmony in Action is a set of processes and strategies for getting things done. In the next chapter, I examine ways in which this assemblage of characteristics affected Harmony in Action’s work towards building links with families and community members.

CHAPTER 5

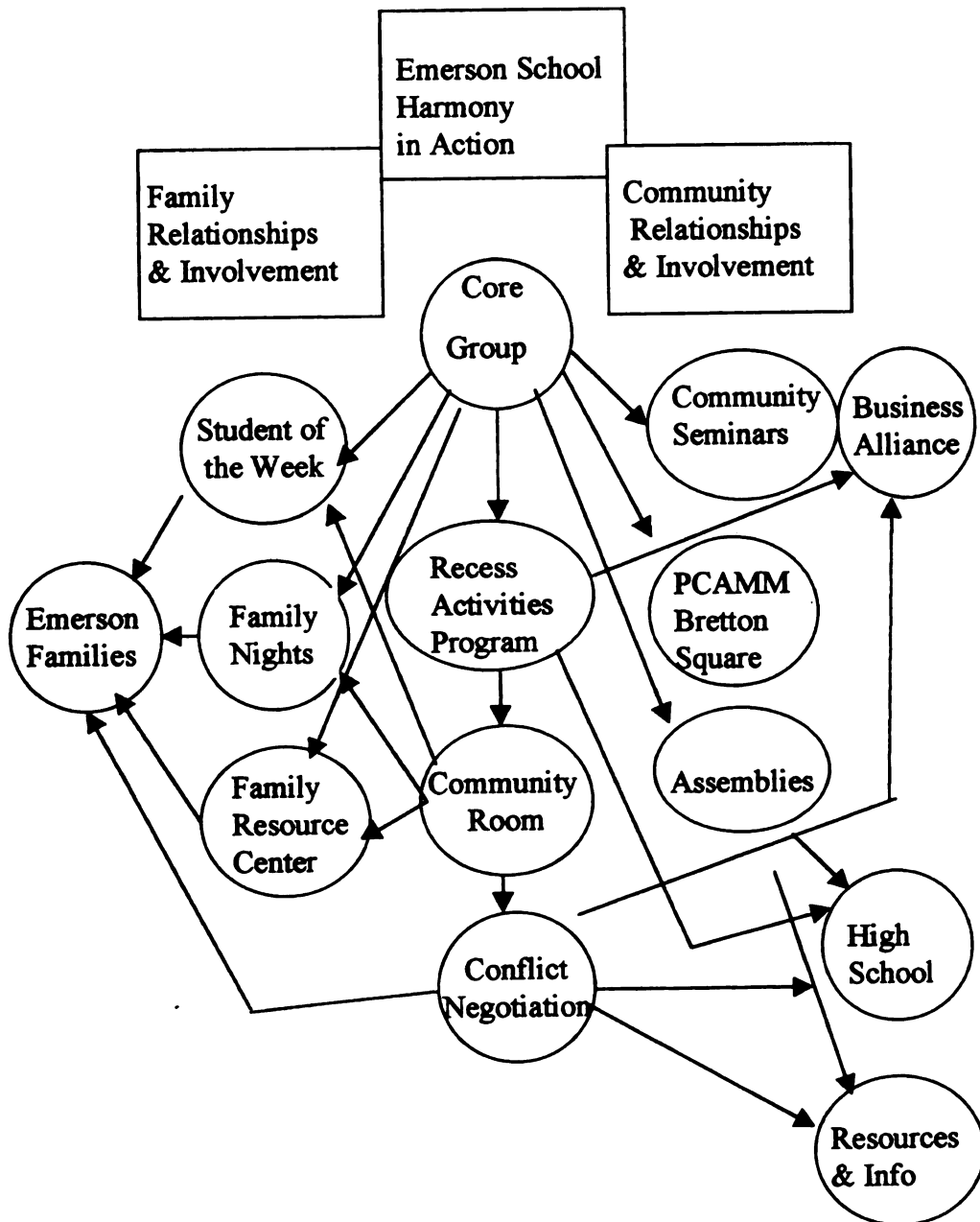
DIRECT ROUTES AND DETOURS: CONTRASTING EXAMPLES OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Representations are static. Life is fluid. The diagram of Harmony in Action's goals and activities presented in Chapter 4 (see Figure 2, page 69) is a representation created by project members in the fall of 1993 that reflects their thinking at that time of how their activities (small circles) related to their goals (big circles). Having had a chance to step back from the work of the group, and having had a chance to focus on one of the goals (school, family, and community interactions), I saw that some of the activities that were not originally "hooked to" the school-family-community interactions goal actually became, or at least attempted to become, family and community activities.

Both stability and flexibility are required by the nature of the work done in PDS's and other innovative environments. At the same time that project members hold stable the overall principles and goals, they remain flexible about how they might achieve these goals. The diagram below (see Figure 4) represents my conceptualization of which activities involved families, which involved community members, and which involved both. It,

Figure 4

Harmony in Action's Family and Community Activities



too, is a static representation. This diagram, which focuses on family-school-community involvement, indicates that some of the small circles “moved” from their places on the original diagram.

I don’t mean that the circles move permanently. They still retained their “hook” to the goals in the original conception of project work. But conceptually, the same activity could be “affiliated” with various goals. For example, the conflict management program was directly related to the goal of Cooperation, Problem Solving and Independence. However, discussions about the conflict management program were contexts where family and community voices shaped decisions, and the implementation of the program was intended to include family and community members as trainers for Emerson students. Similarly, the assemblies were directly related to the goal of Sense of Belonging and School Spirit. But they became a way of bringing community members into the school when, for example, the high school girls’ gymnastics team did a demonstration, or when the students honored the local D.A.R.E. police officer.

An event that took place in January of 1993 illustrates the way a single activity addressed several goals. Adam Shaw’s visit during an assembly had a powerful impact on students. Adam works in the handicapper affairs office and is African American, blind, and has Muscular Distrophy; he stood using a

brace and a walker. His presentation to the children included talking about his experiences of being multiply handicapped, and of being minority. He also talked about perceptions and misconceptions people had of him and others, and about relationships he had developed with his wife, friends and others. The children asked him honest, thought-provoking questions, and many teachers felt that both students and adults in the school had learned much. Adam's visit had introduced Emerson school participants to some ideas about *diversity* by inviting a *community* member to speak at an *assembly* where students and adults had shared a common experience. This one activity was related to several of Harmony in Action's goals.

Activities didn't always fit only one goal; they also didn't always fit neatly into existing categories in the literature on school-family-community involvement. While there are useful typologies for making sense of the range of ways that families and community members interact with the school, I sometimes found it difficult to place particular activities into one category. For example, using Nettles (1991) processes of social change, I could place Adam Smith's visit in the Conversion category (changing beliefs and behaviors), as well as in the Mobilization category (increasing citizen and organizational participation in education).

Just as there are not clear-cut criteria for placing activities into one category or another, there are often not clear-cut criteria for placing people into categories. We had two paraprofessionals in our project who were also parents of children attending Emerson. One of these paraprofessionals was a small business owner with her husband; therefore she was also a business/community member. Many of the family members of students at Emerson were involved in numerous ways in community groups and organizations. For the purpose of organization, I intend “family” to mean family members of students currently attending Emerson, and “community” to mean people or groups of people who did not have a child attending Emerson. In the diagram at the bottom of page 101, I have separated “Family Relationships and Involvement” from “Community Relationships and Involvement,” because some of the activities were specifically designed for one or the other group. The circles directly under the “Family” box and directly under the “Community” box in the diagram, as well as the circles in the middle, represent *activities* or programs that project members attempted to implement at Emerson. The middle activity circles, between the “Family” box and the “Community” box were activities that involved both family and community members. The circles to the edge of the diagram represent *people or groups* that were involved or intended to be involved in these activities. I

am using the words ‘attempted’ and ‘intended’ on purpose, because not all of the activities that the project group considered got under way.

In the next section, I will examine the negotiation and management processes involved in two activities that had different outcomes in the school setting – the Student of the Week program and the Recess Activities program. Neither of these activities was originally “hooked to” the School, Family and Community Interactions goal in Harmony in Action’s original diagram. The Student of the Week program began as a student recognition program, which eventually expanded to include a family luncheon and surveys to gain input from all students. The Recess Activities program had two components in the original BLIPERL proposal. The first component, which I will refer to as the MSU/ET component (i.e., MSU students and Emerson Teachers), is stated in the proposal, “*(Karen) James and the graduate assistant will work with teachers to try out several alternative activities during morning, lunch and afternoon recess times.*” The second component, which I will refer to as the F/C component (i.e., Family and Community), is stated in the proposal, “*Project participants will explore ways of integrating parents and other community members into project activities, especially the efforts to provide more educationally challenging and beneficial experiences during lunch and recess.*”

The Student of the Week program gained quick acceptance by group members and others in the school setting, and was quickly implemented. Student of the Week involved every child at Emerson and nearly 300 family members during 1993-94. In comparison, although the MSU/ET component of the Recess Activities program was quickly implemented and well received in the school, the F/C component of the Recess Activities program never got off the ground at Emerson. Comparing and contrasting the Student of the Week and the Recess Activities programs may provide some insight into the complexities of planning family and community involvement activities.

Student of the Week Program

At the very first meeting of the (then) BLIPERL group on October 6, 1992, Karen shared her formative ideas and asked for input from the rest of the group. Everyone listened, asked questions, and offered ideas from their experiences with Parent-Teacher Organizations, school committees, scouting, camps, and sports, as those present tried to get a handle on what this group would be and could do. Much of the discussion during that meeting was about how to create a welcoming, positive community feeling in the school. Several people mentioned that they were drawn to this group because it seemed to provide an opportunity to be involved and really get some things going.

Olga, a parent, suggested that Harmony in Action organize a Student of the Week program similar to one that her children's former school had done. Olga explained that every child in the school was chosen as Student of the Week over the course of the year. Sarah, a paraprofessional, also described the way that the middle school, where her son attended, organized their Student of the Week program, and went to her car to get the laminated bookmark her son had received when he was chosen.

Negotiation Within the Project Group

As project members started discussing the Student of the Week idea, some people in the group asked for clarification about the criteria by which children were chosen, noting that they would feel uncomfortable if the recognition was something that the children had to "earn." If this were the case, they predicted, only the "model" students would get chosen by teachers. Olga and Sarah reiterated that in the student of the week programs they knew about, *all* students were chosen. The group agreed that the purpose of the Student of the Week program would be to honor each student as special and to recognize a variety of ways that students contributed to Emerson's school community. Melanie, a parent, wondered if some teachers might tend to focus on academic performance. Ruth and Sarah guessed that some teachers in the school would right away raise the issues of finding it difficult to find a

reason to choose their most “difficult” kids, the “troublemakers.” Olga commented, “It’s really sad if they can’t see something good in every child.” Ruth and Karen agreed, but thought it might be helpful to give the teachers some ideas about what other kinds of behaviors might be considered as “contributing to the Emerson community,” so the group made up a list of

Student of the Week Sample Categories:

Cares for others	Respectful of others
Very helpful	Takes care of the classroom
Walks in the hall	Takes turns
Cleans up own area	Sets a good example for others
Assists with room clean up	Lines up quietly and quickly
Remembers library book	Follows directions
Great attendance	Is courteous
Comes ready to work	Friendly
Raises hand to speak	Is supportive
Good listener	Gives best effort
Does neat work	Creative
Very cooperative	Artistic
Tries hard	Great problem solver
Shares with others	Shows good sportsmanship
Assists classmates	Musical
Good suggestions	Academic area of strength
Great artist	(marvelous mathematician,
Great speaking voice	super scientist, etc.)

Karen thought this list would help teachers think about how to choose kids other than the “perfectly well-behaved ones or the smartest ones.” She also reiterated that one of the goals of the project was to make *everyone* feel comfortable at Emerson. Having Student of the Week might help some kids

who never felt connected to school have a way to feel like they belonged. For some of the kids, she suspected, it might be the first time they felt special.

At the very first meeting, the group had negotiated the purpose of the Student of the Week program by asking one another for clarification, and by voicing concerns about potential misinterpretations of the program. They had clarified for themselves what they meant by “a variety of ways that students contributed to the Emerson community” by generating a list of sample categories. Through their discussion, individuals made tangible for one another beliefs and values that motivated their interest in implementing this kind of activity: Every child has value, there are many ways to contribute to a community, kids need opportunities to feel good about themselves, and we should find ways to bring “kids on the margins” into the fold.

These values and beliefs were reiterated during a discussion at the second meeting. Melanie thought it would be nice to have a display somewhere for all of the Student of the Week certificates with the children’s pictures. Ruth suggested that it would be nice if the students of the week could bring in something personal to display – a favorite toy, a keepsake, or something from a hobby. The group liked this idea right away and began talking about the positive outcomes of doing a display like this. Karen thought that children who didn’t know each other might begin to “connect” if

they saw that they had similar interests or hobbies. Ruth thought it might be fun for teachers to learn something new about their students that they hadn't learned in the classroom. Olga suggested that some teachers who felt negative about a child might begin to see them in a new light if they knew more about them, and offered an example, "Here's this kid they don't think can concentrate at all in class, and then they see they have this hobby of making detailed little model trains – that might give them a new perspective about that child." All of these potential scenarios based on displaying children's personal treasures would further build a sense of community at the building level, rather than just at the classroom level; this was one of Harmony in Action's goals.

In the fall of 1993, the purpose of the Student of the Week program was re-negotiated and expanded. There were many more people than usual at the first HIA meeting of the year on September 16, 1993. In addition to the core group (Karen, Ruth, Olga, Sarah, Carrie, Ron, Julie, & Liz), the following people attended: Jean (school secretary), Pat (custodian), Jocelyn, Kim (MSU instructor), Cheryl, Joy (playground supervisor), Sid (MSU instructor), John (new P.E. teacher for Emerson), and Jean (supervisor for Bretton Square). Earlier in the meeting, the group had been discussing some of the details of getting student of the week up and running again, with few

minor changes from the previous year's format. Following this, there had been a lengthy discussion about making changes in the lunchroom atmosphere and brainstorming ideas for indoor and outdoor recess options, including involving parents and community members to supervise activities. By almost 8:00 pm, a few people had left, and Julie said, "It's close to 8:00, last year we tried to end at 8:00." Ron asked, "Can I just say one more thing?"

I know that in individual classrooms, depending on the classroom that there is a lot of student input certainly into what happens and what goes on. I'm not familiar enough with what goes on at the school level to know if there's a whole lot of student input at the school level, but what I was thinking I would like to explore and maybe come up with some parameters for and bring back to this meeting if it sounds like a good idea to you, is to have a limited – perhaps very limited – number of student representatives that could work with us.

Ron's "one more thing" started off a discussion that changed the Student of the Week program and eventually started a Student Representative program later in the year. The lengthy conversation that followed was a good example of Carrie's description of a typical meeting, with a "volcano of ideas" erupting in a quick-paced give and take as the group re-designed the Student of the Week program and began to think seriously about the idea of giving students voice.

Following Ron's question, the conversation began with several people agreeing that it was important to get student input about what was going on at

the school. Sarah had mentioned in an interview at the end of 1993 that she would like to see a student representative program get started to give students more voice and ownership. At the meeting, she told Ron, "We must be thinking along the same lines." Ron agreed to go around and touch base with other teachers in the school to get their input. Carrie suggested, "It would be nice to have a half hour block during the day for these students to get together and talk about issues that were important to them." Olga agreed that the students would have a lot of opinions. Sarah suggested that it was "kind of a replacement for a student council – representatives of the students working for the people that have the power." Ruth shared her experience of asking her class for their opinions about the lunch room: "Their jaws dropped. Nobody ever asked them that. They were like 'what do you mean, what do we want to do with it? You mean we could fix it up?' No one had ever asked them that question!" Sarah added, "They were telling Leslie and I about it at recess this morning and they just went on and on and on. They had more things to say. I couldn't believe it – all the way from hating it because it's so dreary compared to the new one – it's not a nice, cheery place. It's dark, it's cold to the kids."

Cheryl suggested, "We could do a poll of the kids" and for the next several minutes the group wove a tapestry of ideas together that expanded the

Student of the Week program to include student voice and family involvement.

Ruth: Like a survey?

Cheryl: Yeah, and just getting some ideas they could turn it in ...

Ruth: Yeah, see, that's what I want to do.

Ron: And I think that it's important for some kids to take a leadership role in being representatives for their peers and talk with them about some of the stuff we're doing Cause unless we ask the kids, we don't even know.

Ruth: Cause I asked the kids, 'Do you know what HLA is and if they've heard of it' and they kind of know what it is, but like you say, how are they gonna feel ownership unless they're represented?

Jean: Maybe you could incorporate a little survey with each time they are Student of the Week ... and that would give them an opportunity to

Ruth: Oh, I like that!

Jean: And that way you don't just get top students or you don't get ...

Ruth: Great idea. You get a wide ... real diverse

Julie: So, that's a great idea.

Ruth: Great idea.

Ron: You get everybody.

Julie: So then once a week – let's think about that logistically...

Ruth: Yeah.

Julie: Once a week that would mean some group of adults sitting down with that group of students of the week from kindergarten to 5th grade.

Olga: One of our little subcommittee.

One thread in this tapestry of ideas was to get input from students. The idea of doing a survey was well received in the group, and Jean's suggestion to hook it to the existing Student of the Week program assured, as had been important with recognizing students, that *every student* had a chance to give input. The idea of having lunch was the next thread woven through this tapestry:

Ron: Or maybe it could be at their lunchtime.

Julie: Oh, that's a nice idea. Did you hear Ron's suggestion that maybe it be a lunchtime?

Ron: I know there are different lunch times, but still, maybe there's some way to work it out where it would be a couple of adults sitting down with students of the week one day.

Carrie: Or have lunch with them.

Sarah: Have lunch with them.

Olga: Have lunch with the students of the week.

Julie: Maybe have lunch in a special place.

Ruth: Like in this room.

Julie: Around a table where you

Ron: Like in here.

Ruth: Yeah, like in here!

Sarah: Pull em out, let em eat in here – have lunch in this room, with the adults.

Ruth: Oooh, Jean, brilliant idea.

Jean: I would – I might try to volunteer the office – either Renae myself, or my other – or Melinda – to be one adult to meet with them.

For the next few minutes, the group discussed logistics of lunch hours and numbers of students, then Olga and Sarah asked what we would do about the kindergartners, since they didn't eat lunch. Jean suggested that they could do up a little survey and they could take it home and discuss it with their parents and bring back the ideas. Julie said, "That makes it a family activity." Then Janice quietly mentioned having parents come to eat lunch with the children. Julie asked the group if they heard Janice's idea:

Julie: And Janice just said, what about having the parents come eat lunch with them that day? Even if – probably not all the parents could, but they could be invited.

Olga: If they're invited they might come.

Cheryl: Well, if you have it at their same lunch hour if they're working parents

Jean: But this way you could get everybody in the school to voice their opinion.

Julie: This feels good!

Jean: I would make the questions very clear and simple.

Sarah: What would you like to see happen at Emerson? What would make Emerson a better school?

Julie: And maybe even about some specific things – that might be easier to respond to.

Olga: The lunch, the playground.

The next part of the discussion turned back to the logistics of managing 18 children at once in the Community Room and ensuring that everyone would have a chance to be heard, especially the younger children who might not be as able or comfortable sharing their thoughts. Another thing that project members considered was that there might be variations in how families responded to their children bringing home a survey.

Jean: If they bring their surveys back with them to the meeting they have something they've already discussed with their parents.

Sarah: The little ones probably the parents wrote it for them.

Olga: Well, hopefully the moms and dads when they were writing it for those little tiny ones were asking their input some.

Ruth: And they wrote it down.

Olga: *You're gonna get some where parents say, well, I'm not gonna ask him, he's only in the first grade, and I'm gonna write it down anyways.*

Jean: *The thing is, we might need some volunteer help for those children whose parents aren't going to help fill out surveys.*

Olga: *Right.*

Jean: *That's going to happen.*

Olga: *There are going to be some.*

Julie: *Maybe Matt can do that on Wednesday morning.*

The discussion turned back to logistics again, with input about the kinds of questions that could be on the survey, working out the details of getting the surveys home with students, and the need to send a letter home to families explaining the survey and the lunch. A smaller group agreed to work on designing the survey, and set a time to meet early the following week.

The revised Student of the Week program was born! In addition to honoring and celebrating a variety of student contributions to the school, the program now provided a way to honor students' opinions and involve families in positive interactions with the school. Harmony in Action members had re-negotiated the meanings and purposes of the Student of the Week program by building on one another's ideas, by articulating their beliefs that student voice

and representation were important, and by considering ways to involve families.

Management Within the Project Group

Developing a shared understanding of the Student of the Week Program was an important first step towards moving from idea to implementation. Bringing the program to fruition, however, involved numerous decisions, attention to detail, and completion of tasks that project members had to manage. As soon as they reached agreement about *why* they were going to implement a Student of the Week program, participants started moving towards *how* they would implement the program. For example, during the first year, our “to-do” list included:

- Send a memo to teachers and parents explaining the program
- Give teachers a list of Sample categories for selection of Student of the Week
- See if teachers think it’s ok to use the front lobby showcase to display certificates and items students bring from home.
- Make up blank certificates that teachers fill in about students
- Order bookmarks, put student pictures on them, and laminate
- Figure out where and when teachers will turn in certificates
- Who announces Students of the Week on Friday and collects items for the showcase on Monday?

During the second year, our “to-do” list expanded to include:

- New memo to parents about revisions in program
- Setting up a lunch schedule, making sure enough adults each time
- Making Student of the Week Buttons each week

- Decorating the Community Room for the weekly lunch on Wednesday, and documenting attendance of family members
- Inviting community members to attend lunches
- Developing a student survey

Management of project tasks like the ones listed above usually began during project meetings, when Harmony in Action members volunteered to take care of specific tasks associated with particular activities. During the first meeting of 1992, when the Student of the Week program was introduced, Olga and Sarah offered suggestions from their experiences with their children's other Student of the Week programs. In these programs, the students of the week for the following week were announced on Friday, and they got a certificate from their teacher stating why they were chosen.

Olga offered to work on a certificate to give the students. Sarah offered to check on getting bookmarks like her son's from the Lifetouch Company that did the school pictures. Karen suggested that they ask the teachers for one of the picture strips Lifetouch provided for each child. Sarah offered to draft a letter to parents explaining the program. Ruth offered to check with Renae (principal) about using the display case in the front entrance for the students' certificates and personal items. Laurie (co-teacher) offered to type up the list of Sample Student of the week categories.

Very quickly, the group had moved to managing the details of the Student of the Week program. The group had begun to identify resources they would need, and people in the school to contact about various aspects of the project. As planning for the program continued, new tasks and procedures were developed. The group thought through how to get the certificates to teachers, where and when the teachers would return them, and who would be responsible for announcing students names on Fridays and for setting up the display case on Mondays.

During the second year, participants again volunteered for specific tasks like designing a button for the Students of the Week, setting up for the lunch in the Community Room, drafting a letter to the parents, and working on the survey. Often, the distribution of responsibilities depended on the schedules of participants and on particular skills or resources they had. For example, Julie or Laurie, who felt comfortable using a computer, often did typing or computer tasks. Olga and Liz, parents who did not work outside the home, volunteered to announce Students of the Week each Friday afternoon and arrange the display case on Monday mornings. Two other parents, Dawn and Melanie, who worked outside the home, offered to attach student pictures to the bookmarks in the evenings at home. Karen and Ruth often took responsibility for making announcements at staff meetings, and

they and Julie were often the ones who copied and distributed notices to parents and teachers. Since Julie's schedule allowed her to be available for all four lunch periods, she volunteered to greet families and collect student surveys during Student of the Week lunches.

These roles and responsibilities fluctuated over time, especially when group members learned new skills or identified additional resources. For example, at the beginning of the second year, Julie was primarily responsible for making the Student of the Week button templates with a special computer program. For a while, Matt, a junior high school student, volunteered on Wednesday mornings as part of a release time program for teachers at the junior high school. Julie taught Matt how to use the computer program, and he began to help make the buttons. In January, before Julie went out of the country for a month, she also taught Olga how to use the computer, and Olga and Liz eventually took on the primary responsibility of making the buttons each week.

Later in the year, Harmony in Action initiated the Student Representative program that Ron had brought up at the first meeting in September. Fourth and fifth graders were elected by their classroom peers to represent their class. Their term was for two months, during which they met with Ron each week to talk about ideas for Harmony in Action, to plan ways

that they could be involved in Harmony in Action activities such as assemblies, making announcements about Spirit Days, visiting younger classrooms to get input, and helping with the Student of the Week lunches. The student representatives were a new resource for helping manage project activities. They worked in two teams depending on their lunchtime to either help set up for the weekly lunch or to clean up afterwards. The 'set up' students helped Julie put tablecloths on the tables, they designed centerpieces, and they put a thank-you card with a small candy treat out for each of the Students of the Week. As families arrived, they greeted them and invited them to sign the guest book. The 'clean up' students put away materials, cleaned and folded the tablecloths, and put surveys in a folder in the file cabinet. In the spring, student representatives made a videotape of the Student of the Week lunch, including on-the-spot interviews with students and parents.

Negotiation Outside the Project Group

As discussed in Chapter 4, written communication was one the most efficient ways to reach the large number of people with whom we needed to share information. It was through written communication that project goals were communicated to staff, families, and community members. The first memo that Harmony in Action sent out in October, 1992 (see Appendix E),

described the project's goals, and asked for input about several activities that the group had in mind. The statement introducing the Student of the Week program in this memo very nearly echoes the conversation that took place during the first project meeting when the idea was introduced.

Each week, we will ask each teacher to choose one student from his or her classroom as "Student of the Week." Rather than an award that students have to earn, "Student of the Week" is intended to recognize the many ways that students contribute to our classroom and building community at Emerson. Students may be recognized for a variety of reasons – sticking with a project, coming up with a solution to a classroom problem, helping a peer with their work, showing a visitor the way to a classroom, sharing a favorite book with their class – there is something special about each and every student at Emerson! Each week, the 20 "Students of the Week" will be featured in a display with their picture and a brief description of why they are being recognized. By the end of the year, each student at Emerson will be recognized as "Student of the Week."

Although we hadn't asked the Emerson staff if they *wanted* to implement the Student of the Week program, we had asked on the survey for general comments and suggestions in addition to asking specifically about using the display case. The responses on the sixteen survey/memos that were returned to Karen were quite supportive. Here are some of the comments that teachers wrote :

Great idea – good way to build self esteem. Hopefully all Emerson students will be given this honor. Perhaps when the new multi-media center is completed a special wall area can be designed to highlight Emerson students. (JP, 2nd grade)

Great idea! Thanks for all the support throughout the year to make it happen! (TV, 1st grade)

Good idea! I appreciate the work this committee has been doing. (CL, 3rd grade)

Great – Teacher of the Week too! (CD, 2nd grade)

I think it's a great idea! (DC, 2nd grade)

Sounds great! How do we get the freebies from LifeTouch? You are doing a wonderful job! (KZ, 1st grade)

The case is not in the best location for the students to see it though. The library is really the best place. These ideas sound terrific! Thanks for the opportunity to participate. (JG, 3rd grade)

Wonderful idea! This is similar to our 'class family award'. Possibly kids could generate lists of Sample criteria and recommend students within classroom for award/honor. How about a bulletin board in the cafeteria- where the kids could have more "viewing" time. (BS, 4th grade)

Like the showcase idea. If all the teacher has to do is nominate, this is fantastic. (PS, 1st grade)

Harmony in action had used a memo/survey to negotiate outside the project group about Student of the Week; these responses let the group know that we had the staff's approval. Teachers who didn't write specifically positive comments on their surveys, like some of the ones above, nevertheless provided constructive ideas that we interpreted to mean they were engaged and interested in developing the program:

I hope children have an opportunity to bring something to put in the case. (TT, 1st grade)

Be nice if each class had Student of the Week display outside of door-not too many pass by the display case at entrance. (anonymous)

The letter that was sent to families (see Appendix F), was not explicit about the fact that each child would be selected, nor did it explain the idea of choosing student for a range of accomplishments. It did, however, emphasize that students are “special,” and “one of a kind,” which communicated at least part of the group’s shared understanding to students and families.

The second year of the Student of the Week program, 1993-94, project members did not ask for input or approval from the Emerson staff before implementing the changes of adding the lunch and the survey, even though these changes could potentially impact teachers more so than had activities of the previous year. Teachers saw the letter that was sent to families describing the changes since it was put in their mailboxes to send home with students. But there was no formal attempt to communicate why there had been changes to the Student of the Week program. The first written communication that Emerson staff received about the Student of the Week program was a brief memo asking them to return their first ballots. A week later, they received another brief memo informing them of the changes. In this memo, the last

paragraph invites teachers to join their students for lunch, and ends with an open-ended overture for suggestions.

I can't point to any documentation that explains why the Harmony in Action group did *not* try to communicate the purposes of the new pieces of the Student of the Week program, or why they did not attempt to gain approval and support from staff by asking for input as they had the previous year. My guess is that the reasons are two-fold.

One reason might have been that the program got started almost two months earlier than it had the previous year, and that in the "beginning of school rush," this might have been simply an oversight. There is some evidence for this conclusion in the notes from the Harmony in Action meeting on October 7, 1993. Connie, a 5th grade teacher, attended the meeting that night and suggested that the teachers should get their own copy of the Student of the Week letter that went home to families, so they would be clear on the details of parents attending lunch in case they were asked. She suggested that the letter be sent home again, in case some parents hadn't gotten or read it. She thought teachers might also want a copy of the survey that was sent home with students. These suggestions were followed up; the following week a reminder was sent home to parents on the back of the HIA calendar, and a week later a brief memo was sent to teachers along with a student survey

(and an apology for not getting it to them sooner). In this same memo, the group again invited teachers to come to the lunches, and shared a belief that “it is a fun opportunity to interact with students and their families.”

Another reason for not communicating formally and up front about the changes in the Student of the Week program might have been that Harmony in Action members made the assumption that they already had gained approval and communicated the meanings and purposes of the new aspects of the program. I don’t think there was a conscious assumption, necessarily. Riding on the positive feedback from the previous year, and caught up in the excitement of really getting input from students and having lots of families in the school each Wednesday, I don’t think project members stopped to think about asking the staff for input.

The meanings and purposes of the changes in Student of the Week *had* been communicated to families, in letters that went home on September 21, 1993 (see Appendix G) to introduce the changes, and on October 14, 1993, as a reminder printed on the back of the October calendar. The “proof” that families were in support of these changes was that over the year, approximately 300 family members attended the Student of the Week lunches (there are no records for some weeks, so this is based on an average of the recorded weeks), and approximately 299 surveys were collected. Although

there was no formal survey of families' feelings about the lunch or the student survey, I have anecdotal notes from week to week that reflect their positive feedback. Most often, parents and other family members comments were about three aspects of their and their children's experiences:

- They really enjoyed simply coming to school to have lunch with their child and felt that it was a very positive reason to come– it was not a parent-teacher conference, it was not because their child was in trouble, and it was not because they were being asked to do something. Just a 25 minute special lunch in a room decorated with tablecloths and centerpieces. Some parents brought their child a special treat for lunch that day – pizza or McDonalds – and they brought along grandparents, siblings, and others. Some took pictures in front of the display case. They also enjoyed it when their child's teacher joined the child for lunch and they could all just talk personally – not about school, even. Just as people having lunch together.
- They appreciated that their child was being asked what he or she thought and felt about school. Many parents wondered about how the information would be used, but some said that even if they never did anything with it, it made their children feel good that they were asked. Later in the year, when students were Student of the Week a second time, some parents commented that they felt that some of the information on the survey was really being used – their children had talked about changes on the playground, for example.
- They commented that in doing the survey at home with their child, or even during the lunch, that they had learned more about their child's experience at school. Sometimes they were surprised about what they liked or disliked, other times they felt they knew what the child would say.

The surveys were read each week by Harmony in Action members, and if there were short-term issues that could be addressed, Harmony in Action

members tried to fit these tasks into their work. For example, many children commented that eating in the lunch room was not pleasant. Harmony in Action members followed up on students' comments about the appearance of the lunch room by hanging posters and trying to "soften" the environment, and responded to their comments about having to wait to go outside by trying out some different scheduling strategies so that one playground supervisor could go outside with children who were ready. At the end of the year, the surveys were tabulated and summarized, then given to the School Improvement team at Emerson. This team took a look at the priority issues according to students and worked them in to the longer-term plans for the school.

Emerson staff also showed support for the Student of the Week program by coming to the lunches. Across the year, an average of 7.5 Emerson staff members attended each week. This number included teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff. In addition, faculty and graduate students from MSU other than Ron and myself attended occasionally.

Management Outside the Project Group

In addition to communicating the meanings and purposes of the Student of the Week program to school staff and family members, Harmony in Action members were also responsible for making sure that non-project members

understood their roles in implementing the program. Teachers, for example, were responsible for selecting students each week, writing their certificates and turning them in, and sending home memos to families. They were not required to attend the lunches or to make sure that the student surveys were completed. Jean, the school secretary, fielded more calls from family members needing clarification or information about what to do when their children were Student of the Week. Parents helped their children select and remember to bring items for the showcase, and during the second year, they helped their children complete the survey and could attend the lunch if they wanted.

Again, written communication was the most efficient way to provide information to school staff and families. As mentioned previously, most memos and letters combined some statement about the purpose of activities and some statement about the procedures involved in the activities, addressing both the negotiation and management aspects of communicating outside the project group. In addition to memos and reminder notes, Harmony in Action members often followed up personally on loose ends as a way to manage project activities outside the project group. For example, when Olga or Liz discovered a missing Student of the Week certificate, they

went to the teacher's classroom and collected it or reminded the teacher to turn it in.

Managing Student of the Week outside the project group required setting up systems that made it convenient for staff or parents to get information or provide us with information for which they were responsible. Each week, Olga and Liz put a blank certificate in each teacher's mail box in the office. Teachers could return the certificates to a folder taped to the wall directly across from the mailboxes. Many teachers completed the certificates right in the office and returned them right away. Feedback from staff indicated that this system saved time and seemed efficient.

Olga and Liz announced the Students of the Week on the school's public announcement system on Friday afternoons, then again on Monday mornings made an announcement for the students to come bring their items to the display case, so that teachers did not have to remember to send students down on Monday mornings. Olga and Liz also handed out the student surveys as students came to the display case, so teachers were not responsible for getting these sent home. In addition to the procedures that were in place for getting the tasks done each week, Karen and Ruth also explained procedures and answered questions during staff meetings if they came up.

“A Place for Everyone”

Ruth said that when she thought of Harmony in Action, Harris school district’s logo – “a place for everyone” – came to mind. The processes of negotiation and management, inside and outside the Harmony in Action project group, had served to launch and sustain the Student of the Week program at Emerson school. This program had created a “place for everyone” by emphasizing that *every* student be recognized, *every* student have a chance to be heard through the survey, and *every* family have an opportunity to be involved in the school during the Student of the Week lunches. The program was supported by families and by staff in part because it required a very small investment of their time and energy, yet yielded pretty substantial returns in terms of students’ and families’ positive orientations towards the school. The lunches and surveys went beyond “typical” school practices in order to “reach out” to families in new ways (Davies, Burch & Johnson, 1992).

Recess Activities Program

Whereas the Student of the Week program was an idea that was “new” at the school, Emerson staff and parents had previously discussed concerns about students’ experiences during recess. It was these concerns that prompted Karen to address them directly in the BLIPERL proposal developed

for the 1992-93 school year. The third goal this proposal was “To provide more structured learning opportunities for children during their lunch and recess periods.” The following rationale was stated:

Rationale: Children need times during the day to relax, play, and expend their energy in order to be able to benefit from classroom instruction. Unfortunately, however, because recess and lunch activities are usually quite unstructured, children’s experiences during these times often lead to problems in the classroom, for example as a result of fights and other unruly behavior that occur in the lunch room or on the playground. Project participants believe that these problems can be reduced by providing children with more structured and educationally sound experiences during lunch and recess. In addition, improving the quality of these times will benefit the children more directly, by providing them with opportunities to experience problem solving situations and to be challenged to make more appropriate choices and decisions about their own learning. Correspondingly, continuity between their classroom and non-classroom experiences should be increased.

The two components of the Recess Activities program were based on strategies identified in the proposal to restructure recess and to involve family and community members. The moniker “*Recess Activities Program*,” by the way, was not used in the original BLIPERL proposal, but became the common name used by project members as they began to conceptualize how to address issues during recess and lunch.

The Recess Activities program was also intended to create a “place for everyone” by providing a safe lunch and recess environment for all students at Emerson, and by involving family and community members in activities

with children during their unstructured times. However, when it came to discussions about the envisioned F/C component of the Recess Activities program, project members had a more difficult time coming to a shared understanding about the purposes of this program. Project members also had a more difficult time figuring out how to manage this program, which involved more complex processes of coordinating space and people than had the Student of the Week program. Because the processes of negotiation and management were so intertwined in planning for the F/C component of the Recess Activities program, I discuss them together in the following sections.

Negotiation and Management Within the Project Group

During the 1992-93 school year, the discussion about the F/C component of the Recess Activities program stayed at the level of gathering information about family and community members who might be interested in doing activities during lunch and recess with children. However, the MSU/ET component of the Recess Activities program was implemented in January 1993. Ron, the graduate assistant for Harmony in Action, and Ally, an undergraduate T.E. student doing an independent study, began planning and implementing cooperative outdoor activities each Wednesday during recess periods. There was very little negotiation within the project group about this component of the Recess Activities program. From the beginning,

Ron had intended to implement activities on the playground. Project members occasionally shared ideas for “cooperative” activities, culled from books and workshops, such as parachute games, relays, human chains, and mirroring activities. Otherwise, project members seemed to trust Ron and Ally’s judgment about providing activities on the playground.

The second year of the project, the MSU/ET component of the Recess Activities program was less consistent (i.e., there wasn’t a regularly scheduled day), but Ron scheduled students from the teacher education (TE 150) class that he taught to participate in recess activities. Occasionally, some of these students or Ron tried out some alternative indoor activities during recess such as writing and performing plays. Project members seemed to agree that the purpose of these activities both years was to provide students with some alternative kinds of recess activities, and to have adults teach and model cooperative games and activities. Management of these activities did not take much of the group’s time, since Ron was primarily the one who organized the recess activities and the MSU students who were assisting. Other than updates about how the recess activities were going, this was not a detail that had to be handled by the whole group.

Feedback about these activities was positive. Ron and the undergraduate students both years reported that many students joined in these

activities. Teachers reported that their students often looked at the calendar to see what activities were planned, and that they noticed students engaging in these activities on their own on days when Ron and the undergraduate students were not there. Students reported that they enjoyed these activities, and according to the office staff, if Ron wasn't outdoors right at the beginning of recess, students came looking for him. Parents reported that their children talked about these activities at home. Feedback about the MSU/ET component of the Recess Activities program served to encourage project members to pursue the F/C component, which would include family and community members in an even wider range of activities for children.

By the beginning of the 1993-94 school year, project members were ready to move ahead with planning ways to have family and community members involved with students during recess and lunch. This turned out to be more complicated than we anticipated. A potential roadblock early in the year that we hadn't considered previously was the issue of liability. In all our discussions about having volunteers in the school, we had not thought about the potential liability issue of having people other than district employees be responsible for children, even if for short period of the day. At the first meeting, I mentioned that I'd talked to Renae about this issue, and that she

was going to check on it. Several people offered their interpretation of what they'd heard:

Ruth: There has to be a teacher.

Julie: Well, we're not sure. Renae's gonna check, but there may be some problems with that. Maybe even with parents, with community members, with high school students or whatever. We had a lot of ideas last year that seemed really good, and I think seemed workable, but we just have to keep checking it out with Renae as we go along. For example, if we had this movie available, who ...?

Ruth: There would have to be a teacher, or a co-teacher.

Julie: Well, we're not sure though. It may not have to be a teacher or a co-teacher.

Ruth: Well, it may not, but I would feel safer if there were a volunteer.

Olga: I think children area supposed to have 2 adults there at all times anyways That's what I've gotten from other schools that I've been in.

Cheryl: If an emergency happens.

Olga: Yes, if one of them has to leave. Then, plus, with all this child abuse that goes on.

Ruth: Checks and balances.

Olga: Exactly.

Ruth: What she's saying too, though, is that we're pretty sure that when they're in school that they have to have like a licensed teacher there for liability and I think that we're

safe – we're not in any trouble because at lunch time we do have some leeway as far as some flexibility with co-teachers. Unless that was paraprofessionals that Pam was telling me. Maybe not. But anyway, I think there's probably a way we could work that out.

Julie: Oh, I think there's probably ways. Yeah, I agree, Ruth. I mean, even for recess, but I just think we have to not say, "Ok, sure, you high school students come over and work with these kids and go off by yourself in that room and have a good time." I mean we could maybe get in trouble for that We just have to be careful about putting them with the kids without some other supervision.

Sid: Did you say Renae was checking on that?

Julie: She said to me tonight that she would.

Sid: Cause in addition, even if we weren't liable, we might still want to ask the question, "Is this the best thing for kids?"

Ruth: Right, for everybody.

Eventually the liability issue was clarified; we learned that a teacher needed to be *available* to volunteers, but not necessarily with them.

Discussing the liability issue had raised an equally important question, "Is this the best thing for kids?" We realized that we would have to go beyond just placing volunteers with students and really think through what they would be doing with them, and how these activities would be supervised.

Other roadblocks proved to be ahead as we continued to discuss the F/C component of the Recess Activities program. One issue that came up during two meetings in October had to do with how to develop criteria for which children could access activities if there were limited activities available. At the meeting on October 7, project members discussed this. Ruth had identified some rooms in the school that could be used for alternative indoor activities. Her ideas were to have a game room and a video room. Olga thought that instead of a game room, which she felt would be noisy and confusing, they should have a quiet room where “kids could earn the privilege of going into the quiet room instead of going out to recess.” Ruth explained that what she meant by a game room was quiet board games, but she said she agreed that it would be a privilege. However, Ruth’s definition of privilege was that children would get to *stay* in the room until their behavior became inappropriate (i.e., noisy or disruptive), while Olga’s definition of privilege was that they got to *go* in the room if their behavior was appropriate.

Julie suggested that making it a privilege to go in might keep some children from an activity where they might actually be better behaved. She gave an example, “Two boys who are wilder than anything out on the playground might go and play chess and be fine.” Ruth asked, “Can we go

back and ask, ‘What do we mean by earn the privilege?’ I mean if you don’t follow the rules, you’re out.” Olga suggested that “everybody can’t go to the game room or the video room there’s not enough room. So how’re you gonna decide, in your class, which 5 kids get to go, if you pick 5 kids?” Cheryl said that she would “pick the 5 kids that were good that morning” and Olga confirmed, “Ok, so they earned it,” then added, “Unless you went alphabetically or something.”

Ruth’s next statement showed a change in her thinking from what she said before:

I would make it real clear what the criteria was – that they hadn’t been written up by any supervisors, they’d been responsible, like if they had a job they’d done – those type of things – But I wouldn’t choose somebody who’d had to go sit out in the hall – and I would make it real clear, and I would talk it over with the kids and I would say, “What do we want to choose as our criteria?”

Sarah and Cheryl were concerned about making sure that all children would have access to the activities.

Sarah: I think we want to make sure it’s within everyone’s reach to earn it I think the whole idea of our group

Cheryl: Make sure that everybody gets their chance in the limelight. And that the kids who are good all the time have plenty of chances, but the kids who don’t

Throughout this discussion, project members had been negotiating their understandings of this issue of access for students. Ruth had even “switched

gears” as she heard other people’s ideas. However, her ideas continued to fluctuate about the issue of access. At the following meeting, project members were explaining to Jean, who hadn’t been at the previous meeting, what they had discussed about the game room. Jean said, “And then they’re gonna have to earn going to the quiet room, right?” Ruth explained, “The idea of kids earning Well, we said, ‘Why don’t we have it be that anybody could come?’ If there’s 40 kids in there and they’re all being cooperative, what’s wrong with that? And if they’re not being cooperative, then they leave. It’s as simple as that.” Cheryl asked, “What if there’s 100 kids – in terrible weather?” Ruth said, “But the idea of *not* earning it was so palatable. Just giving them- just an open thing and everybody could do it until they proved they can’t.” Ruth seemed to be back to her original stance of the previous meeting, that “privilege” meant getting to *stay* in the quiet room.

These issues of access ended up being overshadowed by the process of managing to get adults to be in the game room. Within the group, Julie and Ron tried numerous times to come up with an overall framework that would reflect the vision of the F/C component of having multiple activities during all recess periods. At the meeting on October 7, Ron had offered to try to work out a plan:

Maybe if this sounds appropriate to people I would be willing to try to put together a proposal – to look at the overall vision of this and how it's possible and see what we need to do to make it happen. Cause right now I'm having trouble – I'm hearing all the issues separately but I'm having trouble right now putting it together.

At the meeting on October 21, he stated, "I got a little stuck on it; I got stuck." Stuck is where they stayed for the remainder of the second year.

Julie mentioned often how difficult it was to invite volunteers in without knowing what she was asking them in to do. Ron and Julie tried to put together a year-long calendar with all the school event dates on it, and then a grid of rooms where activities could take place and the recess times, so that they could start "filling" in the slots. That's about as far as they got on the project. One reason for this is that they worked on this only sporadically; both graduate students had other responsibilities within and outside the Harmony in Action project. Ruth eventually did get the game room "open," but it was not a consistent, regular choice for students. Ruth stayed in the room on some of her lunch periods, and invited teachers to send their students down as an alternative to outdoor recess.

Sid identified some MSU students who volunteered on occasion to be in the game room, and occasionally Ron's T.E. students spent time in there. Managing the Recess Activities project within the group proved to be a difficult task, which included issues with time, resources and procedures.

Ron and Julie's time was limited, as was other project members. Contacting family and community members to "fill the slots" was a labor-intensive job which no one seemed to have time to do, given the more immediate demands of other project activities. This task often was put on the "back burner."

Julie mentioned at a meeting in November, 1993, "I think this is going to take a real concentrated and aggressive effort." Having someone in the group for whom that was their main focus might have been a solution. Managing the *resources* for F/C Recess Activities program was also complicated. Many times, project members suggested that if we provided materials for a crafts activity, family or community members may be willing to do this activity with students. If we provided the materials, who was "we"? Should the materials come out of Harmony in Action's PDS budget, or should they come out of Emerson's school budget? If there were multiple activities, where would they happen? What rooms were available and when? Were there any rooms where certain activities couldn't take place? Just figuring out the logistics of a program that was still at this point "imagined" proved to be difficult.

Negotiation and Management Outside the Project Group

Negotiation and management of the recess activities outside the project group was limited. The first memo that Harmony in Action sent out in October, 1992 (see Appendix E), asked Emerson staff for suggestions about

recess and lunch activities, and suggestions of family members, community groups or businesses that might be interested in sharing their time and talents.

The 16 surveys returned included many suggestions, and a few comments that let the group know that others were concerned about the playground also:

Somehow more organized activities – I heard complaints at conferences about children fighting on playground during recess.

I continue to be very concerned about the safety and comfort of children at lunch and recess. Thank you for your efforts.

The MSU/TE component of the Recess Activities program did not require much negotiation or management outside the project group. In January, Ron helped to put on the Playground Rules and Activities assembly, where he introduced to the children the MSU/ET component of the Recess Activities program. As a follow up, he visited classrooms to talk about recess activities as well as about cooperation on the playground. In these ways, he was communicating to others in the school his ideas about the Recess Activities program. There were also not many management tasks outside the group related to the MSU/TE component of the program. As I mentioned previously, Ron coordinated the time of the other MSU students, but he did not have to manage the time of others in the school. Since the recess activities during the first year were on Wednesdays, and they were for anyone

who wanted to come, there was no scheduling or planning with teachers in order to have children involved.

In February of 1993, Karen and Julie attended the monthly Harris Business Alliance meeting, where they had an opportunity to share information about Harmony in Action, and handed out interest surveys (see Appendix H) to solicit volunteers for the F/C component of the Recess Activities program. In March, more surveys were mailed to Business Alliance members who had not attended the February meeting, and a similar interest survey was sent home for families. There was little response to these surveys; none were returned by Business Alliance members, and approximately 10 were returned by families.

Summary

Both the Student of the Week program and the F/C component of the Recess Activities program were envisioned by Harmony in Action members as “a place for everyone.” The Student of the Week program became this place; the F/C component of the Recess Activities program did not. In comparing these programs, there are clear differences in the negotiation and management processes that affected the extent to which each of these programs realized their initial vision.

In the context of the Student of the Week program, the belief in “recognition for everyone” was never challenged. Project members developed a shared understanding of this belief early in the project work, and they communicated this belief to Emerson staff and families. Managing the program was straightforward, with routine tasks repeated each week once the details were worked out. The program required a minimal investment of time and energy from families and from staff.

In the context of the F/C Recess program, however, the belief in “access for everyone” was challenged early on by the realities of managing a limited number of activities for a potentially large number of students. Project members were challenged to articulate their beliefs about these activities as a being a “right” for students versus a “privilege” for students. And if it was a privilege, by what criteria would students earn it? What had seemed so clear in the context of the Student of the Week program, that each students’ unique and special qualities were all that qualified him or her as Student of the Week, didn’t seem so clear in the context of the F/C Recess Activities program. All of a sudden group members began to articulate what they considered as behaviors that would earn access. As the description of these conversations shows, this was not an easy discussion for project members to have, and the fact that some kept vacillating in their ideas

indicates that they were struggling to develop individual, as well as group, understandings.

In addition to the challenging *negotiation* process involved in the F/C recess program, project members faced the challenging *management* processes involved in getting a program this complex from idea to implementation. It was difficult to both collect and put to use information about space, time, and human and material resources.

CHAPTER 6

“ARE WE THERE YET?”: PERCEPTIONS OF HARMONY IN ACTION AT EMERSON

During interviews at the end of the 1993-94 school year, I asked Harmony in Action members to reflect on Harmony in Action generally, and to comment on specific programs that the group had implemented throughout the two years that they had worked together. I also interviewed teachers from most grade levels who were not involved in the project group, and students who had been involved in the Student Representative program. In addition, students in all grade levels were asked to complete a survey about Harmony in Action activities (see Appendix I), as were family members and staff (see Appendices J and K). 121 student, 13 parent, and 8 staff surveys were returned. Of the 121 student surveys returned, 8 were from first graders, 11 from second graders, 16 from third graders, 43 from fourth graders, and 44 from fifth graders. There were two versions of the student survey, one with faces to circle, similar to the Student of the Week Survey, which could be used by the lower elementary classrooms, and one without faces, which could be use by the upper elementary classrooms. Teachers were invited to do the survey as a class activity, and lower elementary teachers were offered the

option of having additional support of having a Harmony in Action member take dictation from students.

In this chapter, my intent is to provide a sense of how Harmony in Action members and others thought the project was perceived in the school context, and to share some of their insights about the two programs that I described in Chapter 5 – the Student of the Week program and the Recess Activities program. I also identify some of the themes that surfaced as they spoke about these aspects of Harmony in Action.

General Perceptions of Harmony in Action

As I reviewed the comments from project members and other teachers, I noticed three features to their descriptions about how Harmony in Action was perceived. First, people seemed to address the extent to which Harmony in Action was perceived positively by others in the school. Second, they seemed to address Harmony in Action's identity in relation to Emerson in general. Third, they seemed to address Harmony in Action's PDS identity. Comments are categorized by these categories.

Harmony in Action: A Good Thing for Emerson?

Most of the comments that people made about perceptions of Harmony in Action were based on things that others had said (or written) to them in various settings. Sometimes, people in the school setting would come

directly to a project member and simply tell them that they liked or appreciated what they were doing:

If I'm taking assessment as when people come up to me and make positive comments about things that we're doing, then I get a lot of positive comments, and that makes me think that people feel pretty good about HIA. (Ron, HIA project, MSU graduate student)

Positive. I think it is one of the more well received projects. Actually I think it is the best received project. It's the one people know more about I think they saw that as a group working together harmoniously, we could get a lot done. You know, there didn't have to be friction about everything. You know, it was just such a positive group, and I think everyone in the building sensed that. I had people come to me and say, you guys have so much fun, and you guys do such great things, what a great group to be associated with. I mean everybody sensed that. I think the staff in the building had a very good sense of what we do. (Sarah, HIA project, paraprofessional)

Sometimes, the sense that Harmony in Action was perceived positively was also based on what others *didn't* say:

I never heard one negative comment about HIA, except for maybe the bothersome assembly times taking away from their teaching, but other than that I never heard a negative comment I mean we've had a few situations where they've chosen not to be involved, but 90% of the time everybody participated. (Sarah, HIA project, paraprofessional)

Staff meetings were a setting where Harmony in Action members often asked for feedback about what they were doing, and where they developed a feel for how others felt about HIA:

The lower grade levels have been very supportive with our ideas, and very verbal, and given us notes or answers or ideas back, and the upper grade levels I haven't heard much from, although that's not

true – well I haven't heard much individually, but like during staff meetings, I remember Ben was real vocal and real positive about HIA (Ruth, HIA project, 5th grade teacher)

Well, I guess I've been surprised at how much support there really is for this group I guess the biggest surprise for me is when we were talking about the safe schools, safe families thing in the staff meeting, and people brought up that they felt like HIA could be a voice for our school. You really have to have some respect for a group to be able to say that- and the people at the staff meeting agreed. (Carrie, HIA project, co-teacher)

Other times, project members' sense that Harmony in Action was perceived positively was based on notes they got from others in the school:

Jotted at the bottom of a survey in October 1992: I'm really impressed by the ideas, energy and positive impact your group has! I'm sorry to be so overwhelmed that I have no time left to work with your group.

Left unsigned in Julie's mailbox in fall 1992: A quote I saw in a Music catalog. It was just an embroidery thing, so I don't know who said it. I just thought of HIA! Quote: Without music there is not harmony. Without harmony there is no peace.

Left in Karen's mailbox: That was a nice assembly yesterday. Thanks for all the things you do trying to make Emerson more positive.

Left in Karen's mailbox: Harmony in Action cc: Karen – I am very impressed with your efforts to improve school climate and your communication with the community (parents) Thank you and keep it up!

Left in Karen's mailbox, February 1993: Harmony in Action, I just wanted to thank you for all the time and effort you have put towards making Emerson such a special place. My kids just love the Student of the Week" and look forward to the announcement every Friday. It is also great fun for me to watch as the kids are each called. They jump up, smile, and/or yell, YES! It is a joy to see the

children feel so happy and good about themselves. It is definitely a positive self-esteem booster. The showcase is also wonderful. Thank you for all your work.

Left in Karen's mailbox: Karen, I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciated all you and Harmony in Action are doing. You are putting in a lot of extra time and energy and so many positive experiences are happening for our students. Thank you!!

In a letter to Emerson and MSU staff, from a teacher who was leaving after 11 years: I would like to thank the Harmony in Action for our farewell breakfast. The picture, balloon, and the books were wonderful. Thanks for the many things your committee did to reach each and every one of us at Elliott with the activities throughout the year.

Will the Real Harmony in Action Please Stand Up?

Another feature about perceptions of Harmony in Action that project members identified was that others in the school seemed to feel that HIA was “embedded” in Emerson, even though the project was only two years old. I asked during interviews, “When did the project start?” Sometimes, even project members had a difficult time remembering, especially if they hadn’t been involved in the first few meetings in the fall of 1992. Renae commented on this sense that HIA had been around for a while:

I think it's more institutionalized than most other things that we've tapped the opportunity to develop through PDS. Simply the notion that – well, we always wanted kids to feel good about going to school here, and so this (HIA) must have been happening for a long time even though (Renae, principal)

One explanation that project members offered for this sense that Harmony in Action was embedded in Emerson was that the project goals were consistent with the school goals; it wasn't always clear who initiated ideas or activities:

I think HIA is very well known as Emerson. I mean it's like the names are used interchangeably, and it's kind of funny what comes up at staff meetings, you know, as a building decision – well, HIA has already done that, or HIA is doing this and they are representing us as a building, as a staff. And things that the building feels HIA is doing is really a building emphasis or idea. (Karen, HIA project, P.E. teacher)

Another reason that people sometimes had difficulty with Harmony in Action's identity is that the group membership was so varied, and it implemented such a range of activities. Cheryl talked about trying to explain it to friends:

The sad thing about HIA is that a lot of people in this school do not know what it is, you know, like I'll tell some friends on the phone, when I was coming to meetings – "Well, what's that?" and I try to explain it to them. And it's not like PTO because we do different things, but this is more interaction in the school to get more out of school, and help out more, not just in your child's classroom but everybody. (Cheryl, paraprofessional, level 2 HIA)

Renae thought it was important for students to begin to identify HIA as the source of some of the activities that they were involved in:

I don't know that children know about HIA, I mean children know about Student of the Week and they now about spirit activities, and they know about the Carnival, but I don't know that children even

know that HIA exists You give kids all kinds of opportunities to give you feedback and I don't know if they know who they are giving the feedback to. And if they just think it's sort of globally their school, that's ok, but I also think that if you're going to eventually have kids evaluate the impact of HIA, they need to know it exists. (Rena, principal)

Although the Harmony in Action group had tried to create an identity during the first year of the project by developing a logo and using goldenrod paper for all its documents, this “identity crisis” wasn’t really a problem for most of the project members. As Rick said about project members being in a high profile project, “It’s not like they have some interest in being known.”

Harmony in Action: To Be (a PDS Project) or Not To Be (a PDS Project)

In Chapter 3, I described Harmony in Action as a project that “grew up” in a school that was struggling with conflict that often comes along with change and innovation. Much of the conflict at Emerson had been between PDS project groups, and between PDS and “non-PDS” participants. The comments of Harmony in Action members and others reflect that tensions were high about the PDS issue during the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years. It was not surprising that the people who focused most on these issues were teachers who had been in PDS projects previously or new MSU participants who had heard of the history of conflict at Emerson.

Some people worried that project activities would not be supported by some teachers in the school *simply because* HIA was a PDS project. Renae speculated on this:

I don't know if some people automatically didn't read something because it was on a goldenrod note, I don't know how many people you have with that attitude. But that's not responsibility that your group can take – that's responsibility of those particular individuals and their attitude. (Renae, principal)

Ruth also suggested that there were different groups of teachers who had different responses to HIA, based on their orientations towards PDS in general.

I would say – we've got 25 or 26 staff – probably if asked about HIA there would be quite a few people that wouldn't know what the hell we do. Who we're for Just wouldn't know – they're so busy in their- maybe 2 or 3 that I'd say didn't know what we're about, but they wouldn't be negative. They just wouldn't know. Then there would be – the highest portion of the staff would be very positive – I would say maybe 15 or more – because we've gotten some notes, and they say, this is neat and they'll give us suggestions, and we have to trust that if they're making suggestions that that's a sign they trust they're gonna be heard. And then I would say about 8 or 9 people only see it as a PDS project and have real negative feelings about PDS and therefore they don't even really look at what HIA – they just – it's PDS so its gotta be bad. (Ruth, HIA project, 5th grade teacher)

In general, project members seemed to conclude that the fact that HIA was a PDS project had not been as much of an issue as they anticipated. This might have been because project members were so diligent about getting feedback from everyone in the school, and making sure to touch base

especially with the people in the school who we anticipated might have concerns. Some of their comments reflect a general sense that HIA was perceived positively, even by non-PDS teachers, in part because it was a different kind of PDS project from previous ones that had not focused on all-school activities, and had not included the range of people that HIA included:

I think in general the staff are very supportive of what we do, and I think we've really tried to include as many people in the building as we can, and like I said, even people who aren't very interested in PDS I think have still been in some way pretty supportive of us. I think they think we can get some things done There have been times when we've been asked to do some things I think based on the fact that, "Oh, well, I don't know if this really falls into what HIA is all about, but HIA seems to get things done, so why don't you think about doing it?" (Ron, HIA project, MSU graduate student)

I think, overall, during staff meetings or something, people tend to seem to have a general idea of HIA's goals for the school, and it's for everyone, and it's for Emerson, and it isn't just a PDS project. I hope to see it less of a PDS project, but more of an Emerson- It's one and the same to me, but I'm thinking of other people's minds. I hope to see it more of an integral part of Emerson rather than just a PDS project that helps. (Ruth, HIA project, 5th grade teacher)

Harmony in Action members also thought that when non-PDS teachers showed interest in one of the project components, that this indicated a lessening of the division between PDS and non-PDS. Ruth and Ron gave these examples:

As the year went on, there were different factions and different groups that were interested in different parts of HIA. For instance, like there were some teachers who weren't even in PDS that were very

interested in the partner school. Or like when the GENESIS group of handicapped people came to talk about being in the classroom, about 7 of our staff came to that. (Ruth, HLA project, 5th grade teacher)

Two cases where students brought up issues with their teachers and both teachers sent these students to me and the student reps. Interestingly enough, one of the teachers is very much involved with what we're doing but the other one is not involved with HLA at all and doesn't always feel real comfortable with PDS at all, but she must be comfortable with the student rep idea and program. (Ron, MSU graduate student)

There was also a sense that Harmony in Action had provided a link between different factions at Emerson:

A lot of us realized that the school was divided, and HLA did something to help bring it together. If not the teachers, then the kids. Well, it brought the teachers together somewhat too. There's a strong need. (Darcy, 3rd grade teacher)

I think HLA was a salvation from the wreckage of our misunderstandings and communications around PDS. And so sort of professionally, HLA was sort of the bridge that made it possible for some of us to cross over under more peaceful territory. (Rena, principal)

What Did Students Know about Harmony in Action?

The group of students who had had the most interactions with Harmony in Action were the 4th and 5th grade Student Representatives. They met with Ron each week to talk, and to plan activities they could be involved in with Harmony in Action, such as helping with Student of the Week lunches, visiting classrooms to get feedback from students, and helping to do

assemblies. Most of these students listed many of the HIA core group when asked who was involved. When asked what they knew about HIA, these students often mentioned the Student Representatives program, along with activities such as such as Student of the Week, assemblies, and Recess Activities. Most said they had learned about HIA when an announcement was made over the loud speaker, from the goldenrod calendars, when Ron came to visit their classrooms to talk about Harmony in Action's activities, and when they got elected as Student Representatives. Overall, the Student Representatives perceptions of Harmony in Action seemed to be positive:

Well, I know that it's trying to get some fun things in the school for the kids and I know that this was the first year they had kids in HIA, and that they do activities outside like games. That's about it. (Dan, 4th grader)

I think HIA is fun for all the students at Emerson no matter what age you are because you get to plan events everybody gets to plan events, and then whenever they happen they're real fun. (Tom, 4th grade)

Um, I know that it's group that's helping to make the school a better place. (Elizabeth, 5th grader)

It's fun because they like to do activities – and make activities for the kids like at recess or something after school like a carnival.... They set up programs for us and they talk about things like when Mr. W. came he told us something about when they have a meeting and like what they should do to make HIA better and stuff like that. (Emma, 4th grade)

I think it's kind of fun, because the kids get to do a lot of stuff, with the parents. (Lynn, 4th grade)

It's difficult to assess what other students at Emerson thought about Harmony in Action. On the student surveys, nearly every student had an opinion (i.e., marked a response) about nearly all the activities that were listed. This seems to indicate that they were at least familiar with the activities that Harmony in Action implemented. The two activities that I focus on in the next sections are Student of the Week and the Recess Activities program.

Student of the Week

Harmony in Action members and others responded enthusiastically when asked about the Student of the Week program. They felt that it was one of the most beneficial programs that Harmony in Action implemented, and that it affected not only students, but parents and teachers as well. Their comments reflected three areas in which they felt the Student of the Week program affected students – increasing self esteem, fostering a sense of belonging, and providing a chance to be heard.

Increasing Self Esteem

Many people felt that a key feature of the Student of the Week program was that every child at Emerson received this recognition. This had been a major point of the discussion when the Student of the Week program first

started. Olga had talked then about seeing the good in every child, and she reiterated it during her interview:

Everyone is picked as Student of the Week and when it was first started some of the teachers said, "There are kids I'm never gonna be able to pick as Student of the Week" and the response was, if you can't find one special thing about each and every student in your classroom, then something's wrong and it's not with the student. You know, because even the most irate student, there's gonna be a little bit of good there, you know, there's gotta be something that they can be commended for. (Olga, HLA project, parent)

Peggy also appreciated that every student was chosen, but for a different reason:

The kids loved it. Since everyone got it, there was not a feeling of competition. The lunches were a nice chance to get to talk to students individually, and the parents loved it too. In our room, the Student of the Week was the "assistant teacher" who was responsible for certain things, and a model for the kids. It was a real honor, they just loved it. (Peggy, 2nd grade teacher)

Other teachers pointed out that it also helped them as teachers by focusing on individual children:

For Peggy and I, an effect was that we gave more individual attention to students. (Darcy, 3rd grade teacher)

The kids love it and look forward to it. It caused me to have to stop and think about one student at a time in a special way. (Connie, 5th grade teacher)

Nearly everyone mentioned that students felt special when they were

Student of the week:

I was amazed to see the effect on kids. When it was finally their turn they felt they were special. They took it so seriously. With Lance, it was like you had crowned him king. And he behaved differently. It's like something to aspire to. Kids did that to varying degrees, but they all got real excited and their eyes lit up and they would beam. (Tahna, 1st grade teacher)

Student of the Week does more for building self-esteem than almost anything. I mean having their name over the announcements and bringing their stuff to the showcase, getting to eat in the community room, that in itself should never go away. I mean if everything else dies, that should continue, cause kids- they just feel so special (Sarah, HIA project, paraprofessional)

Fostering a Sense of Belonging

One feature of the Student of the Week program that fostered a sense of belonging for students was that the entire school, not just their classroom, recognized them. Having their names announced over the intercom, and their favorite toys or collections placed in the showcase placed them as a member of Emerson school:

It was good for the community to see the showcase, and for kids to stop and look at what their friends brought in. (Connie, 5th grade teacher)

The Student of the Week program ...identifies and recognizes students' strengths and celebrates that with the whole school. (Ruth, HIA project, 5th grade teacher)

I love our Wednesday lunches – when we can invite family members and grandparents and have a special lunch, the kids just look so forward to that and really do feel special. I think the display case is a real big attraction in our school, many of the children stand out there and talk about “look what so and so brought in” or “wow, look at

that” and even if the kids aren’t hearing what other kids say about it, they really get a lot of enjoyment from looking at what the kids bring in and there’s more awareness of each other and the things that they do share here. (Karen, HIA project, P.E. teacher)

Another feature of the Student of the Week program that fostered a sense of belonging was the inclusion of family members in the school for this recognition.

As a whole, family involvement was not as strong, so I think that HIA has helped bring people into Emerson. (Darcy, 3rd grade teacher)

Like take a look at Liz and Olga, that’s gotta be a real good feeling to know that two parents did kind of the whole Student of the Week idea. (Ruth, HIA project, 5th grade teacher)

I like that a lot. That was real important to the kids. They felt so special to be able to eat in the community room and I especially think the kids who had their parents show up felt really good about that. I think the kids who couldn’t have parents come I think giving them the option like some teachers did where they could take a friend, I think that equalized that excitement like if the parents were there. (Sarah, HIA project, paraprofessional)

HIA made school more fun, and gave students something to look forward to. It also brought some adults in that wouldn’t have been there otherwise, with Student of the Week and the Circus. (Jean, secretary)

Most of the time families came – it was a big deal to the families. As a teacher, I came to the lunch because it was important to kids. It stressed the recognition. It gave me a chance to boost that. Out of respect for the child, and to have a personal conversation with the child and the family. The survey and the lunch made the difference. (Tahna, 1st grade teacher)

A Chance to Be Heard

Adding the luncheon to the Student of the Week program was an important way to welcome more families into the school, increasing both students' and families' sense of belonging. The addition of the survey provided an opportunity for students to share their views.

The Student of the Week surveys were excellent – children really felt like somebody really does care what I think, what I feel, what I want, what I need, you know the basic needs of life – somebody is really hearing my voice Just every week the conversation that goes on in the luncheon in here – I mean you actually hear and see people saying things that they would never have the opportunity to communicate. (Karen, HIA project, P.E. teacher)

The survey and the luncheon makes you feel so much more special. And the survey, you're asking how do you feel, you're asking students how they feel about something and giving them some say, and we all like it when we think that what we have on our mind matters to other people. And so when we're promoting that with the kids that we do care what's on your mind and we care how you feel about the school, I just think that made a really big difference to Student of the Week this year and it was all positive. (Olga, HIA project, parent)

Jean and Ruth also focused on the fact that the survey gave children a sense that voicing their views may affect their school environment:

(With the surveys for Student of the Week and feedback), I feel like we've given students a lot more voice and choice in how things are done here in their school. (Ruth, HIA project, 5th grade teacher)

I think the Student of the Week program is the most wonderful thing that's happened. The survey is fantastic. I want it followed through. We've done a few things – like in the lunchroom, but kids are telling us other things too. (Jean, secretary)

Karen and Darcy noted something else that the survey provided for students – a learning opportunity in which they had to think and communicate:

I like the way the Student of the Week survey asked kids about their values – what they thought. They took it seriously, and gave good reasons for what they said. It also helped them learn how to talk to other people at the lunch. (Darcy, 3rd grade teacher)

Someone was really listening to them, and they had to collect their thoughts and express what their concerns really were. (Karen, HIA member, P.E. teacher)

Student Perceptions of Student of the Week

Adults in the Harmony in Action group and other felt that the Student of the Week program was a positive experience for students that contributed to their self-esteem, to their sense of belonging in the school, and to their feelings of being heard. Based on their responses to the student survey, students also indicated that they felt positively about the Student of the Week program in general. Table 1 summarizes students' responses to the survey questions. 75% of the students who returned surveys marked that they "like it" on a simple three-point scale (like it, it's OK, don't like it). They had mixed feelings about the survey (44% like it, 46% OK, 8% don't like, and 2% no response), and were fairly positive about the lunch (64% like it, 26% OK, 9% don't like it, and 2% no response).

Table 1

1993-94 Year End Student Survey Responses:

Student of the Week Questions

N= 121

	SOTW				SOTW Survey				SOTW lunch			
	+	O	-	=	+	O	-	=	+	O	-	=
(1 st) - 8	6	1			4	2		1	5	3		
	1-				1-							
(2 nd) - 11	11				9	2			11			
(3 rd) - 16	15			1	9	5		2	10	4		2
(4 th) - 21	11	6	3		9	9	4		11	7	3	
(4 th) - 22	19	3			8	9	5		20	1	1	
(5 th) - 22	15	6		1	4	17		1	10	10	1	1
(5 th) - 22	13	9			9	12	1		10	6	6	
TOTALS	91	25	3	2	53	56	10	4	77	31	11	3
Percentage	75	21	2	2	44	46	8	3	64	26	9	2

Although most students indicated that they had no suggestion for improving the survey, some students did offer some comments:

- Have more smiles
- Add more feelings
- Ask more questions
- Easier questions
- Make it not so complicated
- Don't have one
- Don't ask those questions

The Student Representative had many things to say about the Student of the Week program. Their comments echo the ones made by adults.

Several students commented that they thought being Student of the Week made them and others feel special:

I thought it was good, because it makes a younger child feel praise, I guess, like they're rewarded for doing something good. (The older kids) might think it's ok, but they might think it's probably for little kids (Beth, 5th grade)

[Showcase] I think that's a good idea ... because you can show something you really like, and then people know what you're interested in, like if you want talk to them about it. (Ann, 5th grade)

[Showcase] Like if you bring something in, then the teachers could get to know, like if they thought you read books a lot, and you brought something different, then they could get to know that side of you. (Mary, 5th grade)

Like when you're Student of the Week you feel kind of special, like when you hear your name announced, it's like so special, like you just won something really big. (Mary, 5th grade)

It kind of cheers up the kids sometimes and they know that they've been doing good. (Megan, 4th grade)

Other students liked having their parents come to lunch with them:

It was fun like having your parents here, and talk about what you did during the day. (Ann, 5th grade)

I think it's nice cause parents can come in. (Chloe, 4th grade)

They [parents] can meet new teachers that they might not meet before. (Megan, 4th grade)

I thought that was nice, like you stayed with your parents and your teacher and you got to talk. (Henley, 5th grade)

I think it's pretty good because instead of the noisy lunchroom, they can come in and talk to their friends quietly in here and they can talk to their parents. (Lynn, 4th grade)

Several students also mentioned the survey as a chance to be heard:

I think it's nice because they get to come down and have lunch in that room, they get to show how they feel. (Sam, 5th grade)

[survey] I think those are real helpful, because some of the questions were really good, you could answer them and it kind of made our school better, lots of people thought. (Emma, 4th grade)

[survey] I think it's pretty good, because they actually get a chance to tell somebody how they feel and before the survey they were just like maybe tell their teachers and it wouldn't really matter, because their teachers would just keep it to themselves. (Tom, 4th grade)

I think a lot of kids really didn't want to do the survey. Cause they had all the other stuff to do. So I think it was neat the way that like I was Student of the Week towards the beginning and you gave them the survey here, and we could do it here (at luncheon). (Dan, 4th grade)

Recess Activities

Comments about the Recess Activities program are of two types. First, Harmony in Action members, students and other teachers commented about the MSU/ET component of the Recess Activities program – the one that they had actually experienced. Second, Harmony in Action members commented about why they felt the F/C component of the Recess Activities program didn't get off the ground.

MSU/ET Component of the Recess Activities Program

Of all the adults in the school, Ron probably had the best handle on this component of the Recess Activities program, because he had managed and participated in the activities. He reflected on the original reason that the activities had been pursued:

I'm thinking of why I came here originally – to solve a problem about the playground, and I think we were able to identify some things that would help solve that problem – and in fact my feeling about what was going on out there and why was different than what people had thought. When I came in here this whole idea about having structured playground activities that the kids could get involved in – that did solve a little bit of a problem for kids who were just a little uncomfortable with getting involved in other activities – I mean it helped them to get more involved, so that solved that problem, but I don't think that those structured activities solved the conflict problems. I think what solved the conflict problems was having someone to out there and look at the structure of what was going on out there and say, you know, mostly what's going on is because all the kids are standing on one very small area, without supervision, just standing there. That was the source of the fighting that was being brought back inside. It wasn't as much about playing, so we had to change the way to address that was different than just having organized activities out there. (Ron, MSU graduate student)

Some of the other adults who had participated and observed on the playground still felt, however, that having activities had addressed the conflict problem:

For older kids they were important – they could be good role models and it kept the conflict down. (Connie, 5th grade teacher)

Kids really looked forward to it. It helped with problems. If you have something to do, you're not in arguments. (Tahna, 1st grade teacher)

The kids didn't really say too much about that – I know that they talked about Ron a couple times, that it was really neat him out there doing stuff – gave em something different to do than fighting, or just being bored. Cause sometimes you just don't want to go play on the swings all the time. (Liz, HIA project, parent)

There seemed to be a general sense that children enjoyed the recess activities. Olga and Renae commented that they felt consistency was important, but Sarah felt that the students adapted when Ron and his MSU students were not there:

Ron wasn't around as much this year as he was last year....he tried to give the recess stuff to other individuals who then didn't show up – which is not his fault – he was counting on them to be there and they weren't, you know The activities were really good, I think the children really enjoyed them. My opinion is there should be different activities every recess of every day, not just once a week and for certain recesses. (Olga, HIA project, parent)

Consistent is what needs to be – I think kids sort of start to count on something, and then when it doesn't show up, they get a sense that, well, it must not be very important. And think teachers get frustrated about building their kids up to expect something and then have it not materialize. So consistency is real important. Or communication when the consistency breaks down. That we actually have an announcement if something comes up – so there aren't 47 kids coming up to their teacher and saying, "Where's so and so?" Cause that just breeds frustration. (Renae, principal)

You know, the kids enjoyed it when Ron and Amy were there, but they never came to me and said, "Where are they?" when they weren't there. I mean, I think they appreciated it that they were there when they were, but then they just got along and adapted fine when they

weren't there. So it's the kind of thing that if it's there it's great, if it's not there, things will go on. They did enjoy having the relays and all that kind of stuff. Kind of a break in the routine. (Sarah, HIA project, paraprofessional)

Overall, feelings about the recess activities seemed to be positive:

Fantastic. The kids loved it when Ron and some of the other MSU people were out there. (Peggy, 2nd grade teacher)

I feel like we've give our students a really good start at making better choices and using that time more productively. (Karen, HIA project, P.E. teacher)

I think the playground activities also helped with self-esteem. You don't have to be the best at everything to – just being involved and cooperatively playing and doing these activities – you don't have to be the best and win. (Olga, HIA project, parent)

Recess Activities were often one of the first-mentioned activities by Student Representatives when they talked about what Harmony in Action did.

Most of these students felt the recess activities were fun:

I got involved in em most of the time I liked most of the games that they had out there – they were pretty neat. Looked like a lot of the kids had fun, too. (Megan, 4th grader)

I think its fun for some of the kids. Like I remember you were building a snow fort on the playground or something like that – like with Mr. W. and some of the HIA people, and that was fun. (Sam, 5th grader)

Those were fun, I like those. (Emma, 4th grade)

They were fun, cause you get bored. (Seth, 5th grade)

Similar to some of the adults, some children felt that the recess activities alleviated problems on the playground:

I never really participated in any cause I just usually me and my friends would just go over to the jungle gym or something and I'd forget about the activities, but I thought they were a really neat idea – keeps kids from getting into lots of fights like out on the soccer field. (Beth, 5th grader)

I kind of like them because when there's kids that have trouble, it kind of draws the kids that have a lot of problems and that leaves the other people. (Lynn, 4th grader)

Students weren't asked on the survey to rate the recess activities.

Rather, they were asked to offer their ideas about what kinds of indoor and outdoor activities they would like to do, in order for project members to have a list of ideas as they continued to plan for the MSU/TE and the F/C components of the Recess Activities program.

Family/Community Component of the Recess Activities Program

Harmony in Action members reflected on the reasons that the F/C component of the Recess Activities program didn't get started at Emerson. Interestingly, they did not mention that issues about access for students had come up in their discussions. They did however, focus on how difficult it had seemed to manage a program of this scope, and were still offering ideas about how to address this.

I think it ended up being too cumbersome. A lot of the stuff that we want to do I think we have to then scale back and look at what we really can do because we have so many ideas, but I do wish the business leaders would be a little more involved I think what it would bring to the school would be so important. This is just a vague impression of mine based on nothing solid, but I think a lot of them would be involved if we had specific, maybe task-oriented ways of involving them instead of saying, can you just put in some time here? That's a little uncomfortable for people, especially if they're not in education, and they're not working with kids, and that can be a little bit threatening. (Ron, MSU graduate student)

I'd love to see more community members. I think if you had like a monthly meeting that was just for them to come to and then you knew that all of the things that we would talk about are going to be about their involvement. That might be why we don't have as many, because it doesn't feel for them like they have a big role in it. It's the same kind of thing that you want to stress with parents. A lot of parents want to come and be involved, but they don't want to come and observe, they want to know what they're gonna do when they get there and if we could provide real specific projects or tasks that they can see that their participation is being beneficial it might be easier to come too. (Carrie, HLA project, co-teacher)

I would like to see more parents involved, but I would like to see more parents involved in everything. I think more community members would be good. At this level. I know a lot usually do like at the high school level, but I think grade school really needs – needs some input there. I think at high school kids are just going to get out of school, and they want to be the ones who mentor and direct them and give them a taste of what their career or occupation is and help them along It might work if they know specifically what they are going to be doing, what they can connect with some of these kids that might be of interest. I don't know, it could be sports. Even if a dad came in to talk about the fine art of football or something, give kids tips, something like that, maybe. (Janice, HLA project, paraprofessional, parent)

Perceptions about the MSU/TE component of the Recess Activities program were positive overall. Adults and students seemed to think that the students enjoyed the activities, and both groups felt that the activities had addressed some needs on the playground. The F/C component of the activities program had not gotten off the ground. One of the key problems that they identified was that it's difficult to recruit volunteers without a volunteer "job description"!

Summary

In only two years, this PDS project involving parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, co-teachers, support staff, community members and students seemed to have moved a good ways towards achieving the goals it outlined in the spring and summer of 1992. Harmony in Action seemed to have gained the support of Emerson staff. It had taken seriously the school's focus on developing links with families and community members as it expanded the Student of the Week program and as it wrangled with the seemingly overwhelming task of involving families and community members in the Recess Activities program.

CHAPTER 7

**“IT IS GOOD TO HAVE AN END TO JOURNEY TOWARDS;
BUT IT IS THE JOURNEY THAT MATTERS IN THE END”²**

In the fall of 1992, the Harmony in Action project embarked on a journey to build a sense of school spirit and identity and to strengthen family and community involvement at Emerson Elementary School. Although it is important to consider what the HIA project did and did not accomplish, the focus of this dissertation study was on the project group’s *journey* toward their goals. Project members interactions, the paths they chose, and the processes and issues involved on their journey are informative to other teachers, families and community members on similar journeys.

This dissertation study began with the question, *How did the Harmony in Action project attempt to strengthen family and community involvement at Emerson?* The Harmony in Action project attempted to strengthen family and community involvement at Emerson Elementary School in several ways. Participating in and studying Harmony in Action afforded me the opportunity to develop deeper understandings of work in the area of school-family-community relationships. In the sections that follow, I summarize some of what I learned from participating in Harmony in Action’s journey.

² Ursula Leguin, 1982, cited in Each day a new beginning, Center City, MN: Hazeldon Foundation

Small Groups Can Affect Change

Because the Harmony in Action members planned activities for the *whole school* and *all families*, and these activities were some of the most visible in the school, the fact that the core group included two teachers, two parents, two MSU graduate students, one paraprofessional and one co-teacher is sometimes lost. Harmony in Action was a small group of eight consistent participants working on a large agenda. Even adding members in the second layer (see Chapter 4), which included four parents (two who were also paraprofessionals), two community members, an MSU faculty member, the school secretary and 18 Student Representatives, only increases the number of participants in the group to 34. This group was not representative, in any formal way, of the Emerson population. Often, Harmony in Action members said that they would like to see more parents, teachers and community members involved in the group, in order to have more support, and in order to gain different perspectives on ways to make Emerson a positive learning community.

One of the criteria by which schools measure how successful they have been in involving families and community members is the number of people participating in activities and groups. However, other measures of “success” may be important to consider as well. One of the original goals of the project

was to include teachers, other school staff besides teachers, parents, students, MSU participants, and community members in order to have a diverse group of people working together to plan and implement activities. The fact that the group did include people in these roles, and that these people stayed involved consistently over a two-year period of time, was itself an important accomplishment. This was the first PDS project at Emerson to include other participants besides teachers and MSU faculty and graduate students in decision making about activities to implement in the school. Even though the decision-making group was small, the project group was a context in which family and community involvement was strengthened at Emerson.

Because HIA activities were planned for the whole school and all families, the project provided several other contexts where family and community involvement could be strengthened at Emerson. Comer commented on a similar phenomenon in his work with the School Development Program: “Although in actuality, only a very few parents were intimately involved as members of the school governing board and in workshops with staff in a school described as unstable, the results were visible to the entire community” (Comer, 1980, p. 334). Many of Harmony in Action’s “results,” such as the Student of the Week program, Family Nights, Assemblies, Spirit Days, and PCAMM and Bretton Square volunteers, were

also visible to the entire community at Emerson during the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years. All of these activities helped, in various ways, to strengthen family and community involvement at Emerson.

The point that I think is important to take from the Harmony in Action group, and from Comer's example, is that small groups can have an important impact on a school. Schools need be realistic about the number of people who might be involved in in-depth, ongoing discussions about school activities. Even in groups with large membership, the bulk of the decision-making and the work are often done by a small group of people. As long as a small group tries to take into account the broader context in which they work, and seek out ways to identify issues that are important to other school, family and community members, this model for changing schools' relationships with families and community members can be effective.

Groups Need to Be Nurtured

Inviting people to join a group does not ensure that they will be active participants. Attention needs to be paid to the processes that help to nurture relationships within a group. The building blocks that I described in Chapter 4 were important for developing a comfortable atmosphere where everyone in the group felt they could contribute to the discussions about family and community involvement activities. These building blocks – sharing social

rituals, sharing personal stories, giving group members pats on the back, and addressing problems when they arose – helped to assure that group members stayed motivated to continue in the Harmony in Action project. Building blocks similar to these may be important to any group in any setting that is learning how to work together. However, I believe they were particularly important in this group for two reasons.

First, because there had been conflicts within and between other PDS groups, and feelings of exclusion by some teachers, I think that group members felt it was important to create and sustain a positive and inclusive setting for anyone who wanted to participate. The message that all meetings were open to staff, families, and community members was repeated again and again throughout the project's duration. In Chapter 6, project members and others described what they felt were generally positive perceptions about Harmony in Action. They also described the perception that Harmony in Action's identity as a PDS project as somewhat blurred. One of the reasons for these perceptions may have been that there was never an MSU faculty member tied to the group. As graduate students, Ron and I were "MSU," but we were not considered to have the power or status that a faculty member had. We participated in the group process, and shared in the planning and implementation of activities along with other HIA members. However, we

were not perceived as having an agenda, research or otherwise, like MSU faculty in other PDS project groups had been (rightly or wrongly) characterized as having.

A second reason that I think the building blocks to nurture the group were important is because this project included people who had not typically been involved in PDS projects. It was important to assure that parents, community members and non-teaching staff feel comfortable participating in the group. Some group members had not considered themselves, or been considered in the school setting, as leaders and decision makers. In order for status to become blurred in the group, everyone had to feel like their contributions and ideas were recognized and taken seriously. Learning to work together involved learning to take one another's perspectives. For example, project members helped Ron and I learn to write short, to the point, interesting memos to families and Emerson staff, instead of the long, jargony essays we had grown accustomed to in graduate school. Another example is the one I described in Chapter 4 when Ruth, a teacher, called Olga, a parent, after a meeting to explain that others might not have heard her point because she was speaking emotionally. Ruth was attempting to understand Olga's perspective, and also helping Olga to take the perspective of others in the

group so that everyone could keep communicating and participating in the project.

Different schools with different populations or different histories might need to create different kinds of building blocks. Haynes and Ben-Avie (1996), for example, note that their early parent program efforts in a lower SES school were difficult because they did not anticipate parents needing a liaison to help them in the school setting. In contrast, schools with a large population of professional families may need to identify or create building blocks which acknowledge the kinds of contributions that these families can make, as well as the unique kinds of issues that these families face.

Thornburg, Hoffman & Remeika (1991), assert that there are at risk families in all SES groups, but the definition of risk varies between groups. Groups that are beginning to form in schools to work on strengthening family and community involvement should pay explicit attention to these building blocks – whatever they might be – in their setting.

Negotiation and Management – A Heuristic Framework

As I participated in and observed the Harmony in Action group, I began to develop a framework for understanding some of the processes involved as group members planned and implemented activities. Categorizing group members' actions as negotiation within and outside the group

(developing shared visions, communicating these visions to others and asking for their support) or management within and outside the group (managing procedures, time and resources for themselves and for others) was a useful way to understand how project members moved from ideas to implementation.

This framework also provided an answer, in part, to the question of how Harmony in Action attempted to strengthen family and community involvement at Emerson. There were times when looking at negotiation and management processes helped me to understand some of the details of interactions between schools, families, and community members. For example, the group had a shared understanding that all meetings were open and inclusive of anyone who wanted to attend. They communicated this verbally and in writing, and managed their meeting times and places so that this invitation felt genuine to others in the school. Looking at these processes across a range of activities that Harmony in Action implemented helped me to notice that negotiation and management varied depending on the activities that the group was trying to plan. This helped me to take a closer look at the nature of the activities in terms of what was expected from families and school staff.

Although the categories were useful, they were somewhat arbitrary since most actions and events had features of both negotiation and management. These processes were intertwined. The four circles representing this framework that I presented in Chapter 4 overlap for a reason. During discussions, the demarcations between categories became blurred because of the interplay between negotiation and management as project group members moved from ideas to implementation of activities.

This framework may be helpful to other groups engaged in trying out new programs or activities. Not everyone can be involved in everything that goes on in schools or any other organization. It is common practice to assign committees, task groups, planning groups, and boards to discuss and plan activities for a larger group. The negotiation and management framework may be useful for groups such as these to keep in mind. Both negotiation and management are necessary for groups to move forward to implement activities; groups that recognize these related processes may be more effective. Also, small groups must often move back and forth between their activities within the group and their activities outside the group as they work to implement activities in larger settings. Recognizing the “within” and “outside” distinction may be a useful way for groups to frame their work.

There Are Many Paths to Family and Community Involvement

Most schools that are interested in strengthening family and community involvement implement multiple approaches to doing so. Several researchers in the area of school-family-community relationships have offered typologies to conceptually organize the kinds of practices going on in schools to involve families and community members. One of the ways that this dissertation study, which focuses on the work of one group in a particular setting, may be helpful is by answering the question, “What is this an example of?” While it is useful to place the Harmony in Action group, as well as the activities it implemented, into existing categories in the literature, it is also useful to identify ways in which the group and its activities do *not* fit neatly into these categories. The latter analysis may lead practitioners to consider additional strategies that may work in their settings.

Epstein (1996) states that each of the six types of involvement that she and her colleagues have described “may be operationalized by hundreds of practices that schools may choose to develop their programs” (p. 215). What I have learned from participating in and studying the Harmony in Action project is that many of the activities implemented at Emerson had characteristics that fit in multiple categories of parent and community activities. Activities that have more than one purpose may actually be more

common in school practice than activities that are clearly of one type or another.

The example of circles (activities) “moving” from goal to goal that I described at the beginning of Chapter 5 illustrates this point. One activity could be affiliated with several goals. Many of Harmony in Action’s activities had multiple purposes. For example, “Family Nights,” which provided parents and children with opportunities to participate in activities in a particular subject matter area, could be considered a special event or parent education (Cervone & O’Leary, 1982), or as curriculum enrichment (Swap, 1993), since they also provided teachers with information about families knowledge and use of subject matter at home (e.g., science or math). Since one goal of Family Nights was to share information and activities that families could use to support children’s learning at home, they were also strongly linked to categories in which parents are in a teaching role (Cervone & O’Leary, 1982; Epstein, 1992). The Student of the Week program also served multiple purposes. It was a special event to bring parents into the school to recognize their children’s achievements, but rather than a one-time event such as a graduation or an awards assembly, it was an ongoing event which weekly brought smaller groups of parents to the school. Student of the Week also provided an opportunity for families and teachers to meet in a

setting other than those where they typically came together, such as conferences and programs. The Student of the Week survey added an element to the weekly event that provided families and students with an opportunity to participate in the school in a new way by providing input about their experiences with school routines and characteristics.

Typologies presented in the literature are useful to individuals and groups in schools in terms of considering the range of activities that are possible for family and community involvement. However, individuals and groups planning involvement activities should not be tied to these categories. Instead, looking beyond and between existing categories may provide ideas for drawing families and community members into schools in novel ways.

The Landscape Matters When Choosing Paths

Individuals and groups planning family and community involvement activities must pay attention to the history, as well as to characteristics of their community and school as they begin to choose paths to strengthen family and community involvement in schools. Emerson's history and its population of families and community members influenced Harmony in Action members' choices about the way the group developed, the kinds of activities that they implemented, and the ways that they implemented them. For example, Harmony in Action project members were fairly explicit about

how Emerson's PDS history, which included conflict and fragmentation among school staff, influenced their efforts to be inclusive of all school staff, to keep them informed about meetings and events, and to seek input repeatedly during the two years that I documented the project activities. Emerson's PDS history also influenced the way in which Ron and I interacted with the rest of the group, and the kind of attention we paid to making sure that we weren't viewed as "having an agenda" or pushing the group in certain directions.

Perceptions about children and families at Emerson also influenced Harmony in Action member's actions and choices. Group members never explicitly stated that they were planning activities in certain ways because of the characteristics (e.g., SES) of the families that attended Emerson. Nevertheless, group members seemed to have some implicit assumptions about children and families at Emerson. During discussions about the Student of the Week program, for example, group members emphasized recognizing *all* students and getting input from *all* students via the student survey. This emphasis was in part based on the perception that many of the children at Emerson needed the social and emotional boost of being recognized and included in the school community. Harmony in Action members acknowledged that not all students at Emerson fit, or should fit, the "model

student” stereotype. These perceptions were in part explained by Renae, the principal, in her description of some of the neighborhoods served by Emerson as being less stable, and struggling with social and self esteem problems (see Chapter 2).

Asking parents to attend a celebration lunch, with no obligations other than to show up and to participate with their child in an informal conversation about their child’s school experiences (i.e., questions on the survey) seemed to reflect group members’ beliefs that an important factor in getting families at Emerson involved was to provide a positive, non-threatening environment and activities that were not too demanding. Lareau’s (1989, 1996) notion of cultural capital may help to explain Harmony in Action members’ approach to involving parents through the Student of the Week program. Her assertion is that families’ cultural capital is based on the extent to which they share the same standards as institutions. Lower and working class families have less cultural capital in terms of helping their children succeed, since they do not always share the cultural norms of schools. Lareau (1996) also suggests that not all families have the same orientation to or meanings about being involved with their child’s school. Lower and working class families do not assume that they should question or intervene with the school on their child’s behalf. In the Student of the Week program, Harmony in Action members seemed to

be designing a program for the predominantly working class families at Emerson, with the added implicit assumption that it wouldn't hurt for middle class students and parents to have a positive school experience as well. The Student of the Week program seemed to be a well-chosen path for involving families at Emerson.

The Family/Community Recess Activities program, on the other hand proved not to be the best path to take in terms of involving family and community members. There were several "potholes" in this path that can be explained from several perspectives. One pothole in the Recess Activities path to family and community involvement may have been a social class issue. The implicit perceptions about lower and working class families and students that had guided Harmony in Action in planning Student of the Week seemed to be suspended when they began to plan the F/C Recess Activities program. Building on Lareau's (1989, 1996) work, I would assert that the nature of family involvement in the Recess Activities program would not map on to the kinds of roles that lower and working class families would have for themselves in relation to the school, since being involved in recess activities required parents to take on a "modeling" or "teaching" role. From this perspective, the F/C Recess Activities program could be construed as a case where Harmony in Action members did *not* take into account social class and

therefore chose the *wrong* path for involving a large number of families at Emerson.

Another kind of pothole in this path was the nature of the task itself in which Harmony in Action members were proposing to ask parents and community members to participate, irrespective of social class. Asking family and community members to sign up for twenty minutes during their work day to lead activities for groups of children may not have been a reasonable request to make. Although “family friendly” work policies are beginning to include time for parents to be involved in their children’s schools, these programs are still the exception, not the rule. In addition, they are focused on conventional family involvement such as parent-teacher conferences. Taking twenty minutes off work to play soccer at recess with a group of children may not fall under the rubric of what employers had in mind when they started to take seriously family members’ requests to be more flexible. In addition, even if their work place found this kind of activity acceptable, the logistics of committing to even a limited number of these volunteer events would be difficult for many family and community members, and sustaining these kinds of activities may be more difficult because parent involvement that goes beyond a focus on their own child is not as relevant to parents (Morgan, Fraser, Dunn & Cairns, 1992). I would recommend that

groups implementing activities learn as much as possible about the multiple and overlapping communities represented in the school during the planning stages of new programs, and continue to do so as the work proceeds.

Reflections on My Role: Places on the Participant-Observer Continuum

Often during the two years that I was involved in the Harmony in Action project, I reflected on my role in the group. Before school began the second year of the project, I had several phone conversations with Ruth, Sarah, and Karen about plans for the beginning of the school year. Karen had been reassigned to the junior high school, and I found myself taking on the role of co-organizer with Ruth and Sarah. At the same time, I knew that I was going to propose a study of Harmony in Action for my dissertation.

I had often said that I was a “participant-observer” in the group, as if this was a well-defined role. I now understand that there is a continuum of participant-observation along which researchers can move from “full participant” (Wagner, 1990) to primarily observer. Researchers may choose different places along a continuum for different kinds of studies, but they can also move along the continuum during a particular study. I participated in the Harmony in Action group mostly as a full participant, in that I attended most meetings, participated in discussions, and helped to plan and carry out activities. Some might argue that I couldn’t see what was going on in the

group from this primarily “insider” perspective. As a partisan of Harmony in Action, I was invested in the work of the group and in ensuring the success. I assert that I would not have come to some understandings about Harmony in Action without having this insider perspective. However, I tried to regularly and systematically step back from my role as a participant to observe the interactions and activities of the group more objectively.

As a participant in the Harmony in Action group, I was as much a “visionary” as the other participants when it came to project goals and activities. Many of the activities would not have been tried at all if HIA group members, myself included, had focused on the barriers and limitations instead of focusing on the challenges and possibilities. This hopeful and positive orientation, however, may have limited my ability to provide a more critical analysis of the Harmony in Action project group and its activities.

If researchers continue to participate in restructured school environments and to take on new roles as innovators and change agents, rather than passive observers of what is going on “out there,” then they will have to pay attention to their roles in the research endeavor.

Concluding This Journey: Final Thoughts and Recommendations

Participating in Harmony in Action’s journey to strengthen family and community involvement at Emerson Elementary School provided me with

many insights about school-family-community relationships. Individuals and groups that are seeking to strengthen family and community involvement in schools should spend some time examining their assumptions about why they think this is an important endeavor and what they expect different people or groups to gain from the involvement.

There is an increasing emphasis in federal, state and local initiatives on developing partnerships or collaborations between schools, families, and communities. However, true partnerships are difficult to develop, particularly when there are social, economic and power differences between teachers and families. It is important to be careful not to give lip service to creating partnerships without being prepared to examine what school staff, families, and community members may encounter when if they are genuinely interested in changing the nature of relationships.

The Harmony in Action project group attempted to blur status lines first by creating a context where the players could meet and work together, second by being fairly explicit about their goal to have everyone be heard and have a role in the group (e.g., having a rotating chairperson for the meetings) and third by nurturing group processes that helped to develop a certain level of trust and comfort in the group. Even so, this “partnership” was limited to the project group and was not a general feature of school-family-community

relationships at Emerson. It may be too ambitious a task to expect the kind of partnership model that Swap (1993) suggested, “in which collaborative relationships between home and school permeate all areas of school culture” (p. 46). Instead, creating pockets of collaboration may be the first step for schools, families and community members. Learning from and building on these endeavors may lead to a more generalized partnership approach in general between schools, families, and communities.

Individuals and groups planning school-family-community interactions and activities should try to articulate clearly the goals of these activities and not be pressured to place everything under the rubric of “partnership.” It should be acceptable for schools to ask families to support the school’s agenda or curriculum, to ask families and community members for help and resources, and to offer their expertise through parent education activities, as long as they are clear about their intent. At the same time, schools should begin to seek out ways to better understand the range of families represented in their school population, to hear family and community perspectives, and to respond to issues that arise.

In order for teachers and other school staff to develop activities which strengthen family and community involvement, there needs to be some

attention in school districts to the fact that these efforts are often time-consuming and labor intensive. Because Harmony in Action was a PDS project, the teachers in the group received reassigned time on Friday mornings of the first year and Tuesdays of the second year. This meant that they were freed from their teaching responsibilities for a period of time to concentrate on Harmony in Action's work. In addition, being a PDS project afforded the Harmony in Action group with financial and people support that may not be available others. Harmony in Action's budget paid for substitute teachers and graduate assistants, and provided money for project activity materials. Without some form of support, school staff may find it difficult to sustain efforts to involve families and community members. Lareau (1996) suggested that "for policymakers at the state or federal level, there needs to be a financial investment to develop a better infrastructure at school sites to promote family involvement" (p. 63).

State and local support could also come in the form of opportunities for school staff, families and community members to explore and learn about school-family-community involvement activities and issues through in-service trainings, seminars, workshops and community forums. It is one thing for

districts to encourage and recommend the development of school-family-community interactions; it is another for them to support these activities financially and conceptually.

The Harmony in Action project attempted to strengthen family and community involvement at Emerson school in a number of ways. Group members made a genuine attempt to develop collaborative relationships, and to provide activities in the school setting that involved families and community members in a range of ways. Although Harmony in Action's experiences and processes may not generalize to all settings, other elementary schools may be able to adapt some of the ideas and concepts described in this study. Hopefully, Harmony in Action's journey of two years offers some valuable lessons for others seeking to strengthen family and community involvement in their settings.

APPENDIX A

Harmony in Action Chronology Sample Page (1992-93)

Harmony in Action Chronology Sample Page (1992-93)

Date	Format	Who	What
Summer 1992	Planning meetings		Karen introduces ideas for "exploratory" project
9/21/92	PTO Meeting		Part of meeting included a PDS orientation Q & A
10/6/92 Tues	Mtg 5:30 Ruth's room	Names at top of memo: Karen Tahna, Laurie, Ruth, Sarah, Shiela, Julie	First meeting Reminder about Fri am's 7-8:30 Daryl Café Other eve Wed 10/21
10/16/92 Fri	Mtg 730 -930 am Daryl Café Sprout group time	Members: Karen, Tahna, Ruth, Laurie, Sarah, Julie & Shiela (written on memo)	Vote on new name Community involvement SOTW Locations for host people Partner school Poll staff for ideas,hobbies, collections Visitor letter/gdlines Calendar/scheduling Areas & jobs Other - pcamm
10/21/92 Wed	Mtg eve	Members: Karen, Sarah, Laurie, Ruth, Tahna, Julie, Shiela Welcome Renae	New name is on memo! Life touch Calendar of sched. And events SOTW update Community inv. (volunteers) Partner school update Other

APPENDIX B

Sample By-Topic Meeting Summary Sheet

Sample By-Topic Meeting Summary Sheet

<p>Date 10/21/93 Topic: LUNCH</p> <p>Participants <u> x </u> Karen <u> x </u> Ruth <u> x </u> Ron <u> x </u> Sarah <u> x </u> Julie <u> </u> Carrie <u> x </u> Olga <u> </u> Liz Others: Jean, Sid, Cheryl</p>	<p>Data source(s): <u> x </u> meeting notes <u> x </u> Tape <u> x </u> Transcribed</p> <p><i>1st tape fast speed</i></p>
<p>NEGOTIATING WITHIN GROUP</p> <p><i>1)Ruth – frustrated about planning assemblies- teachers and supervisors haven't agreed on set of rules, philosophies about PG & lunch- if we don't get consensus, staff wont be behind us.</i></p> <p><i>Part of my ideas are real behavioristic (rewards)</i></p> <p><i>6) Jean clarifies intent of letter she wants to send home "I mean a pleasant note"</i></p>	<p>MANAGING WITHIN GROUP</p> <p><i>Ron- leading meeting- can we start with #7? –see agenda</i></p> <p><i>Carrie does minutes- action notes added</i></p>
<p>NEGOTIATING OUTSIDE GROUP</p> <p><i>Ruth articulating her ideas to staff. Different philosophies about – some teachers don't feel it's their responsibility</i></p> <p><i>Carry over to classroom</i></p> <p><i>Getting feedback from staff</i></p>	<p>MANAGING OUTSIDE GROUP</p> <p><i>4) Jean – it also lets the children who have done the surveys up to this point that they have been heard.</i></p> <p><i>7) Sarah- has anyone else checked on what other schools do?</i></p>
<p>ISSUES</p> <p><i>2) Jean –it's a major and pressing concern. Students tell us in survey after survey. Can we do something soon? Send home a letter to kids and</i></p> <p><i>3) Olga agreeing with Jean</i></p> <p><i>5) detention or time out table</i></p>	<p>OTHER</p> <p><i>New Topic- CC approved \$500 for conflict negotiation training- our budget is so small no one had the heart to say no, and everyone knows there's a need for it.</i></p>

APPENDIX C

Harmony in Action Brochure

HARMONY IN ACTION BROCHURE

HARMONY IN ACTION is a project at Emerson Elementary school which involves school staff, students, families, community members and MSU participants. The overarching purpose of the **HARMONY IN ACTION** project is to promote the development of a positive learning community for everyone involved at Emerson Elementary school. We pursue a variety of activities which are centered around four main goals:

- **PROMOTING A SENSE OF BELONGING AND SCHOOL SPIRIT**
- **PROMOTING COOPERATION, PROBLEM SOLVING AND INDEPENDENCE**
- **PROMOTING INTERACTIONS AMONG SCHOOL, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS**
- **PROMOTING AN UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF DIVERSITY**

Specific activities are outlined in this brochure, but we continually evaluate and revise our work in response to particular issues and interests of students, staff, families, community members and MSU participants. We welcome your participation, expertise and input about our project! Our work together has reinforced the belief that ***HARMONY*** can only be realized through thoughtful ***ACTION*** on the part of all community members.

(HIA Diagram Here)

PROMOTE A SENSE OF BELONGING AND SCHOOL SPIRIT

The overall climate of the school has an impact on the kinds of experiences that children and adults have in their various activities and interactions in the school setting. Activities which provide common information and experiences for all children and adults foster work towards common goals and provide a sense of ownership and pride in the school and surrounding community.

Monthly Themes. Themes serve as a way to integrate a variety of activities for students and adults in the building. Each month, themes are highlighted on the Harmony in Action calendar, and promoted through all-school activities and special events. A list of classroom and home ideas related to and supporting the themes are listed on the back of each calendar.

School Spirit Days. One day each month is designated as school spirit day. Activities reflect monthly themes and provide fun ways for students and adults in the Emerson community to interact.

All-School Assemblies. All-school assemblies reflect monthly themes, Harmony in Action goals, or other special events in the school or larger community, and serve to provide all children and adults with common information and experiences.

Student of the Week. Each week, teachers choose a student to be recognized for various contributions to the school community—leadership, problem solving, creativity, cooperation, academic performance. The showcase in the school lobby features each students' recognition certificate and a personal item of their choice. Students of the week complete a survey about their experiences at school, and attend a special lunch in the community room with their families and other adults to discuss their ideas and suggestions.

PROMOTE COOPERATION, PROBLEM SOLVING AND INDEPENDENCE

Cooperation, problem solving, and independence are vital aspects of a positive learning community. Children and adults who learn to work together, solve problems and conflicts in constructive ways, and develop confidence and a sense of independence contribute positively to the school community.

Playground/Recess/Lunch Activities A variety of indoor and outdoor activities are made available for children during their recess periods. Family members, community members, high school students, Emerson students and staff, and MSU participants will be involved in planning and participating in these activities. These activities reflect the interests and talents of adults and students in our school community, and expose children to a wide range of experiences and interactions with a variety of adults.

Peer Conflict Management Program A core team of adults- Emerson staff, family members, community members, and MSU participants – will participate in a training program to prepare them to teach 4th and 4th grade students to take on the role of peer negotiators. The program will be modified to meet the needs of the Emerson population of students. 4th and 5th grade students will attend workshops with the core team, and will take responsibility for helping to manage and resolve conflicts that occur between students on the playground and elsewhere in the school.

PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF DIVERSITY

In order to become responsible and productive citizens in our increasingly pluralistic society, children need to learn about, appreciate and even celebrate the diversity of people in their immediate and larger community.

Involvement of PCAMM and Bretton Square Physically Challenged Athletes of Mid-Michigan (PCAMM) and Bretton Square members participate in a variety of ways in the school – in classrooms, on the playground, in the lunchroom and library. Interactions with people who are physically and mentally challenged, along with thoughtful discussions about these experiences, provide children with insights and understandings about the diversity and strengths of all people.

Partner Schools Harmony in Action supports interactions between Emerson students and other students in diverse school settings. Classrooms in each school will develop a variety of ways to share experiences such as audio recordings of children's reading and story telling, videotaped tours of each school, and writings in which students share backgrounds, interests and news of recent classroom and building events. The building to building relationship will also involve exchanges of teaching ideas and materials among teachers, and visits between schools.

PROMOTE INTERACTIONS AMONG SCHOOL, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

There is a growing acknowledgement that in order to provide children with experiences that promote positive academic, social, and emotional development, the many institutions that constitute children's worlds must seek ways to work collaboratively. Schools, families, and communities do not operate in isolation; these are overlapping and mutually supportive contexts. All involved can benefit from sharing perspectives, goals, ideas, and resources.

Diverse Project Group Membership. The Harmony in Action project seeks to involve a wide range of people in project activities- school staff, students, high school students, family members, community members, and MSU participants. Evening and morning meetings, along with activities for children in the community room during meetings, facilitate the participation of members.

Relationships with Community Organizations. Harmony in Action seeks to develop its relationships with various community organizations and individuals. A member of the Harris-Dover School Business Alliance participates in our project to help us think of ways to involve the business community in school activities as well as ways for the school to provide services, such as seminars, to the business community. Other community involvement includes involving Junior and Senior High students in project activities, and participation of Physically Challenged Athletes of Mid-Michigan (PCAMM) and Bretton Square.

Discussion Groups/Seminars. A series of discussion groups/seminars will be held at various times and locations throughout the school year. Some will be held at business settings in the community during lunch periods, so that employees may participate. Others will be held at the school or other community settings. These will be led by school staff, family members, and community members, and topics will reflect a range of interests and current issues related to education, family interactions, hobbies, and community resources.

Welcome Wagon for New Families. Emerson families volunteer to provide assistance, support, or information to new families, and students will volunteer to be "peer buddies" to new students at school.

**Harmony in Action
Emerson Elementary School
5000 Bandy
Harris, MI**

Harmony in Action meetings are held approximately every other Thursday evening at 6:30 pm in the Community Room at Emerson. Please call to confirm that we are still meeting if you plan to join us.

1993-94 Meeting Schedule:

September 16	January 20	May 12
October 7	February 3	May 26
October 21	February 17	June 9
November 4	March 10	
November 18	March 24	
December 2	April 14	
January 6	April 28	

APPENDIX D

Harmony in Action Calendar (Sample)

Harmony in Action Calendar (Sample)

**EMERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NOVEMBER 1993
MONTHLY THEME: COOPERATION AND TEAMWORK**

CONGRATULATIONS STUDENTS OF THE WEEK!!! YOU ARE ALL VERY SPECIAL!!!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 ½ Day (Conference Prep)	3 SOTW lunch in Community Room Teachers, NO SOTW ballots for today!	4 Harmony in Action 6:30 Community Room	5 <u>SPIRIT DAY:</u> Sports & Games (wear your favorite team or sports clothing) Special Recess Activities!! <u>HIA</u> <u>presentation</u> "Hands on the Future" conference	6
7	8 NO SOTW this week due to conferences "TEAM EMERSON" Week on the playground	9 Family Conferences Karl out for a.m. recesses	10 Family Conferences SOTW ballots due for Nov 15- 19 Karl out for a.m. recesses	11 Family Conferences Karl out for a.m. recesses	12 Family Conferences SOTW announced for Nov 15-19	13
14	15 PTO 6:00	16 Karl out for a.m. recesses Community Seminar: Exploring Science 12-1 room 104	17 SOTW ballots due for Nov 22- 26 SOTW lunch in Community Room Family Night: Exploring Science 6:30-7:30 RM 104	18 Harmony in Action 6:30 Community Room Karl out for a.m. recesses	19 SOTW announced for Nov 22-26	20 Conflict Mediation training room 104 8:30-2:30
21	22 Karl out for a.m. recesses	23 Karl out for a.m. recesses	24 SOTW ballots due for Nov 29-Dec 3 SOTW lunch in Community Room	25 HAPPY THANKS- GIVING	26 HAPPY THANKS- GIVING	27

APPENDIX E

Harmony in Action First Memo to Emerson Staff, October 1992

Harmony in Action First Memo to Emerson Staff, October 1992

To: Emerson Staff
From: Karen, Sarah, Liz, Sheila, Ruth, Julie
Re: BLIPERL Project/Sprout Group Information

The Building Level Integration with Physical Education, Recess, & Lunch (BLIPERL) group has been renamed ***HARMONY IN ACTION***.

As you know, the emphasis of Harmony in Action is to develop building-wide activities that promote a sense of belonging and community in our school. Our goal is to develop activities for students and adults, which promote cooperation, problem solving, shared ownership, and appreciation of diversity. We hope to involve parents and a broad range of community members in our efforts. This memo is to provide you with information on some of the activities we have begun to plan, and to get your input as we go along.

I. Building Community and School Spirit

A. Student of the Week

Each week, we will ask each teacher to choose one student from their classroom as "Student of the Week". Rather than award that students have to earn, "Student of the Week" is intended to recognize the many ways that students contribute to our classroom and building community at Emerson. Students may be recognized for a variety of reasons- sticking with a project, coming up with a solution to a classroom problem, helping a peer with their work, showing a visitor the way to a classroom, sharing a favorite book with their class- there is something special about each and every student at Emerson! Each week, the 20 "Students of the Week" will be featured in a display with their picture and a brief description of why they are being recognized. By the end of the year, each student at Emerson will be recognized as "Student of the Week". We will provide teacher with forms on which they can write a brief description of the student's special contributions.

Lifetouch (the company who does our school pictures) provides certificates, bookmarks, pennants, cards, and other resources free of charge. So in addition to featuring students in the display, teachers may also choose to present their "Student of the Week" with one of these.

We are thinking about using the display case at the entrance for our "Student of the Week" display. What do you think about this? Do you have any suggestions? (Please respond below)

B. Monthly Themes/Spirit Days

January- Cooperation and Teamwork

February- Participation and Involvement

March- Decision Making and Problem Solving

April – Understanding Diversity

May- Unity and Sharing

C. Structured Recess and Lunch Activities

Over the next few months, we will be identifying individuals or groups from our community who may be able to plan and supervise some structured and educationally sound recess and lunch activities. These activities may correspond to the monthly themes above. Any suggestions?

II. Learning About Appreciation and Diversity

A. Physically Challenged Athletes of Mid-Michigan (PCAMM)

Karen has had several PCAMM members express an interest in becoming involved on a regular basis in Emerson classrooms. Each PCAMM participant will be “assigned” to a particular classroom, and they and the teacher will decide together how often and in what ways they will participate in regular or special classroom activities. Since many children have not had opportunities to interact with physically challenged people, PCAMM members will be introduced gradually into our school, and we hope to have ongoing discussions about issues, concerns, ideas, and successes as teachers work with PCAMM members in their classrooms. If you are interested in having a PCAMM member involved in your classroom, or would like further information, please indicate below.

B. Partner Schools

Wright Elementary school in Landon is interested in establishing a partnership/exchange with Emerson. This exchange might involve audiotape recordings of children’s reading and story telling, videotaped tours of each school, and writings in which students share their backgrounds, interests, and news of recent classroom and building events. Teachers might exchange teaching ideas and materials, swap classes with each other, or observe one another. If you are interested in establishing a relationship with a classroom at Wright, or would like further information, please indicate below.

PLEASE SHARE YOUR IDEAS, CONCERNS, AND INTERESTS WITH US!

Student of the Week:

What do you think about using the display case at the school entrance?

Ok _____

Would prefer a different location _____ **Where?** _____

Comments/Suggestions about Student of the Week:

Recess and Lunch Activities:

Any Suggestions? Do you know of a family member, community group or business that Might be interested in sharing their time and talents?

PCAMM Participants:

I'm interested in having a PCAMM member in my classroom _____

I'd like more information before I decide _____

Any suggestions?

Partner Schools:

I am interested in having a partner classroom with Wright Elementary _____

I would like further information before I decide _____

Any Suggestions?

General Comments, Suggestions, Questions?

APPENDIX F

Student of the Week Letter to Families 1992

Student of the Week Letter to Families 1992

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

**“You are Special” and Emerson School wants to tell everyone
how and why you are a one-of-a-kind student!**

In December, a Student of the Week program will begin. Each week your teacher will decide on his or her Student of the Week and explain on a ballot why you were chosen. The Friday before your week begins, your name will be announced and you will be asked to bring your favorite “thing” from home. We will put this in the display case on Monday morning of your week. You might decide to bring a doll, a baseball card, your favorite troll, a trophy, or a favorite picture. Remember it has to be small enough to fit in the display case!

As Student of the Week you will be given a personalized keepsake

Be listening for your special week!

Harmony in Action

APPENDIX G

Student of the Week Letter to Families 1993

Student of the Week Letter to Families 1993

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Dear Emerson Students,

“You are Special” and Emerson School wants to tell everyone how and why you are a one-of-a-kind student!

The Harmony in Action project sponsors the STUDENT OF THE WEEK program to recognize all Emerson students for their special contributions to our school community. Each week, classroom teachers choose a STUDENT OF THE WEEK from their room. Students are recognized for a variety of accomplishments and special activities. School work, citizenship, creativity, problem solving, and other accomplishments are recognized.

Each Friday STUDENTS OF THE WEEK for the following week will be announced and these students will be asked to bring something special from home. You might decide to bring a doll, a baseball card, your favorite picture, a trophy, something that is special to you! We will put this in the display case on the Monday morning of your week. Remember, it has to be small enough to fit in the display case. *Be listening for your special week!*

IMPORTANT

We really want to learn about your ideas about Emerson school, so this year STUDENTS OF THE WEEK will participate in two new activities:

- Students of the Week will bring home a brief survey so you can tell us what you think about how things are going at Emerson and any ideas you have. You should complete the survey and bring it back to school with you. Please talk about the survey questions with someone in your family. If you are unable to finish the survey, someone at school will help you.
- On Wednesday during the week that you are STUDENT OF THE WEEK, you will have lunch with all of the other STUDENTS OF THE WEEK and various adults in the new Community Room so we can talk about your ideas. Your parents will also be invited to have lunch with you. You should plan on providing your own lunch like on regular school days.

APPENDIX H

Recess Activities Interest Survey 1993

Recess Activities Interest Survey 1993

INTEREST SURVEY

Harmony in Action is a new project at Emerson Elementary School that is initiating several different activities to promote the development of a positive learning community. An important part of our efforts is the involvement of Harris family and community members. This two-part survey will assist us in planning two components of the Harmony in Action project activities.

First, we are recruiting volunteers from the business community to participate in cooperative activities with Emerson students, primarily during recess periods. It is our hop that employers will work out some flexible alternatives in order for employees to participate. This may be a way for working parents with students at Emerson to participate during the school day.

Second, our teachers and other community members will be providing some lunch-time (or morning or evening) seminars for Harris business employees. We need your input in order to plan sessions that are relevant to you. Thanks for completing this survey!

Participation During Recess Periods

Name _____ Company or Business _____ Phone _____

It would be most convenient for me to participate during the following recess periods:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10:40-11					
11:20-11:40					
Lunch					
2:10-2:30					
2:45-3:05					

I would be interested in participating in the following kinds of activities:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organized outdoor games (Red Rover) | <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor small group games (board games, cards) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organized outdoor sports (football) | <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor arts and crafts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using special equipment outdoors (parachutes) | <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor reading and writing activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General outdoor recess activities (pushing children on swings) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please list) |

Participation in Seminars

<p>I would be interested in the following seminars:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Helping my child with homework</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Learning opportunities in the home</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Selecting children's books</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ideas for inexpensive family activities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Stress Management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Aerobics</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Health Topics</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with Divorce</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Crafts, Hobbies</p>	<p>The most convenient time for me to participate is:</p> <p>Monday <input type="checkbox"/> before work <input type="checkbox"/> lunch <input type="checkbox"/> after work</p> <p>Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/> before work <input type="checkbox"/> lunch <input type="checkbox"/> after work</p> <p>Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/> before work <input type="checkbox"/> lunch <input type="checkbox"/> after work</p> <p>Thursday <input type="checkbox"/> before work <input type="checkbox"/> lunch <input type="checkbox"/> after work</p> <p>Friday <input type="checkbox"/> before work <input type="checkbox"/> lunch <input type="checkbox"/> after work</p> <p>Do you know of anyone who could conduct the seminars listed or other seminars?</p>
--	---

APPENDIX I

1993-94 Year-End Student Survey

1993-94 Year-End Student Survey

HARMONY IN ACTION

1993-94 Year-End Student Survey

Dear Emerson Students,

Harmony in Action has organized many programs and activities and we would like to know what you think about them. Please answer the following questions. THANK YOU!

NAME _____ TEACHER _____

MONTHLY CALENDAR:

Each month, we send home a gold calendar with activities that are going on in the school. Is this calendar helpful so you know what activities are going on?

_____ Really helpful _____ Kind of helpful _____ Not really helpful

Do you have any ideas for how the calendar could be more helpful?

SPIRIT DAYS:

Some of our spirit days have been a sports day, backwards day, funny hat and feet day, dress up day, message day. How do you like Spirit days?

_____ Like them a lot _____ They are OK _____ Don't really like them

Do you have any ideas for other spirit days that you think would be fun?

STUDENT OF THE WEEK:

How do you like the Student of the Week program?

_____ Like it _____ It's OK _____ Don't like it

What do you think about the Student of the Week survey?

_____ Like it _____ It's OK _____ Don't like it

Do you have any suggestions about how to make the Survey better?

How do you feel about Students of the Week having lunch in the Community Room?

_____ Like it _____ It's OK _____ Don't like it

Is there anything you would like to change about the Student of the Week Lunch?

ASSEMBLIES:

How do you like the Assemblies?

☐ Like it ☐ It's OK ☐ Don't like it

Which was your favorite one?

Is there anything you would like to change about the Assemblies?

Do you have any ideas for other Assemblies you would like to have?

RECESS:

What kinds of games or sports would you like to do outside at recess?

What kinds of games or activities would you like to do inside at recess if there was a special room?

Do you have any materials, games, or equipment to donate?

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES (4th and 5th only)

This year some 4th and 5th graders were Students Representatives. They helped with Student of the Week lunch, made announcements, helped with assemblies and visited classrooms to tell students what was going on and find out how they felt about activities. What did you think about having Student Representatives?

☐ Like it ☐ It's OK ☐ Don't like it

Would you want to be a Student Representative next year?

Is there anything you would like to change about the Student Representative program?

Do you have any other suggestions, concerns, or comments about Harmony in Action activities?

APPENDIX J

1993-94 Year-End Family Survey

1993-94 Year-End Family Survey

Harmony in Action

1993-94 Year-End Family Survey

Dear Emerson Families,

Harmony in Action is a project at Emerson school that involves school staff, family members, community members, and MSU students. Our main goal has been to develop a positive community for everyone at Emerson. We carried out many programs and activities during the last two years, and we would like to get your input about them. We know it is a busy time of year, but we hope you will take time to complete this brief survey. Your feedback, comments, and suggestions will be helpful as we plan for next year. Parents, please feel free to fill out this survey with your child's help and input if you wish, and return to the box in the office marked Harmony in Action survey. Thank you!

Have you heard about Harmony in Action?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
How did you hear about Harmony in Action?	<input type="checkbox"/> Materials sent home <input type="checkbox"/> My child <input type="checkbox"/> A teacher <input type="checkbox"/> A parent <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)
Monthly Calendar: Each month, we send home a gold calendar with activities that are going on in the school. How helpful would you say this calendar is	<input type="checkbox"/> I've never seen it <input type="checkbox"/> Not helpful <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat helpful <input type="checkbox"/> Very helpful
Do you have any suggestions for how the calendar could be more helpful?	Suggestions/Comments:
Spirit Days: Some of our spirit days have been a sports day, backwards day, funny hat, etc. Has your child participated in Spirit days?	<input type="checkbox"/> No, we didn't know about them <input type="checkbox"/> No, weren't interested <input type="checkbox"/> Participated occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, usually participated
Do you have any suggestions for other spirit days that you think would be fun? Or other comments about spirit days?	Suggestions/Comments:
Student of the Week: Please rate the Student of the Week program 5=like it 3= it's ok 1= don't like it	5 4 3 2 1
When your child was Student of the Week, he/she brought home a survey about how they felt about school. Did this survey help you to learn about how your child felt about school?	<input type="checkbox"/> No, I didn't see the survey <input type="checkbox"/> Not really, I already knew how my child felt <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, it helped somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I learned more about how my child felt

Do you have any suggestions or comments about the survey?	Suggestions/Comments:
When your child was Student of the Week, you were invited to join him/her for lunch in the Community Room. Were you able to come to this lunch?	<input type="checkbox"/> No, I didn't know about it <input type="checkbox"/> No, I couldn't get away from work <input type="checkbox"/> No, I had a schedule conflict/other commitment <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I came for lunch
Do you have any suggestions or comments about the Student of the Week Lunch?	Suggestions/Comments:
ASSEMBLIES: We had several all-school assemblies this year. Please rate the assemblies. 5= like them 3= OK 1= didn't like them	5 4 3 2 1
Do you have any suggestions or comments about the assemblies?	Suggestions/Comments:
Family Nights: We had some Family Nights throughout the year. Please note which you were able to attend:	<input type="checkbox"/> Science (Nov) <input type="checkbox"/> Music & Literacy (Dec) <input type="checkbox"/> Sing-a-Long (Feb) <input type="checkbox"/> Circus (March)
If you were unable to attend family nights, please note why	<input type="checkbox"/> Didn't know about them <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule conflict <input type="checkbox"/> Don't like to come to school at night <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare problems <input type="checkbox"/> Not interested in the topic <input type="checkbox"/> Time of evening not good for my family
Do you have any suggestions or comments about Family Nights?	Suggestions/Comments:

NAME (OPTIONAL) _____

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ames, C. (1990). Motivation: What teachers need to know. Teachers College Record, 91, 409-421.
- Au, K.H., & Mason, J.M. (1981). Social organization factors in learning to read: The balance of rights hypothesis. Reading Research Quarterly 17, 115-152.
- Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (1982). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Alienation and the four worlds of childhood. Phi Delta Kappan, 67, 430-436.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., Moen, P., & Garbarino, J. (1984). Child, family, and community. In R.D. Parke (Ed.), Review of child development research (pp 283-328). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, A. (1991). Design experiments: Theoretical and methodological challenges in evaluating complex interventions in classroom settings. Journal of Learning Sciences, 2, 141-178.
- Campbell, D. (1988). Collaboration and contradiction in a research and staff development project. Teachers College Record, 90, 100-121.
- Cervone, B.T., & O'Leary, K. (1982). A conceptual framework for parent involvement. Educational Leadership, 40, 48-49.
- Chrispeels, J.H. (1991). District leadership in parent involvement: Policies and actions in San Diego. Phi Delta Kappan, 72, 367-371.
- Clark, R. (1987, Fall). Family organization, communication styles, and children's competence development. Equity and Choice, 27-34.
- Cochran, M. (1987, Fall). The parental empowerment process: Building on family strengths. Equity and Choice, 9-23.

- Coleman, J.S. (1987). Families and schools. Educational Researcher, 16, 32-38.
- Comer, J.P. (1980a). School power. New York: The Free Press.
- Comer, J.P. (1980b). Working with black parents. In R. Abidin (Ed.), Parent education and intervention handbook. Springfield, IL: Thomas.
- Connell, R.W., Ashenden, D.J., Kessler, S., & Dossett, G.W. (1982). Making the difference. Boston: George Allen and Unwin.
- Crowson, R.L., & Boyd, W.L. (1993). Coordinated services for children: Designing arks for storms and seas unknown. American Journal of Education, 101, 140-179.
- Davies, D. (1981). Citizen participation in decision making in the schools. In D. Davies (Ed.), Communities and their schools (pp. 83-120). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Davies, D., Burch, P., & Johnson, V. (1992). A portrait of schools reaching out (Report No. 1). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning.
- Edwards, P. (1989). Supporting lower SES mother's attempts to provide scaffolding for book reading. In J. Allen & J. Mason (Eds.), Risk Makers, Risk Takers, Risk Breakers: Reducing the risks for young literacy learners (pp. 222-250). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Epstein, J. (1987). Toward a theory of family-school connections: Teacher practices and parent involvement. In K. Hurrelman, F. Kaufman, & F. Losel (Eds.), Social intervention: Potential and constraints (pp. 121-136). New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Epstein, J. (1990). School and family connections: Theory, research and implications for integrating sociologies of education and family. In D.G. Unger & M.B. Sussman (Eds.), Families in community settings: Interdisciplinary perspectives. New York: Hawthorne Press.

- Epstein, J. (1991). Paths to partnerships: What we can learn from federal, state, district and school initiatives. Phi Delta Kappan, 72, 344-382.
- Epstein, J.L. (1996). Perspectives and previews on research and policy for school, family and community partnerships. In A. Booth & J.F. Dunn (Eds.), Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes? (pp. 209-246). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Epstein, J.L., & Dauber, S.L. (1989a). Effects of the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Social Studies and Art Program on student attitudes and knowledge. Baltimore: John Hopkins University, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.
- Epstein, J.L., & Dauber, S.L. (1989b). Teacher attitudes and practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. Baltimore: John Hopkins University, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching (pp. 302-341). New York: Macmillan.
- Gardner, S. (1990, Winter). Failure by fragmentation. Equity and Choice, 4-12.
- Grant, D. (1989). Learning relations. London: Routledge.
- Haberman, M. (1992). Creating community contexts that educate: An agenda for improving education in inner cities. In L. Kaplan (Ed.), Education and the family (pp. 27-40). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1983). Ethnography: Principles in practice. New York: Routledge.
- Haynes, N.M., & Ben-Avie, M. (1996). Parents as full partners in education. In A. Booth & J.F. Dunn (Eds.), Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes? (pp. 45-56). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Heath, S. B. (1982). Questioning at home and school: A comparative study. In G. Spindler (Ed.), Doing the ethnography of schooling (pp. 102-131). New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Heath, S.B., & McLaughlin, M.W. (1987). A child resource policy: Moving beyond dependence on school and family. Phi Delta Kappan, 68, 576-580.
- Henderson, A.T. (1987). The evidence continues to grow: Parent Involvement improves student achievement. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Holmes Group. (1990). Tomorrow's schools: Principles for the design of Professional Development Schools. East Lansing, MI: Author.
- Kagan, S.L. (1987). Home-school linkages: History's legacies and the family support movement. In S.L. Kagan, D.R. Powell, B. Weissbourd & E.F. Zigler (Eds.), America's family support programs (pp. 161-181). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kirst, M., & McLaughlin, M. (1990). Rethinking policy for children: Implications for educational administration. In B. Mitchell & L. Cunningham (Eds.), Educational leadership and changing contexts of families, communities and schools (pp. 86-94). Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Lareau, A. (1989). Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education. New York: The Falmer Press.
- Lareau, A. (1996). Assessing parent involvement in schooling: A critical analysis. In A. Booth & J.F. Dunn (Eds.), Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes? (pp. 57-64). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Lieberman, A. (1992). The meaning of scholarly activity and the building of community. Educational Researcher, 21, 5-12.
- Lightfoot, S.L. (1978). Worlds apart: Relationship between families and schools. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

- Lutz, F.W., & Merz, C. (1992). The politics of school/community relations. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Melaville, A.I., & Blank, M.J. (1991). What it takes: Structuring interagency partnerships to connect children and families with comprehensive services. Washington, D.C.: Education and Human Services Consortium.
- Melaville, A.I., & Blank, M.J. (1993). Together we can: A guide for crafting a profamily system of education and human services. Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office.
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1984). Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Moll, L.C., & Greenberg, J.B. (1990). Creating zones of possibilities: Combining social contexts for instruction. In L.C. Moll (Ed.), Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology (pp. 39-348). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morgan, V., Fraser, G., Dunn, S., & Cairns, E. (1992). Parental involvement in education: How do parents want to become involved? Educational Studies, 18, 11-20.
- Nettles, S.M. (1991). Community involvement and disadvantaged students: A review. Review of Educational Research, 61, 379-406.
- Oakes, J., & Lipton, M. (1990). Making the best of schools. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Okakok, L. (1989). Serving the purpose of education. Harvard Educational Review, 59, 436-467.
- Powell, D. (1991). How schools support families: Critical policy tensions. The Elementary School Journal, 91, 307-319.

- Rich, D. (1992). Megaskills and new partnerships for student achievement. In L. Kaplan (Ed.), Education and the family (pp. 281-292). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Saxe, R.W. (1984). School-community relations in transition. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.
- Schorr, L.B. (1988). Within our reach: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage. New York: Anchor Press.
- Swap, S.M. (1993). Developing home-school partnerships: From concepts to practice. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Thornburg, K., Hoffman, S., & Remeika, C. (1991). Youth at risk: Society at risk. The Elementary School Journal, 91, 199-208.
- Wagner, J. (1990, April). Research as a full participant: Action, inquiry and understanding in schools and other educational settings. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston.
- Whyte, W.F. (1955). Street corner society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zill, N. (1996). Family change and student achievement: What we have learned, what it means for schools. In A. Booth & J.F. Dunn (Eds.), Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes? (pp. 139-174). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 02102 1732